



Wednesday Night Confirmation Heros

Pastor Amy Stewart

On April 26 we had the joy of witnessing twenty 8th graders affirm their faith. What you likely didn't get to witness, was how they arrived there and the heroes that help make it happen. These youth, along with thirty five 6th and 7th graders, met weekly during the school year for Confirmation. Alongside Confirmation, our SHiNE (elementary school) and FLY (high school) youth also came together.

If you've never seen a Wednesday night at Good Shepherd, it's a sight to behold! The whole building is filled with 2nd-12th graders playing, creating real relationships, sharing dinner together, and exploring faith through videos, discussions, and activities.

The middle schoolers use the faith formation hour to move through a three year Confirmation curriculum built around the Bible, Small Catechism, and topics of daily discipleship. During this time, they are blessed to dive into small group conversation with some amazing mentors, who selflessly and graciously give their time to lead, listen, and learn alongside the youth. They are an absolute treasure and Confirmation ministry wouldn't be the same without them. When asked about their favorite parts, most all of the middle schoolers said that they loved coming because their friends were there and because of the activities they got to do, but they also shared about how much they trust and appreciate their mentors, using words like kind, welcoming, funny, relatable, creative, supportive, willing to help, understanding, patient, and good educators to describe them.

Here's what two of our mentors had to say about their experience on Wednesday nights:

I love hearing the buzz when I walk through the gym, and the students scrambling down the hall. They could be at practices or any number of activities or simply chilling at home after a long day, but they choose to be here. I love getting to see the big picture of the Bible stories and I love hearing how enthusiastic and confident the 6th graders are to share answers in the large group. It always makes me smile! -Dena Hull

[When asked if she'd like to be a mentor again next year:] *I was torn because there are classes that I have really been wanting to take on Wednesday nights, but I enjoy working with the youth at church. I learn so much from Pastor Amy, the kids, my co-mentor, and the whole experience. After much thought, I have decided to continue teaching on Wednesdays. -Kristy Raymond*

I am endlessly grateful for Dena, Kristy, and the 16 other amazing folks who serve as Confirmation mentors. And they aren't the only adults making this ministry happen! Adults of all ages come together to support dinner, rec time, the high school praise band rehearsal, and SHiNE and FLY groups too. If you want to join the joy and blessing of Wednesday nights, speak with Pastor Amy about how you might share your presence and encouragement with the children and youth of Good Shepherd next year!

In the meantime, we give thanks for another wonderful year of Confirmation and Wednesday night ministry, and we are excited to see those who will walk through the doors when we start up again in September! If you have a rising 2nd through 12th grader, be on the lookout for next year's registration later in the summer.



Josh Brecht

Lead Pastor

Where You Least Expect

Have you ever noticed how Jesus seems to show up when you least expect it? It seems God loves to show up in ways and places we do not expect. As I have moved through the resurrection stories, both in worship and my daily devotions this year, I am as fascinated and perplexed as ever. The appearance stories are beautiful and mysterious, confusing and joyful. Each Gospel tells a unique piece of the story, but the one common denominator seems to be surprise. Jesus shows up when and where his followers least expect it.

When two weary travelers are walking in grief back home to Emmaus, Jesus comes alongside them as a curious stranger. When they are finally back home and sitting down at the dinner table, Jesus makes a surprise appearance! **(Luke 24)**

Mary goes looking for the body of Jesus to do the painful work of preparing it for burial, only to be surprised by angels and an empty tomb. When she turns to leave, Jesus appears right in front of her! **(John 20)**

Peter and several others default to their old ways, taking to the boats and the fishing nets. Just when they thought their new calling was over, Jesus shows up with a miraculous catch and breakfast on the beach. **(John 21)**

Perhaps the strangest and most consistent way Jesus shows up is startling appearances to a group of followers **in a locked room!** The risen Jesus seems to have no more use for doors or knocking. I wonder if he smiled and laughed just a bit each time they jumped, or each time one of his best friends gasped after seeing him again.

For all the theological symbolism and significance we might exegete from these appearance narratives, one simple truth continues to stick with me.

Jesus often shows up where we least expect him.

We *expect* to experience God's presence in worship. We *expect* to hear a word from Jesus when we read our Bibles. We *expect* to encounter God during intentional times of prayer. But these stories remind us to pay attention, to be ready. Jesus loves to show up when we least expect it.

I think we often compartmentalize our relationship with God like somehow talking with God is a walkie-talkie we switch on during prayer, devotions, or worship, but then turn it off and leave it in the bag when we go to work, or the gym, or school. But what if Jesus decides to show up on a Tuesday at 3:24 when you are sitting at your desk? Or what if God decides to get your attention in the checkout line at Aldi?

Maybe the Holy Spirit invites you to strike up a conversation with a stranger.
Maybe God is working through you to answer prayer in a coworker's life.
Maybe your neighbor has been searching for God, and a regular dog walk turns into a holy moment.

In this Easter season, maybe God is challenging us to be more open to the unexpected. Maybe Jesus already has a surprise in store for you. Maybe we need a holy disruption to our

rigid routines (yes, I'm as guilty of this as anyone!) to experience something sacred. May we all pay attention to the present moment. May we all learn to expect the unexpected. That is where Jesus loves to show up.

Loss of SNAP Food Benefits for Legal Immigrants

Support through International Institute

By: Cindy Kraft, Service Team

Recent changes to federal SNAP (food assistance) policy are being implemented in Missouri and are affecting many immigrant families in our community. These changes do not impact all immigrants, but they **do significantly restrict access for some groups of legally present individuals who were previously eligible for assistance**.

In particular, certain immigrants who came to the United States under humanitarian protections—such as **refugees, asylees**, and others—have historically been eligible for SNAP under specific conditions. Many of these individuals were able to receive food assistance as they worked to rebuild their lives. However, recent policy changes have narrowed eligibility. As these changes are being implemented, some individuals who previously qualified are now losing access to SNAP benefits.

How Good Shepherd Can Respond

As access to food assistance becomes more limited or uncertain, local organizations are stepping in to help meet the growing need. One of these partners is the **International Institute**, which serves many immigrant families in our region.

In May, Good Shepherd will support the International Institute through our **Food Bin Collection** and our **Mother's Day Pack 'n Play Collection** of baby items including:

- Baby formula, (Similac preferred, any okay)
- Rice cereal
- Teether snacks
- Diapers, (size 5 & up)
- Baby lotion
- Baby wipes
- Pacifiers
- Children's cups, plates and bowls

You can also help in the following ways:

- **Donate via the link below** to purchase gift cards and perishable items through Good Shepherd, which will be donated to the International Institute.

Donations through GS for International Institute

- **Volunteer** at the **International Institute's Food Pantry**.

It is important to understand that undocumented immigrants have not been eligible for SNAP benefits for decades under federal law. At the same time, U.S. citizen children in mixed-status families may still qualify, even if parents are not eligible.

Here in Missouri, the state is updating its policies and procedures to reflect federal changes. At the same time, additional proposals at the state level could further affect access to benefits in the future. The result is growing uncertainty for many families—especially those who were already among the most vulnerable.

Jesus said to Peter, “feed my sheep.”

As followers of Christ, we are called to care for our neighbors—especially those who are vulnerable, displaced, or in need. In moments like this, the Church has an opportunity to answer the call of Christ with compassion, generosity, and action to help create a world where no child goes hungry.

Ushers & Greeters Training - May 17

A Ministry of Hospitality and Safety

The leadership of Good Shepherd (staff, Council, and other volunteers) have been laying the groundwork to implement security plans into our ministries. We strive to ensure that Good Shepherd remains a welcoming community, but is also a community where people can feel safe. The most essential component of a **church** security plan is broad awareness, training, and buy-in from our members and volunteers.

On **Sunday, May 17 we will have a training and orientation for Ushers and Greeters.** These hospitality ministries are often the first point of contact for people. They play a key role in noticing anything that feels unsafe or *anyone* who seems suspicious.

On May 17, we will be working with **new** and **experienced** ushers and greeters to better equip you in the beautiful ministry of hospitality, but also ***to provide you with the tools***

needed in an emergency. The more people we have trained and aware, the safer our whole community will be.

- What should I do if someone walks in that seems very out of place or disruptive?
- How should I react if someone becomes aggressive or threatening?
- Who should I notify?
- What can I do if there is a medical emergency?

The single most important component of any church safety plan is people. A robust and effective safety protocol for a church requires a team of highly committed people who:

- Commit to serving regularly as ushers, greeters, and shepherds.
- Attend trainings and become intimately familiar with emergency plans.
- Become skilled in de-escalation in case a troubled individual shows up at our doors.
- Ready to spring into action at a moment's notice.

Plans we put in place are only as effective as the people who carry them out each week. The safety of Good Shepherd is only as strong as the team we build. ***Thank you for being a part of it.***

Sunday, May 17

Noon – 1:30 pm

Lunch is provided.

RSVP Below

Questions? Contact [Kevin Nichols](#) or [Andrew Leach](#)

Ushers & Greeters Training RSVP

Endowment Committee

Steve Boyer

Please review our updated Endowment Giving Structure. Email Steve Boyer at sboyer59@gmail.com if you have any questions.

GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH · MANCHESTER, MO

Leaving a Legacy: Good Shepherd's

Updated Endowment & Giving Structure

Good Shepherd Endowment Committee

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church has always been blessed by the generosity of its members — gifts of time, talent, and treasure that sustain our ministries today and keep our doors open for future generations. To better honor and steward those gifts, we have formalized a structured giving framework that makes it easier for members to direct donations exactly where they feel called.

How our giving structure works

Our giving now falls into three distinct categories, each designed for a different type of donor intent:

RESERVE FUNDS · SPENDABLE

Gifts used for current needs Donations directed to day-to-day programs, facilities, or outreach — available immediately to meet the congregation's present needs.

ENDOWMENTS · \$5,000 OR MORE

Permanently invested gifts Your gift is invested in perpetuity. Each year a portion of returns is distributed to the fund area you choose, creating lasting annual support.

POSSIBLE GIFT OPTION · \$500,000 OR MORE

Major gifts — tailored options Donors at this level work directly with the Lead Pastor and Endowment Committee to structure a gift that reflects their unique vision.

Three areas you can support

Within both Reserve Funds and Endowments, you can direct your gift to one — or a combination — of three specific areas. If dividing an endowment gift, simply note the percentage for each on the Special Gift Designation Form.

Operations & Ministries

Supports day-to-day programs, worship, and the ongoing ministries that define our congregation's life together.

Capital (Facilities)

Supports the care, maintenance, and improvement of our building and physical campus.

Services & Scholarships

Supports outreach beyond our walls and scholarships for those pursuing ministry formation.

How to make your designation

We have created a simple Special Gift Designation Form that allows you to record your wishes in writing. You will indicate whether you'd like your gift to be spendable (a reserve fund) or invested long-term (an endowment), and then select the specific area you'd like to support.

Once completed, we ask that you: *keep a copy for your records; attach one to your will or estate documents if applicable; and provide a copy to the Endowment Committee chair.*

Why this matters

Legacy giving is one of the most powerful ways a member can express their faith and love for this congregation. Whether through a planned gift in your estate, a contribution today, or a major gift that will shape Good Shepherd for decades — every gift deserves to be directed thoughtfully. This new structure ensures your intentions are clearly recorded and faithfully honored.

Special Gift Designation Forms are available in the church office and on our website. We warmly invite you to reach out to an Endowment Committee member with any questions or to discuss your giving goals.

A note on your regular giving: This endowment and reserve fund structure is entirely separate from Good Shepherd's annual stewardship campaign. It is not a replacement for — and has no effect on — your weekly or monthly giving pledges. We encourage every member to continue honoring those commitments as the vital, ongoing foundation of our congregation's ministry.

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Manchester, MO · Endowment Committee

Adult Choir Camp – Robert Ray's *Gospel Mass*

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church's summers are filled with youth choir camps and Vacation Bible school camps. Someone had the idea for an Adult Choir Camp! Jamie DeGreer, Director of Music was fully supportive!



This camp will focus on Robert Ray's *Gospel Mass*. Robert Ray (1946-2022) is a St. Louis African American composer. Graduating from Northwestern University with a degree in piano performance, he is a well-known educator and composer. He was the founding director of St. Louis Symphony's IN UNISON Chorus. He was asked by a colleague to write an African-American style Mass. What he thought was

going to be a one-time, experimental performance, has grown into a beloved work of many choruses throughout the country.

The work is very challenging which is why we recommend that those who participate **be able to read music**. Those who are 6th grade and up are welcome to join provided they read music. Due to the challenging nature, participants must be able to **attend all rehearsals** which are Sunday-Thursday, August 9-13 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. with performances Saturday, August 15 at 5 p.m. and Sunday morning, August 16.

While this is a challenging work, as is the schedule, Juquwayne Crockett describes the Mass as “a groundbreaking fusion of two distinct musical traditions: the structured liturgical framework of classical Western music and the emotive, improvisational energy of African American gospel...[it] transcends traditional boundaries and offers a transformative worship experience.” Source: [Robert Ray's Gospel Mass Explained | PDF | Worship | Performing Arts](#) – Accessed 2.12.2026

Additionally, we are pleased to announce that we will have a guest clinician, Leon Burke III that will work with us one evening! Mr. Burke is a musician, singer and conductor from St. Louis. He completed studies at Oberlin Conservatory and the University of Kansas. He has also been a Fulbright Fellow in Paraguay. Among his many contributions, Mr. Burke is the music director and conductor of the University City Symphony Orchestra, assistant conductor of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus and principal conductor of the Gateway Festival Orchestra. His credits include his work as the choir director at Eliot Unitarian Chapel.



Jill Thompson will lead the Adult Choir Camp. She is a retired church musician and has had the privilege of conducting Gospel Mass several times in the past. It is one of her favorite works.

Registration opens May 10 and closes July 12. Spots are limited. We will need to ensure we have balanced vocal sections. Therefore, you must register to participate.

Photo of Robert Ray - [In Unison Chorus founder Robert Ray dies at 76 | STLPR](#) – Accessed 4.15.2026

Photo of Leon Burke III - [Leon Burke III - Wikipedia](#) – Accessed 4.15.2026

Erik Oswald's College Faith Journey

Erik Oswald, a college student and member of Good Shepherd, has been highly involved with the Lutheran Campus Ministry (LCM) at Northwestern. On May 9, at 3pm, he'll participate in "Showcase," where the students split into 3 panels to talk about what brought them to LCM, why they participate, how they can use their faith to stay grounded, and where they see their faith out in the world. We encourage you to **watch the livestream** or catch the **recorded talks** afterward, to catch a glimpse into Erik's continued faith journey at college. Thank you for being a leader and for sharing your journey with us, Erik!

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