

The Grace Lutheran

Newsletter of Grace LCMS – Greenwood, Arkansas

October 2026

From Pastor's Pen...

Lunar Missions and Masquerades

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

October often brings to mind many different things for people; things like fall leaves, football, cooler weather (finally!), costumes and candy. For us Lutherans, October also brings to mind Martin Luther and “A Mighty Fortress” and 95 theses. What about the first lunar mission? I’ll admit: This isn’t something that typically springs to mind with this time of the year. Recently, however, I was taking a little break and watching a documentary on the first lunar mission (something I’ve always been fascinated with), and after having watched this documentary, I now have to add lunar missions to the list, particularly when it comes to the Reformation and our daily Christian lives. Let me explain.

According to NASA engineers, the first lunar mission (Apollo 11), while traveling to its lunar destination, was off course about 97% of the time. You see, the onboard computer navigation system was constantly having to make small course corrections as the capsule would drift off its intended course. 97% of that trip, the capsule was drifting away from the intended course, and if it wasn’t for the constant course-corrections, “*one small step for man; one giant leap for mankind*” would never have happened.

This got me thinking about the Reformation and God’s holy Word. In terms of the Reformation, we know how “off-course” the Church had gotten over the centuries leading up to Martin Luther’s famous nailing of the 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg church. We also know how it was the Word of God in all its simplicity and purity that had penetrated through the haze, leading Luther on a “corrective course” back to the grace of God, which is ours through faith alone in Christ alone.

What about us in our own daily lives? Do you still get “off-course” in your daily life? Does the Word of God still provide “course correction” to get you back “on track”? The answers to both these questions, of course, should be a resounding “YES!” And yet... how often do we listen? Do we “course-correct,” or do we ignore the voice of our Lord by plowing ahead? Are we attuned to our Lord’s Word? Do we listen, or do we sometimes disregard it as “noise” or “different opinion,” as if we know better?

I’m reminded of the navigational maxim of “missing the mark by a mile.” If your navigation is just one-degree off over the course of a very short distance (100 yards), you will miss your intended mark, but it will only be by a small amount (about 5 feet laterally). That may not seem like much; like it’s no big deal... but you’re still off! You’ve still missed the mark, and a difference of just a few feet can mean the difference between stepping on a land mine and reaching your destination safely. Worse yet, if that small little error—just one-degree difference in travel—is projected out; e.g., you continue to travel just one-degree off for 60 miles, you will miss your intended destination by a mile. What could’ve been a simple small course correction at the beginning, because of continuation in error, has now resulted in the need for a massive course correction!

This is where the October/Halloween concept of “masquerade” enters into my thinking. As sinful children of Adam, we all have our “masks” we wear in “real life.” We put on our masks, pretending to be something/someone we’re not. We have our “public personas,” and then there’s who we *really* are in private. There are masks we wear around certain people or in certain situations... but that’s not who we *really* are. We’re pretending. We’re playing a part. We’re hypocrites... all of us. This is especially true when it comes to the faith. Are we truly Christian in our words and deeds, or are we just playing the part? Are we wearing the mask of a Christian, or are we Christian? There’s a difference. Our Lord knows the difference. He knows our masked reality, which is why He, in His

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Pastor' Pen, *continued*...

loving mercy, calls out to us through His Word. His Word “unmasks” us, revealing the truth.

What is so interesting at this point is the fact that our Lord Himself uses “masks” to do this. (Martin Luther speaks on this extensively.) He uses the “masks” of faithful family members, friends, and even strangers to come to us and speak His “course-correcting Word.” Yes, He comes to us directly via His Word in Scripture... but like I said earlier, are we even attuned to that Word? How often do you read your Bible? How often do you read, mark, learn, and inwardly-digest His Word? How often do you hear His Word? Is Sunday morning the only time you’re hearing Him speak?

Whether it’s directly via His Word in Scripture, or spoken through the masked vessels He uses (faithful family members, friends, and even strangers), our Lord is *constantly* endeavoring to make the subtle little “course corrections” in our daily lives we need as we daily and often stray off-course into sin. May these always be just that—subtle and little course corrections—and not great and drastic corrections. May we never “miss the mark.” May we always be open and willing to make the loving corrections of our Lord, whether these corrections are addressed to us (or spoken through us to others who are off-course) as He endeavors to lead His beloved children home to the heavenly destination He has prepared for us before the beginning of time. May our masks of sinful unbelief and hypocrisy be removed, and may we ever and always be clad in His baptismal righteousness, allowing Him and His correcting, saving Truth be witnessed in all that we say and do.

Pastor

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A Mighty Fortress is Our God

Matin Luther

A mighty fortress is our God,
A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev'ry need
That hath us now o'ertaken.
The old evil foe
Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal.

With might of ours can naught be done,
Soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the valiant One,
Whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, Who is this?
Jesus Christ it is,
Of Sabaoth Lord,
And there's none other God;
He holds the field forever.

Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill;
They shall not overpower us.
This world's prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none.
He's judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.

The Word they still shall let remain
Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain
With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child, and wife,
Though these all be gone,
our vict'ry has been won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth.

October Birthdays

6	Linda Hansson
7	Dave Sheely
10	Cindy Sheely
17	Connie West
19	Kent Haunschuld
26	Ethan Clark

October Anniversaries

8	Michael & Ciara Pharis
12	Armstrong & Abigail Fraiser
15	Chris & Wendy Cotner

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.

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God!

Life in Christ

Mid-Week Bible Study Pastor Zirbel's Wednesday Bible Study continues in the study of Eastern Orthodoxy. All are encouraged to attend the study that begins at 10:00 am.

Dare to be Lutheran! *"Since your majesty and your lordships desire a simple answer, I will answer without horns or teeth. Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand. God help me."*
Martin Luther – Reply to the Diet of Worms, AE 33:251

Grace LWML will meet for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, 10 /6 at 12:30 PM at the church. All ladies are encouraged AND invited to attend. Refreshments are "bring your own" sack lunch. Dessert & beverages provided by LWML. All women are welcome – Please join us!

Grace Talent Show! Saturday, 10/17 from 2-4pm, LWML will host a Congregation Talent Show. This is *not* a competition, but rather an opportunity for us to share our talents with our family in Christ; an opportunity for all of us to rejoice and celebrate in the unique gifts God has blessed us with. What's your talent? Sign-up in the Narthex today!

Reformation Sunday 10/25 is designated to commemorate the Protestant Reformation, rooted in Martin Luther's 1517 posting of the 95 Theses on October 31st. In the LCMS, Reformation Sunday is both an historical memorial and a theological celebration, marking the Reformation's origin and its enduring call to return to the Gospel.

"The Son of God Has Set Us Free from Sin and Death by His Grace"



Grace Lutheran Church
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Bible Study & Worship Opportunities:

Sunday Worship Service 8:00 & 10:15 AM

Sunday Adult Bible Study & Sunday School 9:00 AM

Wednesday Adult Bible Study 10:00 AM

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