

## From Pastor Telloni . . .

*"By gentle Powers faithfully surrounded,  
Protected wondrously, consoled by grace,  
That's how I long to live these days together,  
Close by your side, to start the coming year;*

*Our hearts are tortured even now by evil days,  
The burdens of the past are hard to bear,  
Oh Lord, grant our scared souls the salvation,  
Therefore You have created us and saved ...*

*By gentle Powers wonderfully sheltered,  
Awaiting fearlessly what there will be.  
God, He is near at dusk and in the morning  
And with us certainly on each new day."*

The above is an excerpt from a hymn penned by Dietrich Bonhoeffer at Christmas just a few months before he was executed by the Nazis in 1945. He was a German Lutheran pastor and theologian who was imprisoned for his opposition to Hitler and his cruel fascist government. Read the hymn again and then continue reading this article ...

The hymn is a song of deep prayer and praise despite the darkness Bonhoeffer experienced in the dank dungeon where he lived and suffered for almost two years before his awful death. Despite his suffering and turmoil, he reaches out to the Lord with confidence and hope. His mind and spirit are sheltered under God's Power and Grace as he awaits the fulfillment of His promise to face the intense twilight leading to the timeless "new day" that will be beautiful and brilliant emanating from the loving eyes of his Savior!

The troubles we face may not be as extreme and tormenting as Bonhoeffer's, but the experiences on our calendars every day may be tough to handle. Do you possess a spiritual roadmap or GPS to the end? Are you waiting and watching for the world's culmination, or too busy, too consumed, by the tyranny of the present?

The best calendar that we can follow, I believe, is the Church Year, which is a commendable guide for knowing and following Jesus Christ and preparing for our weekly worship gatherings. Our worship pattern is based on Scripture and organized to highlight the history of God's promises and His (Jesus'!) story of salvation. Each day and week in the year permits us to follow the life of Jesus Christ from promise to birth (*Advent/Christmas*), to death (*Lent/Holy Week*), to resurrection (*Easter*), to *Ascension*, to *Pentecost*, and consequently, to His Shepherding of His Bride, the Church, until the close of the age that will open the door to the new creation of heaven and earth for eternity.

There is a conscious rhythm and theme connected to the days and weeks in the Church Year. In the first half, from Advent to Pentecost, we closely follow Jesus' birth and saving episodes, living with Him and listening to Him as He redeems our sinful world. Major festivals are celebrated in this part of the liturgical year. The second half is devoted to the life of the believer and Christ's Church, reflecting Jesus' teaching about active faith and witness in the world around us. Each Sunday has a definite purpose that strengthens our faith and life as we navigate our daily lives as Christ's beloved people.

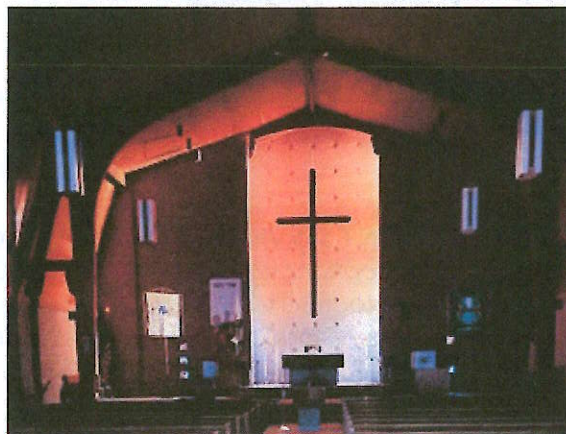
Jesus once declared, "This is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). This truth gives us new glasses to correct our near-sightedness and enables us to look ahead, to see Jesus now and to look forward to Jesus' coming again. Knowing Jesus more and better will, by the power of the Spirit, fortify our faith and love in our dear Lord!

This is what we are remembering on this day between the Last Sunday in the Church Year (*November 24<sup>th</sup>*) and the new liturgical year on the First Sunday in Advent (*December 1<sup>st</sup>*), as we direct our eyes to the future and the end that sparks the new creation that Jesus will establish!

Yes, living the Church Year helps us to know what really matters in life, and what does not.

When Jesus returns, it will be a day of joy! The day we have been looking forward to. Our Lord and Savior Jesus, who now hides Himself in baptismal water, scriptural words, and sacramental bread and wine, will be the Jesus who comes in visible flesh and glory. The whole family of God will be raised in body and soul to their forever home. It will be a privilege to walk with you in this Advent season leading to Christmas and beyond in this new church year! "Emmanuel" – "God with us" – for sure!

Pastor John J. Telloni



## OBSERVING THE SEASON OF ADVENT



**ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS ARE AVAILABLE!** You may pick up your copy(ies) on the table in the narthex! This year's theme is "*Come, Let Us Adore Him.*" Author of the meditations is Dr. Kari Vo, and the publisher is Lutheran Hour Ministries. It is true that God deserves our worship and praise for all that He has done for us. And in the birth of Jesus into our world, He was born to save us from our sins, born to give us eternal life - God has given us His very best, to which we can only respond: "*Come, Let Us Adore Him!*"

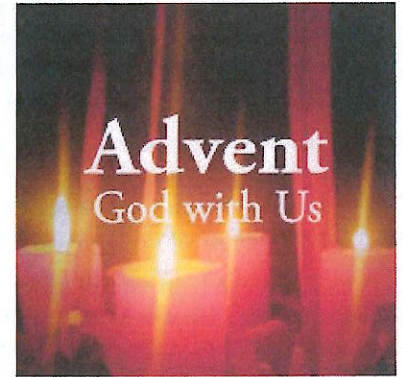
## ADVENT WORSHIP

**MIDWEEK ADVENT SERVICES** will be held on **Wednesday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup>.** Two service options will be available: **12:00 Noon and 7:00 p.m.** Pastor Telloni will conduct the Noon service and Pastor Carpenter the evening service. **Overall Theme:** "*The Advents of God.*" The theme hymn for the services will be "*The Advent of Our King*" (LSB 331).

December 4<sup>th</sup> - 12 N (Pastor Telloni); 7 pm (Pastor Carpenter)  
"*In the Garden*" (Genesis 3:1-21)

December 11<sup>th</sup> - 12 N (Pastor Telloni); 7 pm (Pastor Carpenter)  
"*On Mt. Sinai*" (Exodus 20:18-21)

December 18<sup>th</sup> - 12 N (Pastor Telloni); 7 pm (Pastor Carpenter)  
"*The Last Day*" (Joel 2:1-11)



Merry  
Christmas

OTZ

From the Staff

Lewis P. Porter

KATHLEEN DEFINE

Pastor John Telloni

Dennis J. Brown Sr.

[Handwritten signature]



## CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SERVICES

**Tuesday, December 24<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Eve**  
**Candlelight Communion Service**  
**6:00 p.m.**

PREACHER: PASTOR TELLONI

Special vocal music by the Adult Choir

Traditional candle-lighting ceremony with the singing of "Silent Night"  
Jesus Himself will meet us and bless us in His Holy Supper



**Wednesday, December 25<sup>th</sup> - Christmas Day**  
**Divine Festival Service - 10:00 am**

PREACHER: PASTOR CARPENTER

Special music by the Adult Choir

The Sacrament of the Altar will be celebrated



**Sunday, December 29<sup>th</sup> - 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas**  
**Education Hour - 8:45 a.m.**

**Divine Service - 10:00 a.m.**

PREACHER: PASTOR TELLONI



**Wednesday, January 1 - New Year's Day**  
**The Circumcision and Name of Our Lord**  
**Service - 10:00 am**

PREACHER: PASTOR CARPENTER

The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus will be celebrated  
The Adult Choir will sing a seasonal anthem

**Sunday, January 5<sup>th</sup>**

**The Festival of the Epiphany**

**Divine Festival Service - 10:00 a.m.**

PREACHER: PASTOR TELLONI

The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Jesus will be celebrated.

The Adult Choir will sing a seasonal anthem



**STEWARDSHIP CORNER – A HEARTFELT THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROSITY IN “STEPPING UP” YOUR GIVING ON CONSECRATION SUNDAY**

The Stewardship Board extends our deepest thanks and gratitude to each of you who participated in pledging to Step Up Giving during our recent Consecration Sunday. Your generous contributions and heartfelt commitments once again show and reaffirms the strength of our congregation and our shared vision for the future of St John’s. If you were absent or unable to turn in your Commitment to the Lord on Consecration Sunday, please return it to the church office or drop it in Sunday’s offering plate so that your 2025 commitment can be recorded.



Your willingness to step up and contribute ensures that we can continue our mission, support our ministries, and expand our outreach in ways that truly do make a difference.

May your thankfulness and trust in the Lord be reflected in your Stewardship!

- Board of Stewardship – Luther Russert, Chairman

**LIFE WITH GOD**

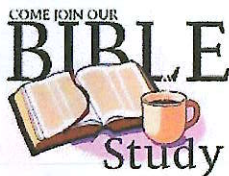


the front bulletin board. Please sign up if interested!

is a 6-8 week class dedicated to the teachings of the Scriptures and to prepare for membership or, for members, to review our teachings. The curriculum is called “*Rooted in the Faith – Living in Christ.*” A class will be scheduled if there are interested people. A sign-up sheet is posted on

**MONDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS**

continues to meet from 10 - 11:30 am in Rooms 112-113. TOPIC: “*St. Paul’s 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Letters to the Thessalonians.*” A timely subject for these troubled times. Pastor Telloni leads the discussion.



**DONATIONS OF COOKIES**



for the Bake Sale are appreciated from members of the congregation. Please bring your favorite homemade treats on Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>. Questions, see Mickey Krnach or Deb Stocker.

**THE MARTHA SOCIETY CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON**

will be held at La Pizzeria, 3656 Dressler Road N.W., Canton, on Tuesday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, at 12 noon. Dutch-treat – all ladies (and spouses) are invited! A sign-up sheet is posted on the front bulletin board. Questions? See Debbie Stocker.



**THE ST. JOHN QUILTERS**

will not meet in the month of December and resume on



Wednesday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, from 9:30 am - 2:30 pm. If you would like to join them or have questions, please see Janet Dyer or Jeanette Tennant.

**THE MEN’S FELLOWSHIP**

will not meet in the month of December and will resume their meetings on Thursday, January 2<sup>nd</sup>, at 11 a.m., at Varieties Restaurant on Lincolnway East in Massillon.



(sponsored by the Martha Society)

**St. John Lutheran Church**

**Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup>**

**9:00 am to 12 noon**



## THANK YOU TO



THANK YOU

all who generously donated to the annual Operation Christmas Shoebox Project, whether bringing in items, monetary gifts, or helping to fill the boxes! Adults and children (25 in all) came out and helped assemble the 20 boxes that are going

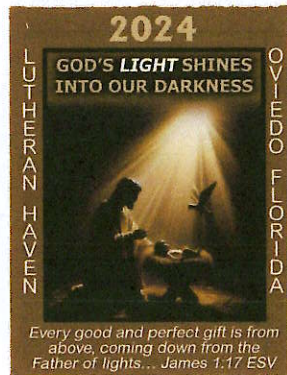
out to children around the world! All of this work is done in order to share the love of Jesus. Please pray for the children who will be receiving these personal boxes given to them.

- Shannon Carpenter

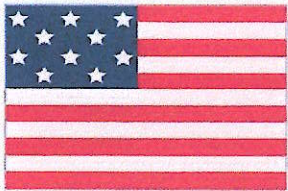
## LUTHERAN HAVEN CHRISTMAS SEALS

*"We love because HE first LOVED US." (1 John 4:19)*

may be picked up on the table in the narthex. Lutheran Haven in Oviedo, FL, is owned and operated by the SELC District, the only district which operates such a ministry. Their **Benevolent Care Ministry continues to assist retired church workers along with other LH residents when a critical need arises.** This year is the 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Seal campaign. Any gift this year will make a difference in more ways than you can possibly know.



## THE CUB SCOUTS



held a *Flag Retirement Ceremony* on Monday, November 25, 2024. This involved using the Church flagpole and setting up a burn barrel at the Church pavilion to dispose of the retired flags.

## SCOUT TROOP #257 IS SELLING PEPPERONI ROLLS

now through January 14<sup>th</sup>. An order form is located on the table in the Gathering Place and payment is due at that time. You may place your check made payable to "Cub Scout Pack #257 or Boy Scout Troop #257" in Rick Ott's mailbox. Orders will be available for pick-up approximately the last week of January. Thank you for your support! - Rick Ott, Scout Liaison.



## TRUSTEES' NEWS

**CUSTODIAN NEEDED:** Our current custodian, Dennis Brown, Sr., is retiring soon, and so we need a new custodian. Custodial duties include, but not limited to, emptying refuse cans in all rooms, mopping, vacuuming the Sanctuary and all rooms as needed, which includes dusting shelves and ledges, cleaning bathrooms and all the public areas. There may be special events that require custodial services. 10 hours a week; days and hours are negotiable.

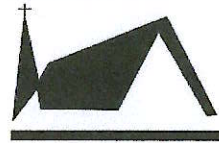


**WINTER VOLUNTEER(S) NEEDED:** There is a need for someone to shovel snow Monday through Friday in the mornings, before 9:00 a.m., this winter during church office hours.

**THANK YOU** to Dan Rohr for volunteering to shovel snow on Sunday Mornings.

If you are interested in serving the church, please contact Steve Marker at 234-214-2607 or call the church office at 330-837-4645.

## ANNUAL CHRISTMAS MARKETPLACE Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne



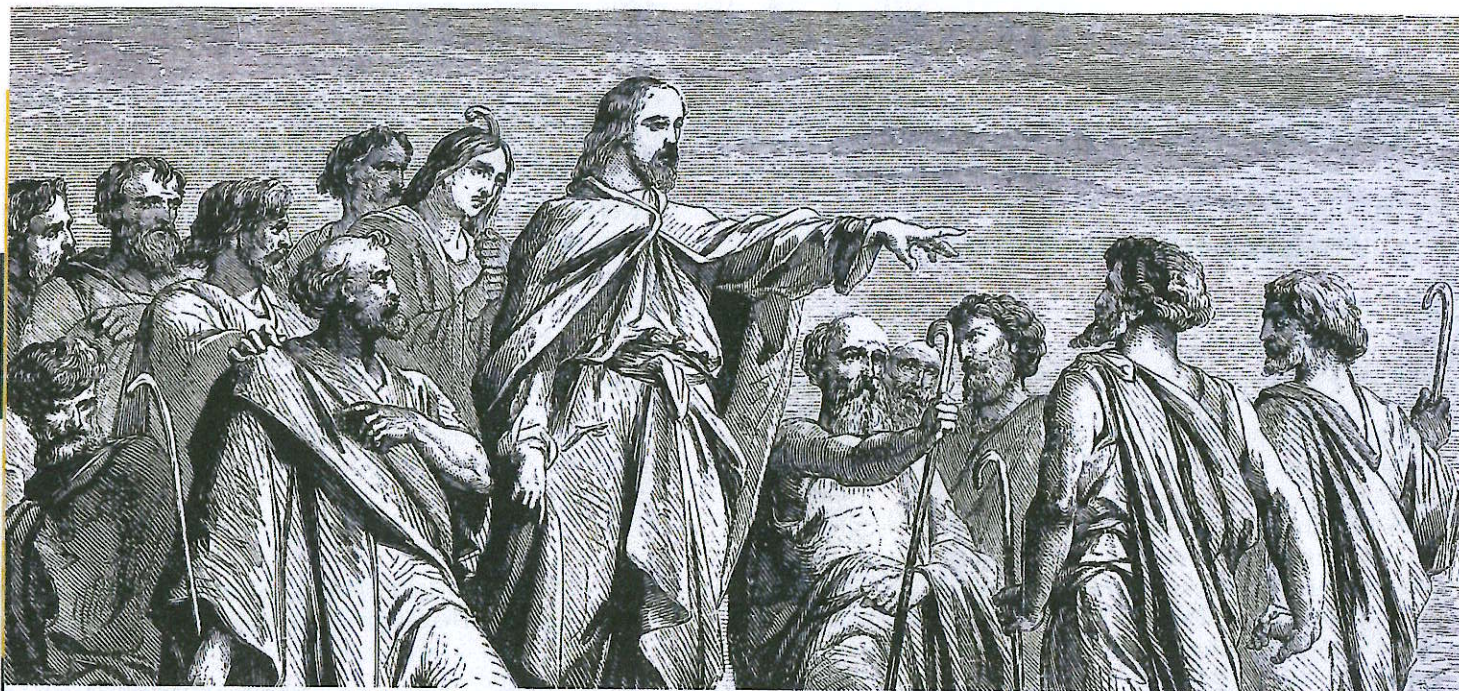
For the last month or so, a number of members have provided Gift Cards (chain, restaurants, service stations, Visa gift cards, and cash gifts) for the families of seminary students as a part of this annual Christmas Marketplace project. These gifts encourage the students and bring them holiday joy, making this special season memorable in many ways.

Thank you, dear members, for your generosity and gifts this year! The total amount of cards and cash donated is \$455.00.

## OUR MOWERS

We offer our hearty thanks to all of our men who have faithfully mowed the grass on our property, along with trimming low-hanging branches since the spring until now. They are: the late Ron Gemma, Keith Graber, Scott Pry, and Dennis Brown, Sr. A special thanks goes to Scott for doing repairs and maintenance on our lawn mower when needed.





## Hold Fast the Confession

“**B**ut who do you say that I am?” (MATT. 16:15). Christ confronts every person and forces a confession. Peter, answering for the apostles, got it right: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (MATT. 16:16). Jesus followed with a prediction of His suffering and death, and Peter wouldn’t have any of that. He thought it was a denial of what he had just asserted. To be the Christ, to be the Son of God, means going to the cross for the sins of the world. In return, Jesus gave Peter the starkest rebuke in the New Testament: “Get behind Me, Satan! ... For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (MATT. 16:23).

When confronted by the Word of God, which is to say, the testimony or witness of Jesus’ person, a confession is required. “Everyone who [confesses] Me before men, I also will [confess]

before My Father who is in heaven” (MATT. 10:32). To confess Jesus is to confess something about self. John the Baptizer gave a marvelous testimony in two ways. He pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (JOHN 1:29). It is such a great confession it got put into our Sunday liturgy. And then just as remarkably, John the Baptizer confessed something about himself when he was asked, “Who are you?” He said, “I am not the Christ” (JOHN 1:19, 20). And they asked him again, and he said, “No.” To confess Jesus and His forgiveness won on the cross and distributed in preaching and Baptism and Lord’s Supper is to confess: “I am nothing. Jesus is everything. My sin is His. His righteousness, in fact everything He is and did and does, is now mine.” O happy exchange!

When we speak of Jesus, it is a confession. At first the confession of Jesus was a witness, in particular, an eyewitness. The Gospels are

careful eyewitness accounts. The rest of the New Testament is careful apostolic testimony of Christ by either apostles (eyewitnesses of Jesus, His death and His resurrection) or those directly connected to them. And these eyewitnesses testified. They bore witness as witnesses at a trial testify to what happened. There are beautiful vignettes in the New Testament of this witness, which is a confession. The woman at the well spoke with Jesus, and then she told her friends and neighbors. “Many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman’s testimony” (JOHN 4:39).

The New Testament settled in on a magnificent word for this public testimony of Jesus. In the original Greek, the word is *homologeō*. It means “to say the same thing.” It means for us to confess back to God and to others what God and His Christ have said about Himself. In fact, the word confession is the very same word in Latin: *confessio*. St. Paul uses the term: “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (ROM. 10:9-10). The word is used in the New Testament confession of sins (1 JOHN 1:9), the confession of the content of the faith (1 JOHN 4:2) and the confession of the praises of God (MATT. 11:25 [often translated “praise” or “thank” here]; ROM. 15:9).

The Lutheran church continues this confession today. The title page of the 1580 edition of our Lutheran *Book of Concord* contains this title: “Concordia: Christian, Repeated, Unanimous Confession.” It is “repeated” because the book contains the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord, the latter of which simply reasserts the teaching of the Augsburg Confession and notes how the Augsburg Confession should be rightly understood and confessed. The title of the Augsburg Confession is simply, “Confession [*Bekentnus* in the old German spelling, which means “confession”] of the Faith.” In laying out the teaching of the Bible and the Lutheran church, the Formula of Concord repeats over and again: “We believe, teach and confess...”



To confess  
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**FOR MORE ON CONFESSION IN SCRIPTURE,**  
see Matthew 3:6; 7:23; 10:32; 11:25; 14:7; Luke 22:6;  
Acts 19:18; Romans 14:11; 15:9; Philippians 2:11;  
James 5:16; John 1:20; 9:22; 12:42; Acts 7:17; 23:8;  
24:14; Romans 10:9; 1 Timothy 6:12; Titus 1:16;  
Hebrews 11:13; 13:15; 1 John 1:9; 2:23; 4:2; 2 John 7;  
Revelation 3:5; 2 Corinthians 9:13; 1 Timothy 6:12;  
Hebrews 3:1; 4:14.

The *Book of Concord* is also called “Concordia,” which literally means “hearts united.” After Luther’s death, 30 years of confusion reigned before real and extensive unity was reached and confessed via the *Book of Concord*. We have seminaries, universities, churches, health plans and more named “Concordia.” To be sure, that means “hearts united,” but our forefathers named these institutions with a full-throated confession of the “Concordia,” the *Book of Concord*. (If you don’t have a *Book of Concord*, you can obtain several versions from [cph.org](http://cph.org), including a nice little “pocket version” paperback. I recommend the larger Reader’s Edition.) This is our confession, our answer to Jesus’ question: “Who do you say that I am?”

Hold fast the confession! (HEB. 4:14).

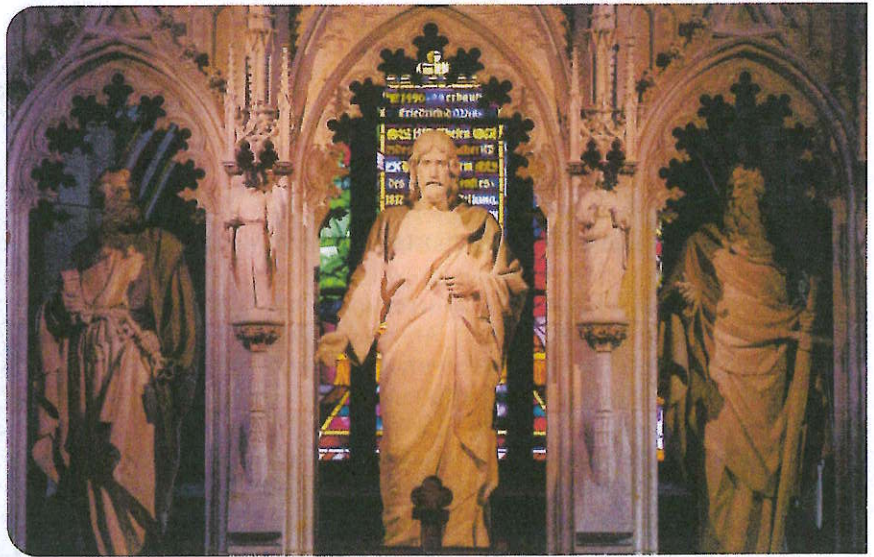
— Pastor Matthew C. Harrison

On Sept. 5, the president of the Lutheran Synod of Mexico (SLM), the Rev. Isaac Garcia, was kidnapped, along with another pastor and four deaconesses, while traveling to host a workshop with Lutherans in southern Mexico. The SLM is a partner church of the LCMS. Garcia and the others were stripped of their money, phones and belongings (including their rented vans and items meant for distribution at the workshops.) They were then blindfolded and held along with more than 20 other captives. “Despite all this, God was with us,” said President Garcia, according to a report from the International Lutheran Council. “We were able to feel peace ... knowing that our lives were in God’s hands, literally living what Paul says: ‘For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.’” They were finally released after six hours and took the opportunity to pray with all the others who had been kidnapped. “After reflecting on the situation, we simply ask God to continue being with us as we know He is,” continued Garcia, “and to keep leading us to those who need to hear, repent, and come to Christ. We pray for all missionaries around the world, that God may watch over and protect them at all times.”

The government of Nicaragua recently implemented policies that will increase the state’s control over religious institutions, including taxing tithes given to churches by up to 30% and requiring religious organizations to be in formal partnership with the government to carry out projects within the country. On the same day these policies were implemented, the government revoked the legal status of 1,500 churches and non-profit organizations. Many of the churches affected were small, neighborhood congregations of fewer than 100 people. Last year, the Nicaraguan government banned outdoor religious processions and worship services, as well as the display of religious symbols (such as crosses) outside of homes. Leaders of Christian churches and organizations have also been targeted with surveillance, harassment and imprisonment in recent years. We pray for our brothers and sisters in

#### DO YOU HAVE NEWS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE SNIPPETS?

Please submit your news items as a letter to the editor at [witness.lcms.org/contact](mailto:witness.lcms.org/contact).



this 90% Christian nation as their government steadily increases its control over their churches.

Since its landfall in Florida on Sept. 26, Hurricane Helene has left devastation behind it across the southeastern U.S. LCMS Recognized Service Organizations, as well as several LCMS districts and many volunteers, have been assisting in the response to Helene. Representatives from LCMS Disaster Response visited the areas affected by the hurricane to help coordinate efforts and said that the LCMS volunteer response has been enormous. “Within days, volunteers were on-site helping serve meals, removing debris, chopping fallen trees, mucking out homes and tearing out drywall,” said the Rev. Dr. Ross Johnson, director of LCMS Disaster Response. To make a gift to help bring Christ’s love and mercy to those affected by disasters, visit [lcms.org/givenow/disaster](http://lcms.org/givenow/disaster).

States remain fierce battlegrounds in the fight to defend unborn life. And the battles are complex. In October, the Biden administration asked the U.S. Supreme Court to send Texas’ six-week abortion ban back to lower Texas courts

where it had been challenged and upheld. The challenge was to more widely define what constitutes a “medical emergency” — Texas law allows abortion in the case of a “life-threatening physical condition” arising from the pregnancy that places the woman “at risk of death or poses a serious risk of substantial impairment of a major bodily function.” Two medical groups challenged the law, citing the federal Emergency Medical Treatment & Labor Act (1986), which requires hospitals to provide “stabilizing care” to anyone who arrives at an emergency room with a condition that seriously threatens their health. The groups argued that Texas law forces doctors to violate this act when they do not abort children who pose a threat to the mother’s health, but not in the ways defined by Texas law. The Texas courts threw out this challenge, and the Supreme Court threw out the Biden administration’s appeal. Battles over abortion bans continue in Texas, Georgia and many other states. We pray that the Lord would give wisdom to pro-life voices in government as they seek to sift through these complicated matters while upholding the God-given sanctity of every human life.