

Friendly Messenger

September 2026

MESSAGE FROM PASTOR OSCAR

Back to School: Learning to Love

Here we are, another school year, we find ourselves once again entering that familiar cycle of learning and growing. For much of our lives, we measure our years by school calendars, grade levels, semesters, graduations, and new beginnings. We learn, we practice, we grow, and then we move on to the next lesson.

But I wonder if, somewhere along the way, we begin to think of learning as something separate from doing.

Is there really a point in our lives when growing, learning, and doing diverge? Who decided that childhood is for learning, adolescence is for becoming, and adulthood is for doing? What authorities or structures have taught us to divide these things?

Perhaps our faith has something different to teach us.

When Jesus blesses the children, he does more than simply offer a blessing to the youngest among us. He points to something profound in them—something valuable to the kingdom of God that we should not lose sight of as we grow older.

Children have an innate curiosity. They can wonder without needing every answer. They can be open to awe and beauty. They are teachable. They are often humble enough to ask questions, to admit what they do not know, and to trust those who care for them.

These are qualities worth holding onto. In fact, they are qualities worth cultivating throughout our entire lives.

But I believe there is something deeper that ties all of these qualities together. There is one constant thread running through them all—a cord that binds us, a reality that is present in every stage of life but from which life can slowly pull us away.

That cord is love.

Love is the beginning and the foundation of all that we are. It is at the heart of our relationships, our learning, our teaching, our growing, and our doing. It is the cornerstone of being the Body of Christ in community and the very image of God that we bear.

Scripture tells us that God is love. And we are created in God's image—not merely to learn about love, but to live it, practice it, receive it, share it and grow in it.

Cont. Pastor's Message

Perhaps this is part of what Jesus is reminding us when he places the children before us, to see. The kingdom of God is not something we simply graduate into. It is something we continually grow into becoming. We are always learning how to receive grace, how to love our neighbor, how to forgive, how to wonder, how to serve, and how to recognize God's presence in the world around us.

So, as we begin another school year, may we remember that learning is not only for children. We are all students in the school of God's grace. Disciples.

May we open our minds to new possibilities and our hearts to new understanding. May we remain curious without becoming critical, humble enough to be taught, and open enough to experience awe and wonder.

And above all, may we return again and again to the lesson at the heart of every lesson: love.

May this new season be a time of learning and renewal—not only for our children and teachers, but for all of us. May God bless our schools, our families, our teachers, our students, and our congregation as we continue growing together in love, communion, community, and grace.

And may we never forget that there is no graduation from God's love. It is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all that we are called to be and do.

God Loves You And So Do I,
Pastor Oscar

Come Home to Sardis! Sardis celebrates 159 years of worshipping God and serving the community this year. We are excited that Pastor Anna and Doug will be our homecoming guests! Pastor Anna will give our sermon and assist in Holy Communion. She served as pastor at Sardis from 2008 until 2014. She continued in the ministry serving at Our Saviour's Lutheran in Great Falls Montana where she and Doug were amazed at God's creation. They traveled widely in their RV after her retirement. They have made their home in Kernersville, NC for the past two years, but still visit Montana when they can.

We are also excited to have Frank Griffin serving as our organist on

Home-coming

Homecoming Sunday! Frank has been enjoying retirement in Greer, SC, and substitutes for churches in the area. He is a member of Trinity Lutheran in Greenville, SC. Sardis was fortunate to have Frank as Music Director and a member from 2015 until his retirement in 2024.

Next year we will celebrate 160 years of Sardis's ministry. Looking ahead to special activities to commemorate our commitment and service.

The **Fred T. Foard Senior Citizens** group meet on the first Wednesday of each month for lunch and a program. The seniors will meet in September on the 2nd at Ebenezer. All are invited to join us for fun, food, and fellowship.



SARDIS WOMEN OF THE ELCA (WELCA) NEWS

CHANGE FOR CHANGE

Each year NC WELCA collects monies for a worthy organization. This year – until January 31, 2027 – we are collecting for two groups. Fuller Disaster Rebuilders (FDR) and Robeson County Church & Community Center (RCCCC).

FDR is rebuilding homes in the western NC area. Members from Sardis, Old St. Paul's, and Taylorsville Presbyterian worked on homes in Swannanoa and Black Mountain as last year's mission project. We worked in Marion and Nebo July 5-July 10 of this past year to continue that project.

RCCCC is located in Lumberton, NC. "The Center was born was founded as a response to provide advocacy to those in need, to help with emergency aid, to promote the resources available to the economically challenged, and to work toward racial unity in Robeson County." www.robesonitogether.org

Across the state, we have collected \$2,425.24 to date. Sardis will collect on the FIFTH Sundays of the month. We had a slow start, and hope to improve on the following Sundays: AUGUST 30 and NOVEMBER 29. Please mark your calendars and plan to make a donation for these worthy causes as your situation permits. Thank you!

FALL MOUNTAIN RETREAT

The annual fall retreat will be October 2-4, 2026, at the Blowing Rock Retreat Center in Blowing Rock, NC. The theme is "Rest, Renew, and Reconnect" and will be led by Rev. Judy Drysdale. Join women across the state and enjoy the fall leaves of NC mountains. Brochures are available in the narthex.



North Carolina Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Church Council did not meet in July.

Thank you to all those who supported the 2026 mission trip this year. Here's a few highlights from my week, bunking at the Presbyterian's Camp Grier in Old Fort.

There were six attending from Old St Paul's (OSP) and six from Taylorsville Presbyterian (TPC). Two more from TPC joined us for Tuesday afternoon and all day Wednesday. Several had to return home early, so on Friday morning we were at twelve.

We had three homesites that were in various stages of rebuilding. I worked on a new build in Nebo along with Ray and Marshall. The previous home had been struck by a tree, so this was a completely new home. We had four tasks to complete: paint walls and ceilings, install insulation in the crawl space, frame windows, and screw down the sub-floor. Day one we attacked the ceiling and priming the walls, with all ten of us working together. Luckily there was temporary power so we had lights and fans. Not a fan in every room, but my handy neck fan was put to good use. It wasn't so hot being inside, but we were all sweating by day's end. Ray worked on ceilings with five others, Marshall worked with Dawn, who has been blind for about 40 years, painting the wall corners with primer, and then he helped me paint primer on the walls.



We left early to go to Swannanoa for a house blessing. The home was at the end of a steep road. Mud and water flooded their crawl space, knocking out their back porch and damaged the back bedroom. They didn't have too much damage to the rest of the house. They lived with her sister for ten months. They were so grateful to all the people who had worked on their home. Although we hadn't helped repair that home, it was so fulfilling to see a family back in their home through the work of volunteers. There were about five Fuller employees there to participate in the blessing. Jacob, our crew chief, led a beautiful prayer, the family was presented with a Bible and two handmade quilts from a Midwest group (I think), and we listened to their granddaughter beautifully sing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."



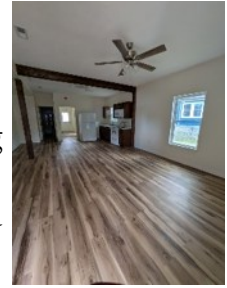
On the way back to Camp Grier we stopped at the street in Swannanoa where we had worked last year. WOW! It looked so beautiful to see the homes being lived in, flowers planted, and a semblance of normalcy. There are still a few houses on the streets not completed, and some that will be demolished, but it was a joy to see how our efforts had made a difference in people's lives. At

left is the home where the man and his mother clung to the metal porch posts while the water rose to almost the porch ceiling. One of our teams floored the house and installed a few windows. The home on the right is the one I worked in, painting doors and trim, hanging doors, and blowing in insulation.





At left is the home that was sided by another of our teams. Nice to see that paved driveway where once was a muddy mess of siding, boards, and other construction mess. At right is a duplex that was nothing but studs and subfloor. We used it for storage and I helped organize all the tools and materials at the end



of

the week. Now it is ready for grass and that was handled by Pastor Andrew, Ray, and the three teen boys on Thursday and Friday. Monday night we enjoyed a delicious pasta meal with salad and garlic bread. And watermelon! On Tuesday, the insulation was installed by 13 yo male Lucius and 21 yo Meredith – Pastor Andrew's daughter. The young and skinny!! They were both exhausted but I heard no complaints. Framing was delivered by Jacob, the Fuller Rebuilder site chief. Pastor Paul and Dawn's husband William started measuring and cutting. Two volunteers from TPC arrived and started pitching in on painting. Others finished the ceilings while I painted wall color in the kitchen/living room. Cleaned up the paint brushes and rollers, and off to Dollar General on the way home for snacks and other essentials! Supper was "smashburgers" and baked beans. Delicious!



Wednesday we had to repaint ceilings, so I did a bedroom while Lucius cut in for me. Others teamed up to get the rest of the ceilings done. Then, Ray supervised drilling screws in the subfloor with Lucius, Jace (11 yo from OSP) and Ernest from TPC-an experienced young man. That was a hard task! It was hard for the younger boys so I tried helping. Once I got the hang of it, I'd miss the joist as they were not lined up as earlier. I may have screwed in 20! Luckily, it was time to clean up and leave! Since the window framing boards were cut the day before, so Dawn, Meredith and Judy were busy painting them. They managed to get one window done before quitting time. And we managed to get the two bedrooms, hall and laundry room painted with a soft cream color. We were treated to a \$15 meal at Hillman's, compliments of TPC.

Thursday six of us headed back to the house while Ray and the boys went to Swannanoa to do some landscaping. We worked on framing the windows in the living room/dining room/kitchen great room, painting the trim for the windows, and getting that subfloor screwed in. We enjoyed chicken tacos with onions and peppers and ice cream sundaes. Only three of us returned to the house on Friday. Pastor Paul finishing up windows and cleaning and organizing tools and paint, Dwight cut in while I finished painting the bathroom, closet and LR closet, and giving the master a second coat. We felt good about all we had been able to complete that week.

Each night after supper, several of us played cards and enjoyed fellowship. At nine, we had Devotions, consisting of a Bible reading and song. The work we were doing for others was not so much the emphasis, but how we saw God each day and what being there as a volunteer meant to us.

I would encourage all who are able to think about volunteering next year as we continue to help those in need in our area. There's something for everyone to do!

Message from the Social Ministry Committee . . .

School Supply Drive a Success!

Many thanks to all those who contributed school supplies for Banoak and Blackburn Elementary Schools. The Evangelism Committee partnered with the Social Ministry Committee to collect bookbags and student and teacher supplies. Thanks to your donations and two Thrivent grants, over \$1000.00 worth of supplies were delivered on August 24th. Both schools were incredibly grateful for our support.



God's Work our Hands.

Once again Sardis will be participating in the God's Work-our Hands project on Homecoming Sunday -SEPTEMBER 13TH. Congregation members are asked to help pack 240 lunches (120 for the Corner Table in Newton and 120 for the Soup Kitchen in Hickory) for the homeless members of our county. These non-perishable lunches are handed out to the homeless over the weekend since both agencies are closed on Saturday and Sunday. Members of the Committee will be purchasing items, and an assembly line will be set up and ready to go. Please plan to stay a short while after the meal and fellowship to help with this worthy project.

Upcoming Events from the Social Ministry Committee

The Social Ministry Committee will be collecting wintry weather wear for the homeless during October and November. As you are cleaning out closets and switching to fall and winter wear, please donate any gently used hats, gloves, scarves, hoodies, sweaters, and coats that you no longer need. Wintry weather articles can be donated to all ages. On frigid days and nights, warm clothes mean a lot to those without a home. The donations will be divided between the Soup Kitchen and Corner Table. These agencies GIVE clothing to those in need versus selling it.





September 9th craft class will be decoupage ornaments out of napkins. 4 for \$5.

Assortment of napkins will be used. Fran Whitener will be leading the craft.

MAYBE BRING A SNACK TO SHARE!!!

Information for NL's and Bulletins

Committee meetings or events by the congregation should be communicated to Jane directly. This needs to be done in time for newsletters (Wednesday before the last Sunday in the month), or the bulletin (by Wednesday evening each week.)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
		1	2 12:00 FTF Seniors at Ebenezer 2:00 Youth Meeting	3 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	4 Pastor's Sab- bath	5
6 Bring Food for Bless- ings Box 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Ser- vice/Holy Communion and FB Live	7 LABOR DAY Office Closed	8	9 1:00 Susan Craft Class	10 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	11 Pastor's Sab- bath	12
13 HOME COMING 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Ser- vice/Holy Communion and FB Live <i>Pack Bags for God's Work Our Hands</i> 7:00 Church Council	14 7:00 Prayer Group via ZOOM	15	16	17 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	18 Pastor's Sab- bath	19
20 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Ser- vice/Holy Communion and FB Live	21	22	23 5:00 Articles due for Octo- ber NL	24 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	25 Pastor's Sab- bath	26
27 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Ser- vice/Holy Communion and FB Live 2:00 Trinity Ridge (new time) 6:30 LMM	28 7:00 Prayer Group via ZOOM	29	30	Inclement Weather decisions will be an- nounced on our Phone Tree by Saturday evening or early Sunday morning. Please make sure your phone information is up to date with the Secretary. In the event of a Tornado during service please exit Sanctuary and proceed to the hallways, (1) back of Sanctuary to the left and (1) is the Fellowship Hall to the right of the Narthex. Remain in hallways, not in rooms.		

BIRTHDAYS

9/2 Dorothea Wyant
Amy Jones
9/3 Faye Hoke
9/8 Tim Whitener
9/11 Nena Babb
9/17 Lexie Wood
9/22 Jennifer M. Whitener

Anniversaries:

David & Mildred Fulbright 9-27
Ralph & Wanda Stallings 9-28

COUNCIL CONTACT ASSISTING MINISTER

Mike Midgett

USHERS

Dawn/Zachary

COMMUNION PREPARATION / CLEAN – UP

Donna B.
Sherrie M.

Offering Counter: Dwayne W.

<i>VOLUNTEER September</i>	6th	13th	20th	27th
ALTAR FLOWERS	Betty W.	Ethan & Heather C.	Darrell J.	Mae W.
ACOLYTE/ CRUCIFER	Marshall/Ian	Paisley/Ray	Ian/Cayden	Graysen/Tim
COMM. ASSISTANT	Dawn C	Jon G.	Rick J.	Sandra R.
GREETERS	Bruce/Rita	Dianne/Shuford	Benny/Edna	Shuford/Marilyn
LAY READER	Gene B.	Kristin T.	Nena B.	Paisley H.
TECHNOLOGY	Terry,Ben,Joe,Samuel	Terry,Ben,Joe,Samuel	Terry,Ben,Joe,Samuel	Terry,Ben,Joe,Samuel
SECURITY	Bruce	Ben	Rick	Daarrell
SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADER	K-6 Nena 7-12 Nena	K-6 April 7-12 Nena	K-6 Susan 7-12 Rick	K-6 Sherrie/Mike 7-12 Dawn
BACKPACK PROGRAM	3rd Joe & Phyllis	10th Mildred Fulbright	17th Gene & Donna	23rd Tim & Barbara
FRONT YARD SIGN	Nena	Jennifer	Tim	Nena
MEAL DEL.	5th April	12th no meal	19th Susan	26th no meal
BLESSINGS BOX	Jon's Class	Disciples of Christ	Church Council	LMM

[Sardis Lutheran Church](#); [Sardis Lutheran Church | Facebook](#) ; <https://instagram.com/sardislutheranchurch...>

If you have a birthday or anniversary and they are not listed please let the office know. Thank you.

OUR MISSION

Sardis Evangelical Lutheran Church serves together as disciples of Christ, teaches the word to invite people into a life of knowing Jesus, encourages each other in faith and personal mission through reaching out to the needs of the community and individuals.

REMEMBER: you can find this NL, the weekly calendar and Sunday Sermons on the website: <https://sardislutheran.com/> mark it as a favorite and check it out often.

SARDIS LUTHERAN CHURCH
6103 W NC 10 HWY
HICKORY NC 28602



Sardis Leaders Contacts Pastor: Rev. Matthew Oscar Shepherd (C) 828-228-3078 pastor@sardislutheran.com Pastor Office Hours Wednesday, 11am – 3pm Remember, you can always call the Pastor anytime from 8am to 7am in case of emergency.
 Organist/Director of Music: Nena Babb
 Council Chair: Gene Biggerstaff (C) 828-381-0039 genebiggerstaff@gmail.com
 Secretary/Treasurer: Jane Moretz, (C) 828-302-8458 secretary@sardislutheran.com