

First Lutheran Church



127 S. Columbus St. Galion, OH 44833

419-468-3107

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Worship 10:00 am

Weekly Newsletter 12.4.25

Pastor's Ponderings

A Doubtful "Yes!"

This pondering is from my Wednesday evening Advent reflection on Luke 1:5-25. I encourage you to read the Scripture first, though I do tell much of the story here (albeit in my own way).

Zechariah is a man who has heard "no" for so long that he is unable to hear God's "Yes!". Zechariah, and his wife, Elizabeth, both righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commands and all the regulations of the Lord, is a man who has heard "no" so many times that he cannot hear, he cannot perceive, he cannot believe God's "Yes!". For so long, Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, have asked, have yearned, have prayed for a child, and for so long, month after month, year after year, decade after decade, Elizabeth has remained without child. So, when an angel of the Lord screams God's "Yes!" into Zechariah's face, he simply cannot hear it.

"I am an old man," says Zechariah. He rejects the notion of a child in his old age immediately—before any renewed hope can take hold. Zechariah's done with hope. "My wife—she's old. She's barren. We know this. As hard as it has been to hear God's "No!" to us, we've come to accept it. So don't do this. Don't offer this false hope."

But as much as he wants to keep the hope at bay, just a little bit of hope has clawed its way into his heart—and how could it not? This angel shows up out of nowhere and terrifies him.

This angel knows his wife's name, knows the baby will be a boy, even gives the baby a name—John. And then the angel, as any good grandparent will do, starts offering unsolicited parenting advice: "He's not allowed to drink wine. Ever!" So, Zechariah, even though hope has for so long brought so much pain and so much disappointment, he still dares to hope and says, "OK, but how will I know this is so?"

The angel, who then reveals himself as Gabriel, tells Zechariah, "Go ahead, tell me again how you and Elizabeth are too old to receive God's "Yes!". Go ahead. I'll wait. What's that? I can't hear you. Oh, you can't speak? Well that's because you will be unable to speak until these things occur. Consider this your sign."

There's nothing special about Zechariah and Elizabeth, not really. Sure, he's a priest. But not an important one. A priest like him gets to offer incense like this maybe once in his lifetime. And Elizabeth, she's a woman who has for far too long suffered the disgrace of a barren womb. Just listen to her prayer of thanksgiving when she conceives: "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people." Her job was to make babies, and she couldn't do it! What was wrong with her? What sin had she committed? This is how her culture and her people looked upon her. She was disgraced. In the marketplace—disgraced. At the well—disgraced. At the synagogue—disgraced. Each day she spent among her people—disgraced. These are insignificant, unimportant, gossiped-about, disgraced people.

Can we blame Zechariah for his doubt? "Why would God say "Yes!" to the people of Israel through me? Through my wife?" Especially as the angel Gabriel declares, "He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God, [...] make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Zechariah questions, “Through me? Through Elizabeth? Through us? We couldn’t conceive in our prime! How could that possibly happen now? And why would this child, my child, our child, have the spirit and power of Elijah?”

And yet, ours is a God who says “Yes!” to humanity, to all of creation, through all kinds of insignificant, unimportant, gossiped-about, disgraced, and imperfect people. People who most certainly understand Zechariah’s doubt—people like us. This doubt is so relatable and relevant to our lives. Who among us has not lost hope, has not heard what we believed to be God’s final no? Who among us has not held God’s call at arm’s length, refusing to believe God is calling us—could accomplish anything through us? Who among us has not thought ourselves so insignificant, unimportant, disgraced, or imperfect that we doubted God’s “Yes!” to us?

And besides that, saying “Yes!” is hard. Like Zechariah, it might expose us to a painful “no” from years gone by—a “no” we’ve fought hard to keep safely buried. Our “Yes!” might expose us to self-doubt and the ridicule of our people: “Elizabeth, have a baby? She’s too old!”. Our “Yes!” could lead to questions like, “Am I really perceiving God’s call correctly?” Because, after all, we aren’t all called by angels while offering incense in the temple—how do we really know if God is calling us to the “Yes!” we think we hear?

But make no mistake. God has said “Yes!” to you and to the world. God continues to say “Yes!” to you and to the world. And God is calling us to “Yes!” for this world here and now.

In what ways is God calling you to “Yes!”? That’s a big question, so let me shrink it a bit. In what **one way** is God calling you to “Yes!”? And it doesn’t have to be big—none of us is

giving birth to John the Baptist, OK? In what **one way** is God calling you to “Yes!”? And how might it change everything? Because God’s “Yes!” does do something, doesn’t it?

Our “Yes!” flows freely from God’s “Yes!” to us and is rooted in the belief that God can work good things for this world through us—through you. Through little old insignificant, unimportant, disgraced, imperfect you. Our “Yes!” is rooted in the belief that our waiting for Christ’s return is not done idly because the God of the incarnation, the God who burst forth into the messiness of our lives and of this world in the birth of Jesus Christ, continues to break into the here and now—even as we wait. Especially as we wait.

Through each and every “Yes!”, God is made known. Through each and every “Yes!”, God is seen. Through each and every “Yes!”, God is poured out into this world.



If you have comments or questions, would like to talk, or desire a visit, please call or e-mail either me or the church office.

Peace,
Pastor Shawn Schneider
937-726-3831 or
pastor@flcgalion.com

This Week at First

Worship: Second Sunday of Advent

First Lesson: Isaiah 11:1-10

Second Lesson: Romans 15:4-13

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 3:1-12

In-Person Worship

Sunday – December 7, 2025

8:30pm - St. Paul Lutheran Worship

10:00am - First Lutheran Worship

Tuesday - December 9, 2025

5:00pm - Community Meal

Wednesday - November 10, 2025

7:00pm - Mid-Week Advent Services at
St. Paul Lutheran Church in North
Robison



We are praying for:

Family and friends of Martha Kozik, Tony Barker, Kyle Baughn, Marlene Leme, Joyce Shearer and Chloe

Long Term Prayer List: Joyce Corwin, AJ Rinaldi, Kaden Allerding, Linda Kahler, Haylee Lilly, Scott, Sandy Alley, Jean Henry, Tina Fuson, Ed Smith, Bobbie Jo Seighman

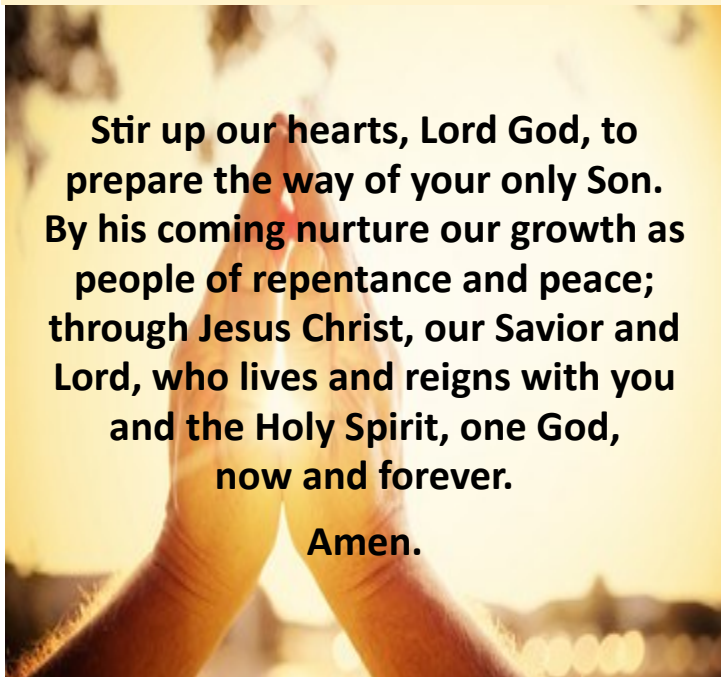
Homebound, Assisted Living, or Limited Mobility: Chuck Robinson, Jay DeNise, Millie Haas, Brenda Haas, Mary Lou Griebing, Janet Hammermiller, Phyllis Straka and Fred Watkins.

To add someone to our prayer list or prayer chain, call the church office or email us at pastor@flcgalion.com

Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to
prepare the way of your only Son.
By his coming nurture our growth as
people of repentance and peace;
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and
Lord, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God,
now and forever.

Amen.



Lydia Schneider - December 7
Katie Guy - December 10



Gary & Electa Foster - December 12



Grief Share is a 13 week, Christ-centered, biblically-based program that focuses on grief topics associated with the death of a loved one.

The Fall group will continue on Monday December 8, 2025 at 6:30pm - 8:30pm.

The group will gather at St. Paul United Methodist Church, 746 Cherry Street, Galion.

For more information and/or registration, please call Mary at 740-396-2522, Cathy at 419 -571-5948 or St. Paul UMC office at 419-468-4557.

Grief is not something you suddenly get over, forget or move on from. Too often, people tend to tuck their grief away instead of allowing it to do its intended work. Whether your bereavement experience is recent or not so recent, Grief Share is an opportunity to be around people in a confidential and understanding environment where you will find encouragement, comfort, and help in grieving the death of a spouse, child, parent, sibling, other family members or a friend.



Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things! And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory.
Amen and Amen.



Tuesday, December 9th

5pm - 6pm

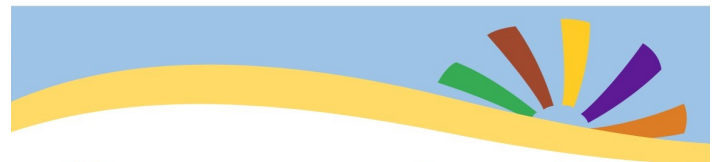


Come and join us for a meal, fellowship and fun!

Donations of food always appreciated!

Your help also appreciated.

**SERVE the LORD
with all your heart!**



Community Breakfast

*** Free Breakfast**

Every 4th Saturday of the month

9am to 10:30am

All Are Welcome!!!

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Galion, Ohio