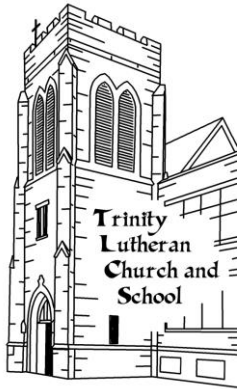


Trinity Lutheran Church & School
300 Broad Street
Menasha, WI 54952



February 2026 Newsletter





Trinity Lutheran Church & School

300 Broad Street • Menasha, WI 54952

Church Phone: (920) 722-2662 / **School Phone:** (920) 725-1715

Church Office Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Website: www.trinitymenasha.com

Divine Services: Saturday – 5:00 PM / Sunday – 9:00 AM

Education Hour: Sunday - 10:30 AM

Services will continue to be available for streaming on Trinity’s Facebook page. Check the church website for more details.

IMPORTANT DATES IN FEBRUARY

Date	Time/Event
February 1	Before/After Services - Soup & Bread Sale Fundraiser for the Organ & Piano Fund
February 3	6:30 PM Voters’ Meeting with Board Meetings to Follow
February 5	5:15 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal
February 5	6:30 PM Ensemble Rehearsal
February 6	7:00 PM Hymn Sing
February 7&8	Before/After Services – Soup & Bread Sale Fundraiser for the Organ & Piano Fund
February 7	Following Service Family Game Night in the Large Fellowship Hall
February 9	5-8 PM Culver’s Dine Out (1161 Westowne Dr., Neenah)
February 10	6:30 PM Board of Directors Meeting
February 12	5:15 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal
February 14	9:30 AM Food Pantry
February 15	Transfiguration of Our Lord
February 17	6:30 PM Ladies Aid Meeting
February 18	9:00 AM & 6:30 PM Ash Wednesday Divine Services
February 19	5:15 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal
February 22	First Sunday in Lent
February 25	9:00 AM Lent 1 Mid-Week Services
	5:15 PM Lenten Meal
	6:30 PM Lent 1 Divine Service
February 26	5:15 PM Handbell Choir Rehearsal
February 28	9:30 AM Food Pantry

Our Mission Statement:

Trinity Lutheran Church and School, Menasha, is a fellowship of Lutheran Christians being empowered by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and His Sacraments to encourage, refresh, and strengthen both adults and children in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, while sharing His love with those who do not yet know their Lord and Savior.



Senior Pastor:

† Rev. Steven S. Billings

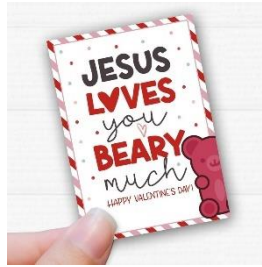
Associate Pastor/Principal:

† Rev. Keith E. GeRue

Music Director/Organist:

Nancy Lephart

February 2026



Trinity Lutheran Church & School

Church Phone: (920) 722-2662 / **School Phone:** (920) 725-1715

Church Office Hours:

Monday – Friday, 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Email: ChurchAdmin@trinitymenasha.com

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9 AM Divine Service 10:30 AM Ed Hour Soup & Bread Sale Before & After Service	2 Rev. Billings Sabath 9 AM Shelter Sewing 6 PM Home Prayer Time 6:30 PM Women's Bible Study	3 6:30 AM Ladies Bible Study 6:30 PM Voters' Meeting with Board Meetings to Follow	4 9 AM Chapel 5 PM Catechism	5 6 AM Men's Bible Study 5:15 PM Handbell Rehearsal 6:30 PM Ensemble Rehearsal	6 7PM Hymn Sing	7 5 PM Divine Service Soup & Bread Sale Before & After Service Family Game Night Following Divine Service
8 9 AM Divine Service 10:30 AM Ed Hour Soup & Bread Sale Before & After Service	9 Rev. Billings Sabath 9 AM Shelter Sewing 5-8 PM Culver's Dine Out - Neenah 6 PM Home Prayer Time 6:30 PM Women's Bible Study	10 6:30 AM Ladies Bible Study 6:30 PM Board of Directors Meeting	11 9 AM Chapel 5 PM Catechism	12 6 AM Men's Bible Study 5:15 Handbell Rehearsal	13	14 Valentine's Day 9:30 AM Food Pantry 5 PM Divine Service
15 Transfiguration 9 AM Divine Service 10:30 AM Ed Hour	16 Presidents Day Rev. Billings Sabath 9 AM Shelter Sewing 6 PM Home Prayer Time 6:30 PM Women's Bible Study	17 6:30 AM Ladies Bible Study 6:30 PM Ladies Aid Meeting	18 Ash Wednesday 9 AM Ash Wednesday Divine Service 5 PM Catechism 6:30 PM Ash Wednesday Divine Service	19 6 AM Men's Bible Study 5:15 Handbell Rehearsal	20	21 5 PM Divine Service
22 1st Sunday in Lent 9 AM Divine Service 10:30 AM Ed Hour	23 Rev. Billings Sabath 9 AM Shelter Sewing 6 PM Home Prayer Time 6:30 PM Women's Bible Study	24 6:30 AM Ladies Bible Study	25 Lent 1 Mid-Week 9 AM Lenten Divine Service 5 PM Catechism 5:15 PM Lenten Meal 6:30 PM Lenten Divine Service	26 6 AM Men's Bible Study 5:15 Handbell Rehearsal	27	28 9:30 AM Food Pantry 5 PM Divine Service



Anniversary Blessings
February 2026



2/9 Kyle & Heather Fink
 2/13 Roy & Ruby Mehl
 2/13 Scott & Sandy Meyer
 2/15 Gary & Linda Bartelme
 2/20 David & Rosemary Collingwood
 2/24 Jerry & Diane Peotter
 2/28 Blaine & Connie Henkel

February 2026
Birthday Blessings!

02/01 Katelyn Pomerence	02/12 Ava Schmidt
02/02 Rosemary Collingwood	02/13 Randy Ross
02/02 Lisa Olson	02/13 Martin Schramper
02/02 Sandy Wussow	02/15 Bradley Perry
02/03 Dawn Henrickson	02/17 Alayna Hopfensperger
02/03 Michelle Mahoney	02/17 Roy Mehl
02/04 Paula Reichert	02/19 Carol Evensen
02/05 Melani Gast	02/19 Rev. Keith GeRue
02/06 Justin Bursack	02/19 Sophia Siegel
02/06 Brenda Kempf	02/20 Ellen Rivord
02/06 Ruth Wright	02/20 Rita Wilke
02/08 Alex Friebel	02/21 Sue Maynard
02/08 Amy Siegel	02/23 Jeff Groshek
02/10 Skylar Gast	02/23 Dylan Kobs
02/10 Garza Torres	02/23 Carl Kohler
02/11 Lorna Forbes	02/23 Carl Riske



02/24 Robert Hopfensperger
 02/27 Todd Kohler
 02/27 Burnette Pagel (100)
 02/28 Jean Toeppler



✝ *Trinity Membership Update* ✝

New Members/Transfers In:

Released/Transfers Out:

Baptisms:

Weddings:

Those Who Have Passed: Robert "Bob" Lephart (Husband of Nancy Lephart)
 & Richard "Rick" Evensen (Husband of Carol Evensen)

²⁵For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. ²⁶And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God. Job 19:25-26

Serving Our Lord with Gladness – February 2026

Senior Pastor: Rev. Steven S. Billings

Associate Pastor/School Principal: Rev. Keith E. GeRue

Divine Service Date/Time	Acolyte	Elder on Duty	Communion Assistant	Usher Captain	Greeter	Altar Guild
February 1: 9 AM	Richie Sprouse	Bart Nielsen	Josiah Nielsen	Jim Wittmann	Connie Henkel	Gail Burrows
February 7: 5 PM	Emma Anderson	Dave Little	To Be Determined	Gast/Corrente	Dan/Peggy Dahms	Jean Zeinert
February 8: 9 AM	Robbie Kohler	Bart Nielsen	Dave Collingwood	Dave Collingwood	Rose Collingwood	Jill & Craig Thomas
<u>Transfiguration</u>						
February 14: 5 PM	Richie Sprouse	David Little	Ian Thomas	Roger Voigt	JoAnn Schultz	Jean Zeinert
February 15: 9 AM	Emma Anderson	Bart Nielsen	Scott Gutzmann	Steve Sexmith	Jane Nielsen	Gail Burrows
<u>Ash Wednesday</u>						
February 18: 9 AM	No Acolyte	To Be Determined	To Be Determined	Volunteers	Volunteer	Jean Zeinert
February 18: 6:30 PM	Robbie Kohler	To Be Determined	To Be Determined	Volunteers	Volunteer	Jean Zeinert
<u>First Sunday in Lent</u>						
February 21: 5 PM	Richie Sprouse	David Little	Dan Siebert	Robert Allen	Betty Allen	Jean Zeinert
February 22: 9 AM	Emma Anderson	Bart Nielsen	Lee Weinig	Lee Weinig	Volunteer Needed	Gail Burrows
<u>Lent 1 Mid-Week</u>						
February 25: 9 AM	No Accolyte	To Be Determined	No Communion	Volunteers	Volunteer	NO COMMUNION
February 25: 6:30 PM	Robbie Kohler	To Be Determined	No Communion	Volunteers	Volunteer	NO COMMUNION
February 28: 5 PM	Richie Sprouse	David Little	Vern Jahsmann	Jerry Maynard	Barbara Kester	Jean Zeinert



Thank you all for your love, prayers, thoughts, messages and support during this difficult time of Bob's passing.

All calls, texts, gifts, flowers and hugs were greatly appreciated. I am blessed to be a part of this congregation where I feel everyone is my family and my friend. God's blessings. - **Nancy Lephart and Family!**

SOUP & BREAD SALE JUST DAYS REMAINING!

Winter is a time for comfort foods... soup and bread. Trinity's Soup & Bread fundraiser runs through Feb. 8th and supports the Organ and Piano Fund. We need members who would like to make soup. The jars and instructions for soups are in the Narthex.

If you have questions, please contact Elaine Weinig at (920) 470-9090.





Catechetical Comments

A Series

THE APOSTLES' CREED

This month we continue our consideration of the First Article of the Apostles' Creed by taking up question 111.

111. Why does God do this for us?

“All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.”

The *Catechism* continues its explanation of the First Article of the Creed by asking the question:

Why does God do this for us?

It answers this question by saying:

“All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.”

It then presents the following Scriptures in support of this answer:

Genesis 32:10 – I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that You have shown to Your servant.

Psalm 103:13 – As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him.

When I was at my congregation in Detroit, one day a member came to me, asking, “Pastor, why does God like me so much?” Seeing the look of confusion on my face, he continued, “I have a wonderful wife, a good marriage, a good steady job. Our kids are well

behaved and are doing well in school. We’ve never had the problems many of our neighbors have had; even some of our relations have suffered broken homes and children always getting into trouble. But we’ve never had to deal with any of that. Why does God like me so much?”

Odell and his family were indeed blessed, and whereas I could point to his growing up in a Christian family, with parents who were married from a young age, with a faithful father who was engaged with his children and a mother who nurtured them materially and spiritually, I didn’t mention any of that, because to go down that route would have made it appear as though God’s blessings were dependant upon the behavior of his parents and his own behavior as a husband and father. This is not to say that God doesn’t reward faithful behavior; He does, but His favor does not rest upon us because of that behavior.

What I ultimately said was, “Odell, God ‘likes’ you, indeed He loves you, because that’s who He is. God is love. He sent His Son to die for you long before you were ever a good father, long before you had a good father. Your mom and dad shaped you as a Christian and led you to walk a faithful Christian life. That has borne fruit in your life and in the life of your family, but in the grand scheme of things, He loved you first and best because it’s what He does. You have responded well to His love. Your children and grandchildren will thank you for that; in fact, they will thank God for that.”

Odell then thanked me and we prayed and thanked God for His “fatherly, divine goodness and mercy.” †

Humbly in His service,
Rev. Steven S. Billings
Senior Pastor

From the Principal

The theme of our Lent midweek meditations this year is: The Angels of the Passion. This is just a fun way for me to try to tell the passion account in a creative way. Yes, I've taken some poetic license here, but believe I remain faithful and true to the passion account. I hope this make you think about the passion account in a new way and grow in appreciation for it and all that God has done for us. Midweek Services are at 9:00 am and 6:30 pm.

Lenten Dinners are on Wednesday's February 18, 25, March 4, 11, 18, 25

~ Pastor GeRue

THE ANGELS OF THE PASSION

Ash Wednesday February 18	“A Life of Standing With” 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
Lent Midweek 1 February 25	“Angels of the Passion: How It All Started” Genesis 3:1-24; John 6:25-35
Lent Midweek 2 March 4	“Angels of the Passion: A Mission of Mercy, Part 1” Genesis 19:1-16; Matthew 4:1-11
Lent Midweek 3 March 11	“Angels of the Passion: Traitors!” Job 1:1, 6-12; 2:1-8; Luke 22:24-34; John 13:21-30
Lent Midweek 4 March 18	“Angels of the Passion: A Mission of Mercy, Part 2” Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Luke 22:39-46
Lent Midweek 5 March 25	“Angels of the Passion: Just One Little Word” 2 Kings 6:8-23; Matthew 26:47-56
Maundy Thursday April 2	“The Feast Awaits!”
Good Friday April 3	Tre-Ore 12noon – 3:00 pm
Good Friday April 3	“Unbroken Life, Broken Death” John 18-19
Easter Vigil April 4	7:30 pm
Easter Sunrise April 5	6:30 am
Easter 9:00 am April 5	“Proclaiming the Good News” Matthew 28:1-10

What's happening around The School.

February 2	9 am Opening Devotion 3:45 pm Chess Club 3:45 pm Instructional Basketball	February 12	9 am Opening Devotion 2:45 pm Electives
February 3	9 am Opening Devotion 4:30 pm Home Basketball Game vs Celebration	February 13	9 am Opening Devotion Midterms Released
February 4	9 am School Chapel 3:45 pm Faculty Meeting	February 16	NO SCHOOL Presidents Day
February 5	9 am Opening Devotion 4:30 pm Basketball Party	February 17	9 am Opening Devotion
February 6	Midterms 9 am Opening Devotion 2:45 pm Electives	February 18	9 am Ash Wednesday
February 7	6:30 pm Family Game Night	February 19	9 am Opening Devotion
February 9	9 am Opening Devotion 3:45 pm Chess Club 3:45 pm Instructional Basketball 5 – 8 pm Culver's Dining Out	February 20	9 am Opening Devotion 2:45 pm Electives
February 10	9 am Opening Devotion	February 23	9 am Opening Devotion
February 11	9 am School Chapel	February 24	9 am Opening Devotion 3:45 pm Boys Volleyball Practice
		February 25	9 am Lenten Midweek Service
		February 26	9 am Opening Devotion 2:45 pm Electives 3:45 pm Boys Volleyball Practice
		February 27	9 am Opening Devotion

NEIGHBORS

Supporting Neighbors



MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9 • 5-8PM

Join us in supporting Trinity Lutheran Menasha 5th - 8th Graders, as 15% of all sales will be donated, including sales of gift cards!

There's no limit to how much heart you can put into the community – and we're always looking for opportunities for neighbors to help neighbors. Join us and consider giving what you can to our local cause today.

Thank you for your support!



Valid only at Culver's of Neenah

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Neenah, WI 54956
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Happy Valentine's Day and Happy Love Month

From Trinity's Board of Outreach and Social Ministry



What are your thoughts when it comes to Valentine's Day or even the entire month of February? Do you wonder if anyone will remember you with a card, a nice deed, a phone call, or a little visit? How many people that you know will most likely have such a thought but then quickly try to think about something else. Sadly, they may feel it's just not going to happen and too much to expect.

God is with us and cares for us each day of our lives and He is waiting to have us come to Him in prayer at any time. What an opportunity and a wonderful blessing we have as His Children. He sent His only Son to die for us on the cross and take the punishment of our sins. What a beautiful message to share!

Isn't there someone or several people you'd like to share that joy with during the month of February or any month, for that matter? Every morning when we open our eyes we say, "thank you Lord for giving me another day to praise You and love and care for the people You have put in my path." Please consider and ask Him to guide you as you reach out to someone or several people who need your love and the precious love of Jesus. Think about your church family; who haven't you seen at Trinity lately? Send that card or make an encouraging and loving phone call just to say, 'hello and how are you?' God blesses our lives when we are a blessing to others. May this February 2026 be your best ever as

you touch someone's life with the love of Jesus. To see someone smile because they feel loved and remembered is priceless. To Him be the Glory!

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. Mark 12: 30 & 31

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others faithfully, administering God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10



FROM YOUR BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

It's been a few weeks since all the celebrations, gatherings and feasts of the Christmas season. You have probably taken this time to sit back and rest while reminiscing about all the new memories created during the season. The singing, the worship services, all the little touches of love you gave and received. Very special events indeed! Actually, many cherished events that you will remember for a long time.

Well...Merry New Year! You don't have to stop touching people's lives just because the holidays (we prefer to say Holy Days) have passed by. You can connect with others—members, friends, neighbors, relatives, and even strangers—right now. Show the same cheerfulness, love, and care you did during the holiday season. Don't let your enthusiasm pass like the season did. Celebrate God's people! Encourage, build up one another, suffer with others, pray with others, love others, spend time with others. Listen, as God speaks to us through His scriptures:

In Ephesians 4: 32 - **Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**

In Colossians 3:12 - **Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.**

In Galatians 6:10 - **So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.**

In 1 Peter 3:9 - **Do not repay evil with evil or reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.**

Finally, in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 - **Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

So, remain cheerful, serve God by serving others, do as He commands and you will maintain the Christ filled season you cherished so much!

Prayer:

Father - kindness, compassion, and forgiveness describe your character. How can I be more like You? How can I be an outlet of Your kindness, compassion and forgiveness to the people You have purposefully placed in my life? Show me Father. Open my heart to remember the words of my Savior and feel the all-encompassing love of You, my heavenly Father. I am loved, I am chosen, purposed and forgiven. Therefore, embolden me to pray, live, and love in reflection of these great truths about who I am. Guide my prayers and my life. Let all I do, honor You. In Jesus name, AMEN!



VOTERS' MEETING
Tuesday, February 3, 2026
6:30 PM

Join us for a mid-fiscal year update on our financial picture and vote on Trinity's nominations for the National LCMS positions of President, First Vice-President and Regional Vice-President. Our Pastors provide the recommendations.

Our regular Board Meetings will begin after the Voters' Meeting.



**PLEASE CHECK YOUR MAILBOXES FOR
YOUR 2026 OFFERING ENVELOPES
AND YOUR 2025 OFFERING STATEMENT.**



Love to Sing? 🎵

Join us on **6 February** (Friday

🎵 at 7pm to experience

Trinity Monthly Friday Hymn-Sing!

Pastor B will begin with a brief devotion

Followed by Call-Outs from YOU!

🎵🎵 **What's YOUR favorite hymn??**

🎵 *we'll keep picking people to call out their
favorite hymns, and sing 2+ stanzas ... for an hour!*

Oh ... Reception follows in the Narthex!! 🎵

Any questions, call or see

Bart, 920-734-8843 or Rose, 608-213-2644

**ASH WEDNESDAY
SERVICES**

February 18, 2026
9:00 AM & 6:30 PM



**Lent Begins with
Ash Wednesday**

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, the precise date of which depends on the date of Easter. The name "Ash Wednesday" comes from a practice originating in the Middle Ages of ashes being sprinkled over the heads of those who came to church and went to confession. Today, ashes are applied to the forehead in the shape of a cross. Ordinarily, the ashes come from palms that were blessed on Palm Sunday the year before. Both this rite and the traditional readings for the day call for an attitude of humility and repentance.

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH - FINANCIAL REPORT DEC. 2025				
<u>Operating Accounts</u>	<u>BEGINNING BALANCE</u>	<u>DEPOSITS/INCOME</u>	<u>WITHDRAWALS/EXPENSES</u>	<u>ENDING BALANCE</u>
Ministry Fund	\$12,989.46	\$85,675.86	(\$78,027.20)	\$20,638.12
LCEF Steward Fund	\$19.72			\$19.72
Money Market	\$67,248.58	\$30.40		\$67,278.98
Nicolet Memorial Fund	\$383.22			\$383.22
Nicolet Office Acct	\$3,301.29	\$1.49		\$3,302.78
Nicolet Scrip	\$18,753.16	\$21,912.79	(\$34,385.93)	\$6,280.02
Sub Total	\$102,695.43	\$107,620.54	(\$112,413.13)	\$97,902.84
<u>Restricted Accounts</u>	<u>BEGINNING BALANCE</u>	<u>DEPOSITS/INCOME</u>	<u>WITHDRAWALS/EXPENSES</u>	<u>ENDING BALANCE</u>
Nicolet Restricted Funds*	\$66,397.38	\$2,275.39	\$1,135.00	\$69,807.77
LCMS Endowment Fund**	\$154,407.93			\$154,407.93
Schwab Wealth***	\$59,935.82	\$524.10	(\$370.51)	\$60,089.41
Sub Total	\$280,741.13	\$2,799.49	\$764.49	\$284,305.11
<u>School Accounts</u>	<u>BEGINNING BALANCE</u>	<u>DEPOSITS/INCOME</u>	<u>WITHDRAWALS/EXPENSES</u>	<u>ENDING BALANCE</u>
School Checking	\$9,975.92	\$12,444.87	(\$15,276.63)	\$7,144.16
Hot Lunch	\$4,221.61	\$4,536.82	(\$5,628.71)	\$3,129.72
School Savings	\$18,238.26	\$2.47		\$18,240.73
Scholarship Fund	\$10,911.37	\$88.02	(\$8,995.00)	\$2,004.39
PTL	\$4,641.83	\$2.10		\$4,643.93
Sub Total	\$47,988.99	\$17,074.28	(\$29,900.34)	\$35,162.93
<u>All Accounts</u>	<u>BEGINNING BALANCE</u>	<u>DEPOSITS/INCOME</u>	<u>WITHDRAWALS/EXPENSES</u>	<u>ENDING BALANCE</u>
Total	\$431,425.55	\$127,494.31	(\$141,548.98)	\$417,370.88
LCEF Mortgage (BOTR)	\$777,912.60		(3,199.44)	\$774,713.16

Handbells - 3rd Octave

Ordered! ...

\$\$ DUE AT SHIP-DATE ...1 APRIL!!

TOTAL \$8355.00

Looking for ANY donations

to the "CAUSE" ... 😊



*If you'd like to put \$\$ toward
the Handbell Purchase, PLEASE
feel free to do so!!*



"Handbell – 3rd Octave" envelopes available in the Narthex, Church Office (& Rose). Fill out front of envelope, place check or \$\$ in envelope & deliver to Office or Rose BEFORE 29 March. (Checks to: Trinity LC, memo: Handbells-3rd)



UPDATES NEEDED!

The church office has been receiving information back regarding undeliverable emails.

If you have stopped your email service, or changed your email address, please let the church office know. We are happy to update your information, or remove the address from our directory and email announcement email list if you no longer receive emails. Thank You!

5 Myths About What Happens When You Die

By Rev. Dr. Jacob Corzine

Vice President of Publishing at Concordia Publishing House

What actually happens when the Christian dies? What do we have to look forward to (or to fear)? Can we look toward death with confidence, with trust in God?

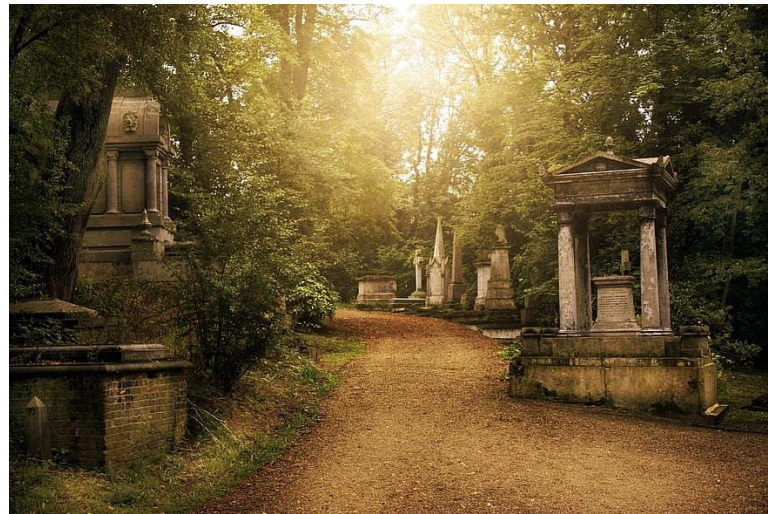
Below are a few common myths about what happens when Christians die. The responses to these myths are not everything there is to know, but they may clear up a few things. They all steer toward one truth: The Bible teaches about a gracious, forgiving God who, through the redeeming work of His Son, Jesus Christ, did everything that was needed to be able to receive believers into His arms when they die.

Myth #1: You Simply Cease to Exist

I start with this one, because it is probably the furthest from the belief of the Christian reader but still not unfamiliar. Many people hold to exactly this: There is no heaven, no resurrection (as the Sadducees in Mark 12:18 taught), and this life is the only one we have. And that very often leads to some conclusions: You only live once, meaning do everything you can because you won't get another chance. I should make this life as good and comfortable as possible, because it's all there is. Or alternatively, the worst that can happen to a person is that they don't have material wealth and have to live with some kind of suffering. Then the goal of life is to end physical suffering, either one's own or that of other people, at all costs. This can take very good forms (like adoption) or very bad forms (like suicide). But its root is the idea that this physical life is all there is. It's a myth.

Myth #2: You Become an Angel

There's a place in Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House on the Prairie books where this comes up. Young Laura is worried that if she is not good, she won't become an



angel. But Little House on the Prairie isn't the Bible, and the Bible knows nothing of this teaching (Mark 12:25 says we will become like angels, not that we will become actual angels). Angels are separate beings from humanity. They're created by God and do His bidding. Christians do consider the end of their earthly lives on the basis of divine promises, but that isn't one of them. Instead, the promises of eternal life (John 3:16), forgiveness of sin (1 John 1:9), freedom from the troubles of the world (Revelation 21:4), and eternal joy and comfort in God's presence (John 16:22) are the things that await us.

Myth #3: You Go to Purgatory

A Roman Catholic teaching sharply condemned by Martin Luther was that Christ saved us from the ultimate consequence of our sin (hell) but not from the need to be purged (thus the word purg-atory) of our sinfulness before we can go to heaven. The idea that our sin has spiritual consequences that must be borne after this life is what drove the sale of indulgen-ces—a form of good works that could be placed on the scale against our sin, thus reducing the size of those painful consequences. From a biblical perspective, this is simply an example of expecting too little from Jesus. He bore all our sin and all its punishment. To leave any burden for us still to bear, any price for us still to pay, diminishes the glory that we owe our full Redeemer and Savior. Because of His finished work (John 19:30), no additional purging, cleansing, or repairing stands between us and eternal life.

Myth #4: You Don't Go to Heaven Right Away

This false teaching is usually called “soul sleep.” It stems from the idea that you can't go to heaven until after the final judgment. If you can't go to heaven, and there's no purgatory, then—so the argument goes—you must sleep until the Last Day, when Christ returns. But even though the Scriptures often refer to this time as sleep (1 Thessalonians 4:13), this is used in reference to the body, which awaits the resurrection at Christ's return. The fuller teaching is something else. In Philippians, Paul desires “to depart and be with Christ” (Philippians 1:23). Jesus famously tells the sinner on the cross, “today

you will be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). That paradise is heaven, and it awaits believers immediately when they die.

Myth #5: When You Die and Go to Heaven, That's the Last Word

The Bible, when it talks about the end, mostly actually directs our attention to Judgment Day, when Christ will return to judge the living and the dead (Acts 17:31). This judgment is not just for unbelievers but for believers as well. But believers in Christ don't need to fear it, because of faith. Their good works that flow from faith will be received by Christ, and their sins that have been forgiven by Christ will already be gone. This is the final, ultimate result of Christ's saving work for us. Our sins totally removed, we'll be judged according to our Spirit-given faith and Christ's righteousness, and we'll be received as the sheep of the Good Shepherd, once again, for eternal life in heaven.

There is, of course, a lot more to say about what theologians call the “Last Things.” The focus here has been simply on what happens (or doesn't happen) when you die. It's good to have this on our minds, because it's the true horizon of our lives. Looking toward the end of our lives, either by death or Christ's triumphant return, is a reminder that faith in Christ is the thing today that matters most of all.

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