



Shining Mountains *news*

"IT IS OUR MISSION, AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST, ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD AND COMMAND TO GROW IN HIS WORD, TO GATHER AROUND HIS WORD, AND TO GO WITH HIS WORD."

God has called us to live in

Freedom!

How are you going to celebrate your freedom?

For the next few days, you'll no doubt be hearing the sound of firecrackers through your window at night, and smelling grills and barbecues in the evening breeze. As we celebrate July 4th, people will be grilling out, boating, and gathering together with family and friends.

It's good that we set aside time to thank God for the gift of freedom that he's given us in our nation. And, of course, there are much higher ways to celebrate that freedom. We have freedom of religion, so we use it as we share the gospel boldly. We have great economic freedom, so we act as children of God as we care for those around us. We have freedom of speech that allows us to be active voices in our government, so we speak up, work hard and vote thoughtfully to be the best influences on our country as we can. After all, freedom is to be *used*. Doesn't it sadden you when that freedom is wasted?

That's all the more true in the Kingdom of God. Listen to the way God says it through St. Peter: **Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants**

of God. (1 Peter 2:16)

As a Christian, you're *free*. You know that God has paid the price for *all* your sins. Every one of them. That means that not only has he washed away the guilt of your past, but also the guilt of the sins that you've not yet done. Your salvation does not depend on how good or loving *you* are, but how loving and gracious *God* is. That's freedom!

Doesn't it sadden you to think of the way that we so often waste that freedom? Peter talks about Christians using their freedom as a "cover-up" for evil. You could sum it everything he says in the entire section this way: *God's saved you from the sins of this world, so live that way!* If our freedom is found in being forgiven, what a waste when we run back to the same sins.

God reminds us that living in our freedom automatically leads to people seeing our good deeds and glorifying God on the day that he returns. Perhaps a good measure of whether you're using your freedom is this: Do the people who regular see you know that you're a Christian? Do they see someone who puts their faith into action? Someone who could rightly be called a "servant of God?"



Every July 4th comes with a humbling reminder for me: I didn't do a thing to earn our country's freedom. Someone else won it. I just get to enjoy it and live in it.

So it is with our freedom in Christ. It's a gift! May God bless you as you live in it, and as you put your faith into practice, may God bless our nation through you!

I believe in + the Holy Christian Church +

In the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, we confess our faith in "the Holy Christian Church." Throughout our newsletters in 2012, we'll examine what this means. What is the Church? What is the difference between "the Church" and "churches"? What does it matter what church you belong to? What's going on among "Lutheran" churches? God's Word will guide our discussion as we talk about these questions.

Do denominations really matter?

It wouldn't seem so—at least not by the trends in our country over the last few decades. (*Denominations* are the various nation-wide church bodies that congregations form.)

According to one recent survey, more than two-thirds of church-going Americans would have little-to-no problem switching church bodies. The last few decades have seen the rise of "non-denominational churches" - congregations that have no allegiance to a larger church body (such as Southern Baptist, Presbyterian Church of America, or Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod). Other studies have suggested that this trend is growing among younger generations.

Grouping churches together in denominations serves many helpful purposes—and one *vital* purpose. It's *helpful* to work together as a church body to operate ministerial education schools to train our pastors and teachers. It's *helpful* to work together to send missionaries overseas and to publish materials to help share God's Word with others. All of those things are helpful; while individual congregations could do some of that work on our own, it's often more efficient and practical to do it together.

Those are benefits of grouping together in denominations, but they aren't the real purpose. God calls us to make a faithful confession of his Word to this world. He says through St. Paul, "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (Romans 10:10). He says this confession needs to be clear and accurate. Consider his guidance for a young pastor: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:16).

Our "denominational labels" are one of the ways we confess what we believe. While virtually every Christian church claims to hold to the Bible, many—in fact, the great majority of

them—boldly teach things that are against God's clear Word. Most often, their written confessions of doctrine make this clear. For example:

- The Roman Catholic Church's doctrinal statements proclaim that anyone who believes in salvation by grace, apart from works, is eternally damned.
- Baptist denominations state that baptism does *not* give faith and salvation, though God's Word says it does.
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America openly condones the kind of sinful lifestyles that Jesus says destroy our faith and take us away from God.



By being a member of a certain church, a person is saying, "I'm in agreement with what this church teaches." Certainly we can think of exceptions to that: members of the Missouri Synod who oppose their false teachings, Catholics who don't even know about the practice of indulgences, people who are members of WELS churches simply because their parents were, without ever learning what we teach. It's easy to get the impression that denominations don't matter!

The most important thing that we have is our faith in God. God calls us to confess those truths faithfully! Certainly there are many who don't think denominations matter—indeed, many denominations give that impression. But God calls us to give a clear confession of his Word. God grant that we take that to heart as we learn the truths of his Word more deeply and rejoice in the confession we share as Christians united in the WELS. May God give strength and courage to those who are in denominations that don't teach the truth to seek out churches that do. And in all these things, may he lead us to see that what matters *most* isn't the denomination we're in, but the truths of his Word that we confess. Because when our denomination is always centered on God's Word, then it's a confession that truly matters.

January	<i>I believe in the <u>Holy</u> Christian Church</i>
February	<i>I believe in the Holy <u>Christian</u> Church</i>
March	<i>I believe in the Holy Christian <u>Church</u></i>
April	<i>The joy of the Church</i>
May	<i>The mission of the Church</i>
June	<i>Orthodox and Heterodox churches</i>

July	<i>Do denominations really matter?</i>
August	<i>"So what if they're not WELS?"</i>
September	<i>What's going on among the Lutherans?</i>
October	<i>WELS: The confession we share</i>
November	<i>WELS: The challenges we share</i>
December	<i>WELS: The mission we share</i>

Bible Study



God promises us every blessing as we grow in His Word. Consider taking advantage of the following opportunities to study with your fellow believers:

SUNDAY MORNING: CHURCH AND STATE

Living in two kingdoms

Starting Sunday, July 15th, our Sunday morning Bible study will focus on what the Bible says about earthly government. We'll look at the God-given responsibilities of the state, consider church-state relations, and survey the challenges and blessings that have come in this arena of life over the last two thousand years.

MONTHLY: LET THERE BE LIGHT!

An overview of the first five books of the Bible

Our once-a-month look at the books of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) will have one last class on Thursday, July 19th to finish our look at the book of Exodus.

Building project update

Possible locations:

The congregation gave great support to making an offer on the corner of Baxter and Davis. That work is still going forward. The development group that owns it has suggested a 3-5 acre parcel with frontage on Davis. They've asked for a meeting on July 11th to discuss options and costs. In the meantime, developers are bringing us proposals for a location in the Norton Ranch area (north of Huffine, west of Jackrabbit), and we've recently received information on a possibility on the corner of Ferguson and Babcock.

Valley Center land

The sale of the six acre parcel of Valley Center is now complete and we've received payment. The house and remaining acre will be leased to the new buyer starting in early July, with a tentative sale date before the close of 2012.

Grants and other financial news:

God blessed Shining Mountains with an incredible Christmas gift—a \$45,000 grant towards the design of a new church from the Antioch Foundation. (For more information on the Antioch Foundation, see bulletin announcements or visit www.theantiochfoundation.org.)

2011 also saw a clarification of our status with the WELS Church Extension Fund (CEF). Because of the size and nature of our worship space, Shining Mountains should now be eligible for both a low interest rate (4%) on a new loan as well as a significant grant towards construction costs of a new church home.

The congregation is now officially debt-free. Please take a moment to read the letter from CEF posted on our bulletin board!

News from local WELS churches:



September 28-30, 2012
Fairmont Hot Springs Resort

The women of SMLC are invited to a Women's Retreat at Fairmont Hot Springs. The retreat is organized through Apostles' Lutheran Church in Billings.

The retreat will feature devotions, discussions of the blessings and challenges of our churches' women's ministries, and time to relax. A guest speaker, Ali Manning, will share information about the newly started WELS Women's Ministry organization. Meals and devotions will be provided as well.

To register, contact Apostles' Lutheran Church at 406.656.7141. Participants are asked to pay a \$25 registration fee, as well as cover the costs of their own rooms. The deadline for registering is Friday, August 24th.

For more information, including a daily schedule of events, please see the brochure that's been placed in your mailbox and tacked to the bulletin board, or speak to Pastor Seifert.

BRANCHES BAND
FREE CHRISTIAN CONCERT
ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

LOCATION:
327 S 12TH ST
LIVINGSTON, MT 59047
(406) 222-3372

DATE:
TUE. AUG 7TH

TIME:
7:00PM

BRANCHES BAND EXISTS TO SERVE CHRIST THROUGH OUR MUSIC. MEMBERS OF THE BAND ANDY BRAUN (GUITAR, VOCALS, AND HARMONICA), RACHEL BRAUN (VOCALS AND SMALL PERCUSSION) AND JEREMY BAKKEN (BASS, PIANO, AND VOCALS) TRAVEL ALL OVER THE COUNTRY WITH THIS MINISTRY. WE PLAY HYMNS AND CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN SONGS TO EDIFY WORSHIP SERVICES, ADD FUN TO CHURCH FUNCTIONS, AND MUCH MORE! FOR A COMPLETE SCHEDULE AND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BRANCHES BAND, VISIT US AT:

WWW.BRANCHESBAND.COM
OR BECOME A FAN AT
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/BRANCHESBAND.

CDS AND OTHER MERCHANDISE WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT EACH PERFORMANCE.

Serving Us in July *Thank you to those who served in June!*

	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Refreshments</u>	<u>Flowers</u>	<u>Cleaners</u>
7/1	D Gustafson / D Gentry	Joecks	Seifert	Thiede (7/2-7/7)
7/8	A Miller / L Alexander	Bakers	L Baker	Agenten (7/9-7/14)
7/15	J Newton / L Hunziker	Stubbs	open	Baker E. (7/16-7/21)
7/22	J Lauersdorf / T Zulauf	open	E Baker	Baker, L&V (7/23-7/28)
7/29	T Linn / P Marozick	open	open	Ballard (7-30-8/4)

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.
Psalm 84:10

July 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 9:15 Bible class 10:30 Worship w/ H.C	2 7:00 pm Evening worship	3	4	5	6	7
8 9:15 Bible class 10:30 Worship	9 7:00 pm Evening worship	10	11 6:00 pm Church Council meeting	12	13	14
15 9:15 Bible class 10:30 Worship w/ H.C	16 7:00 pm Evening worship	17	18	19 7:00 pm Let There Be Light monthly Bible study	20	21
22 9:15 Bible class 10:30 Worship	23 11:45 Voters' meeting	24 7:00 pm Evening worship	25	26	27	28
29 9:15 Bible class 10:30 Worship	30 7:00 pm Evening worship	31				

Upcoming Messages

July continues our march through the “non-Festival half of the Church Year,” also known as “The half-year of the Church.”

May the following schedule help you as you prepare for worship or look for opportunities to invite a friend!

Worship in July

July 1: *Lord of the Nations Sunday*—A chance to reflect on our life as Christians in our nation

July 8: *The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost*—In the face of death, Christians cling to Christ!

July 15: *The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost*—Jesus preserves us, even in persecution

July 22: *The Festival of St. Mary Magdalene*—Those who have seen the Lord see life differently

July 29: *The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost*—“Orthodox Sunday!” God calls us to hear the pure Word and cling to the pure Word.

