

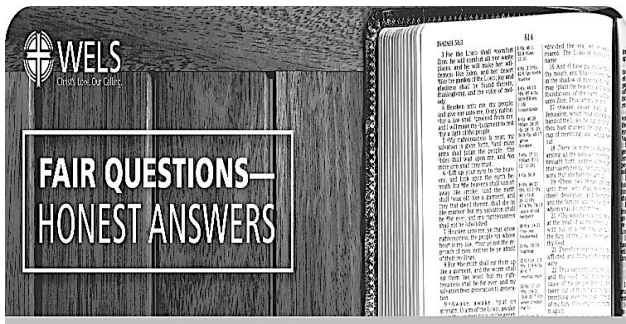


NEWSLETTER

December
2015

We are living in the end times. So what?

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18)



We're in the thick of the “holiday season.” The commercials and holiday specials on TV attempt to dictate what life should be like this time of year. We often see families smiling and laughing. But how often do our lives really look and feel anything like those overly produced moments we see in movies and on TV? Is our holiday experience filled with laughter and delight, or is it mostly filled with stress and anxiety? The chaos of this life and the whirlwind of increasingly busy schedules can leave us with a sense of longing rather than fulfillment.

The pain and hardship of this life, whether in this time of year or anytime, should come as no surprise. We are living in the *End Times*, the last days before the end of the world comes. But so what? What difference does that make? God makes it clear that we shouldn't be surprised when life isn't the Hollywood ideal. In fact, because of sin in this world, God says that this life is going to be troublesome. He even warns us that wickedness will increase in the last days.

However, we live in the *End Times* like a child watches the calendar for Christmas. We wait with that same sort of eager excitement because we, too, are waiting for a gift. We're not waiting for toys and games wrapped in shiny paper. There is something much better coming. As the apostle Paul wrote in the Bible: *“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:18).

God promised a Savior right at the scene of the world's first sin. He followed through on that promise by sending Jesus to pay the price for everyone's sins by dying on the cross. God's forgiveness is ours now; trusting in Jesus we are God's children! And as his children we stand waiting for the rest of that gift: rescue from this world of hardship to be brought to an eternal life where only good exists.

Jesus' work for us, his death and his resurrection, assure us of his love. While there may be dark times in this life, none of those change God's love. He is with us now to help us get through the rough times. Because of Jesus and the gift of salvation that he won for us, finally God will take us to be with him forever in heaven. These *End Times* will give way to an eternity of true joy!

For more Questions & Answers, go to
www.WhatAboutJesus.com, then
Questioning God.

CHURCH NEWS

Christmas Caroling!! We are planning to go Christmas caroling on Saturday, December 5th. All members are invited to join and spread the story and spirit of Christmas through song. Schedules of the caroling itinerary are available in the narthex. If you have any questions or want additional info, speak with Lonnie Rabe or Pastor Reichow.

Christmas Program with Jesus Cares: We will be celebrating Christmas with a special program of songs and narration entitled, *“Jesus Is My Present”* performed by the Jesus Cares members on Thursday, December 10th here at church. All St. John’s members and families are invited to attend this great opportunity and to experience the Christmas story in a unique way. Jesus Cares participants will be arriving between 6:15 – 6:30pm to prepare for their program. Their program in the sanctuary will begin approximately at **7:00pm**. Treats will be served afterwards for those in attendance. We hope to see you there!

Christmas Eve Program Practice will begin on Sunday, Nov.29th in connection with Sunday School. The children will be practicing until noon each week. Parents please take note of this time extension. Thanks for your cooperation in making this program a success.

Grace Circle Gathering: We had a great turn out (17 people) at our first discussion and fellowship gathering in November. All are invited to the Schwartz home for a second time on Monday, December 14th beginning at 6:30pm. Come casual. You may bring a treat to share IF you desire to do so (this is not required).

Change of Service Times: Please NOTE that our Christmas Eve service and our New Year’s Eve service this year will be at **6:30pm**.

Directory Updates: If your address or phone number has changed over the past year, please contact Carol Dammann before the printing of the 2016 directory.

CHRISTMAS AT MLC

The annual Christmas concerts at Martin Luther College are on Saturday, Dec. 5th at 7:30pm and on Sunday, Dec. 6th at 4:00pm in the Chapel of the Christ on the MLC campus. This year’s concert is titled **“Magnify His Name.”** The choirs, wind symphony, and handbell choir invite you to join them in this celebration of the birth of Christ.

LADIES AID

St. John’s Ladies Aid is sponsoring a Christmas party on Sunday, December 6th beginning at 12:30pm. All church members, relatives and friends are cordially invited to the catered dinner. The cost of the meal is \$9.50 per person to be made payable to St. John’s Ladies Aid. There is a sign up sheet in the narthex for all who wish to come to the party. Please bring an item for the food shelf and also a donation for the Belle Plaine Lutheran Home.

The Ladies Aid has Christmas cards for sale. Check out the selection on the table in the narthex. Your support to our ladies group is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

YOUTH NEWS

The youth group Christmas party will be here at church on Sunday, November 29th from 2:00pm to 4:00pm for all our youth members – grades 5-12. Please bring a snack to share. There will be fun games, gift exchange and talk about future plans. If youth members want to be a part of the gift exchange (bunco dice game), please bring two wrapped gifts equaling a total value of \$5. Youth members are welcome to invite as many friends as they would like. If these friends want to participate in the gift exchange, have them bring two gifts as per the above instructions. See you there for a fun time!

Watch your emails and church bulletins for upcoming events. Have any thoughts or suggestions for events, please pass them on to Bryan and Kristen Budahn.

Birthdays & Anniversaries

2 nd	Leonard Lange and Mike Wills
4 th	Richard Gorr
6 th	Diane Dittmer
7 th	Tim and Janet Schuth (24th Anniversary)
10 th	Tanya Reichow and Cindy Schuth
12 th	Jaime Mathwig
14 th	Brock Warren
15 th	Betty Gorr
22 nd	Sunok and Allan Ganson (27 th Anniversary)
23 rd	James Dammann and Dylan Schuth
24 th	Benjamin Goette and Melanie Schmidt
26 th	Mike and Jessica Wills (8 th Anniversary)
29 th	Emily Rabe
30 th	Darlene Mackenthun and Kaitlyn Scherer
31 st	Mavis Lange