



Central Lutheran Church

Come Share the Spirit!

Central News - July 2019

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Christianity and Patriotism

How is a Christian to respond to patriotism?
How can a love of all people and a primary commitment to the kingdom of God stand with a love for country?

Patriotism can be defined simply as love of country. It's the kind of love that makes one thankful to be a citizen of a country. It's the feeling of gratitude for freedom, or democracy, or culture, or any of the values people around the world treasure in their nation.



Patriotism is not nationalism. Many people take love of country and expand it to mean love of country at the expense of other nations. It's when people believe they are better because they come from a particular place, or that others are less valuable because of their land of origin. Such exceptionalism means treasuring one's identity while minimizing others. It is saying, "My country is better than yours, and you are less civilized and enlightened because of where you are from." Nationalism never stops to consider what one's nation could learn from others.

Paul writes about the need for the Jews to recognize the full participation of Gentiles in the kingdom of God. Their national and religious identity made it difficult to understand how a Greek, Ethiopian, or slave from Asia Minor could be just as much a part of God's new work. "Neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor

free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

Jesus loved his people, his city, his nation so much he cried over it (Luke 19:41). He wanted nothing but the best for his country and it grieved him to see how his people had rejected his teachings. His example is a love for nation that doesn't pit one against another; instead, it's a recognition of love for one another followed by a mournful recognition of our shortcomings.

Jesus illustrates how to celebrate the times our nation does something great and a desire to make our country as good as it can be. We can mourn the times when our nation does something wrong. We recognize the need to temper our feelings when our country fails. Healthy patriotism lies in the ability to judge our nation in its successes and its shortcomings.

It is an important distinction that Christians' first love is the kingdom of God, over and above love of country. The Christian's primary allegiance is to God, which sometimes means the Christian patriot must disagree with the policy set by one's country. It means calling for the righting of wrongs and the upholding of equality, justice, tolerance and compassion. Christian responsibility defines our patriotism, even when it is difficult.

Jesus died for people of all nations. To the people of Israel, Jesus was betraying his own people by spreading the gospel to Gentiles. Jesus asks that we lay all of our loves at his feet so that we may grant him the first fruits of our love. Love of God, love of our brothers and sisters everywhere.

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Statement on Children in Detention

The bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA) has joined ecumenical and inter-religious partners in a statement addressing concerns over the well-being of children who cross the U.S. border seeking safety from the threats in their home countries.



In part the statement says, "As U.S. religious leaders representing diverse faith perspectives, we are united in our concern for the well-being of vulnerable migrants who cross our borders fleeing from danger and threats to their lives."

"Sadly, as a nation we have denied them safety, instead placing them in detention facilities. Many detention centers are overcrowded and lack sanitation, further elevating the risk of serious health issues for migrants already stressed and weakened by their journeys."

"We believe our nation and its leaders have both the moral and legal responsibility on behalf of those who seek safety in our land. The U.S. has an international legal obligation to do so having acceded to the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, therefore, must implement those duties in good faith. It also has an obligation to do so under its own domestic law and should not attempt to set aside these legal responsibilities. The duty not to return a person to a state where they may face torture or other serious harm is absolute under the United Nations Convention Against Torture, which the U.S. has signed and ratified."

"We urge the administration to maintain its commitment to international law and defend human rights by implementing safeguards to ensure the safety and health of all of those seeking protection in our land, especially children who fall under our care."

The statement was signed by 23 Christian, Jewish and Islamic partners in the United States.



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Living in God's amazing grace

Number of passed GED tests	Previous Progress	Current Progress
Math	10	10
Language Arts	9	9
Science	9	10
Social Studies	9	11
Civics tests	11	11
GEDs earned	8	9

Adult Education Ministry

Every month, the Adult Education Team reports more tests passed and more GEDs earned. It's certainly cause to celebrate.

However, the program isn't just a numbers game. Each

passed test means program participants are moving closer to achieving their personal goals. This month, this Adult Education report will feature one of the participants, so you can learn more about how this ministry impacts lives and empowers them to succeed.

Julio enrolled in the GED tutoring program in 2015. He worked at a dairy farm to support his wife and four school-aged children. His dedication was evident as he came for tutoring two and three times a week for almost 18 months. He

progressed steadily through his test preparation studies with the help of volunteer tutors until he eventually earned his GED in May of 2017.

Since most employers require a high school diploma or equivalent, Julio's GED certificate was the key he needed to open doors to opportunity. He set his sights on getting a job in auto repair and immediately landed a job as a part-time mechanic's assistant at Pep Boys. Julio worked at both his part-time and dairy farm job for over a year, hoping to learn enough about auto repair to advance to a mechanic and earn enough to move his family from their small trailer to a larger manufactured home.

Last month, Julio dropped by to announce that he had just accepted a new job as an auto mechanic in a local auto repair shop. If that wasn't exciting enough, he also shared the happy news that he was recently approved for a mortgage and would soon be moving his family to a larger home. Way to go, Julio!

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Upcoming Events

Study and Discussion



Friendship Center Ministry

Robson Ranch

Sunday Inter-Denominational Worship
8:30 a.m. Vacation Bible Church
Laredo Room

Central Lutheran Church is sponsoring and assisting the development of the Friendship Center ministry for the Robson Ranch community under the direction of Pastor Ron Hunt. The ministry will focus on being a

welcoming and supportive spiritual environment for the residents of the community. It will be offering the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus and make a difference in the lives of others through personal callings.

Our congregation can share in prayer, study, outreach, administrative needs and financial support. Specific opportunities will be shared in the coming weeks.

Youth Night Class

Our youth group will resume with a meeting on Wednesday, July 10th from 6-7:30 p.m. at our Casa Grande campus.

We will be planning a trip to "Sunsplash" on July 24th for students and parents.

Our program includes our elementary, middle school and high school students.

Classes for the different age groups are led by Kara Cooper and Pastor Thom.



Good Grief

"Grief never ends, but it changes.

It's a passage, not a place to stay.

*Grief is not a sign of weakness,
nor a lack of faith.*

It is the price of love."

(Author Unknown)

Because of all the people and things in life we love, life is full of sorrow, sadness, distress, pain, suffering, and, adversity. Life is full of loss in many different forms. Unique in many ways. Common in many ways.

These gatherings are intended to provide opportunities to share grief. To be comforted, to comfort. To be helped, to help. To be supported, to support others. Meetings will continue later this summer.

Please contact Pastor Thom or Judy Smith for any questions or needs.



Shield a Badge

Central Lutheran Church joins with many congregations and organizations in the area participating in the "Shield the Badge" support ministry. Volunteers agree to pray daily for a member of the Casa Grande Police Department.

Pick up an information card and contact Sandy Carpenter (carpesm56@gmail.com) and you will be assigned a badge number. For one year pray for the safety and well-

being of the officer using the badge number.

Summer Softball Season

Your "Saints" enter the month of July with a record of 2 and 4.

The schedule for this month is:

July 8th at 7:15/8:15 p.m.

July 15th at 6:15/7:15 p.m.

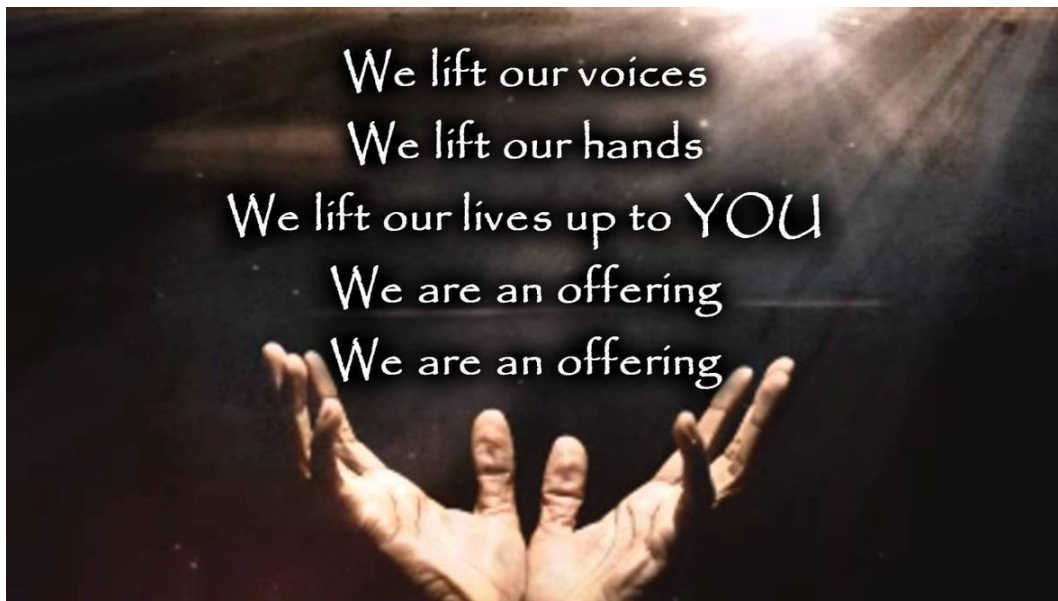
July 22nd at 6:15/7:15 p.m.

July 29th at 6:15/7:15 p.m.

If there are no weather postponements the season ending tournament will be held on August 5th.

Games are played on Monday nights at the Paul Mason Sportsplex on Pinal Ave. in Casa Grande.

Special thanks to the fans who come out to support our team.



Our Stewardship

We continue to celebrate our growth reflected in a greater number of worshipers, worshipers who have met their monthly offering goal (even when missing a worship service), and, those who have doubled their offering on the second Sunday of each month.

We have held the belief that many of us have had the ability to grow in our giving. Continuing to ask ourselves, "how come I don't give more?"

Your contributions have made it possible for us to extend our benevolence to many areas of need. This year the council will designate contributions to:

All Hands and Hearts -- assisting the recovery effort of the people of Puerto Rico;

City of Joy Rwanda -- sponsoring a student in Rwanda for an entire school year;

Lutheran Disaster Relief -- the ELCA provides extensive support for the relief and recovery efforts of the impacted regions;

Refugee Program -- Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest supports the resettlement of families from around the world in Arizona;

Florence Immigration and Refugee Rights Project -- providing educational materials, sports equipment, school supplies, pregnancy and new parent support;

Maricopa Lutheran Church -- assisting the congregation's efforts to establish a permanent location in their community;

Friendship Center -- sponsoring the start-up ministry for the Robson Ranch community.

Thank you for your contributions to our growing ministry, helping us to grow our ministry within our congregation, to the Grand Canyon synod and the national church, and to those in need around the world.

A Fragrance Free Environment

We are now encouraging that everyone please avoid wearing scented products, such as perfumes, colognes and aftershaves, during worship and other congregational events held at our two sites.

Many people have sensitivities and respiratory difficulties that are triggered when exposed to personal fragrances.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Council Members for 2019

Our council was set at last month's annual meeting. Members for this year are:

Gary Erickson (Vice President), Paul Garrison, Gary Isaacson, Ina Johnson, Dick Jones, Richard LaPaglia, Gary Linafelter, Leticia Luse, John Pieschl (President), Mary Pietrini, Skip Simes (Secretary), and Carolyn Torr (Treasurer).



Meetings are generally scheduled for the third Tuesday of each month in Arizona City or Casa Grande.

Community Ministries

Community Education Ministry

Our adult students continue to succeed in their study programs. We now have 10 students who passed the math test, 9 language arts, 10 science, 11 social studies, and, 11 civics. Nine students have completed all of their GED requirements.

You can help by volunteering as a GED or English tutor or making a donation -- designate as "adult education." Thank you for the donations received for this ministry!

Education Opportunity: Learn Spanish

Central Lutheran is offering Spanish Language Workshops. Sessions are free for everyone and will focus on learning beginning/ intermediate conversational skills. Dates and times are determined based on the schedules of participants.

Donation of Home Furnishings

Sometimes the families of our participants are in need of furniture, and small and large appliances. You can help them by donating these items. Contact Alyson to help.

For information of all our programs contact Alyson Stephens: 602-721-1673 or alysonstephens@q.com.

Manna Bags

We continue to work with the Casa Grande Police Department providing Manna Bags for officers to distribute in our community.

You can pick up Manna Bags to carry in your car to be shared with someone in need that you may meet in the course of your day.

Manna Bags generally include the following items:

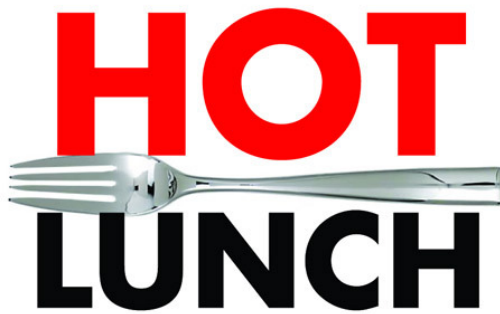
two 16.9 oz water bottles, packaged tuna, sausage, crackers (plain, with cheese or peanut butter), energy bars,



PayDay candy bars, fruit cups, hand wipes, plastic forks and spoons, in a gallon plastic bag.

Community Food Pantry

Our congregation has donated thousands of food items to the Casa Grande Food Bank. The second Sunday of each month has been designated as a day to support those in need. You are encouraged to make it a practice to bring food items each month for the food bank. Food bins are located at both of our sites.



Hot Lunch Program

You can help the Eloy lunch program on Wednesdays by providing 25-50 homemade or purchased “treats.” For information talk with Sandy Christopher. You can bring your “treats” to worship on Sunday and they will be delivered to the program site.

Request to Travelers

Contribute shampoo, conditioner, lotion, soap, toothpaste and coffee packets to Helping Hands, which assists families through mentoring, healthcare, nutrition, and emergency programs. A container is located in the entry at both sites.



Ladies Quilting Ministry

The group will be taking a break and resume meeting once again in the fall.

Thanks to all the women who have contributed to this ministry that provides a message of care and comfort to women and children of our community through the sharing of quilts.

A special thanks for the recent donation of several sets of quilt tops and bottoms, fabric and yarn. Such contributions are greatly appreciated!



City of Joy Rwanda

God's grace is on daily display and the Holy Spirit continues to build up the ministry taking place in Rwanda. You can support this inspirational ministry by sponsoring a student and supporting the graduates of the sewing program by purchasing items that have been created.

After visiting with us in January, the

Ellingson family briefly returned to Rwanda and have now settled in the Phoenix area.

Todd Ellingson, President and Founder of City of Joy

todd.d.ellingson@gmail.com

<http://cityofjoyrwanda.org>

<https://youtu.be/oDUbpBEfokk>



"Good Gifts" Ministry

Malawi is a landlocked country in southeast Africa that was formerly known as Nyasaland. The topography of the country is defined by highlands split by the Great Rift Valley and enormous Lake Malawi, which takes up about one-third of Malawi's area.

The population of Malawi is estimated at a little over 18 million. This estimate takes into account a lower life expectancy, and higher infant deaths, due to AIDS.

Malawi is among the world's least-developed countries. The economy is heavily based on agriculture, with a largely rural population. The government depends on outside aid to meet development needs. There are challenges in building and expanding the economy, improving education, healthcare, environmental protection, and becoming financially independent amidst widespread overpopulation and unemployment.

Our congregational campaign raised \$8,783, which has been increased to \$10,000 by the church council. These funds will allow us to partner with the Malawi Health and Wellness program. Through the direction of the Lutheran Church of Malawi our funds will be used to provide access to clean water, sanitation, livestock, farm equipment, fruit trees, medical supplies and medicines, school materials, and mosquito netting.

This is a specific breakdown of expenses:

- 2 simple water wells
- 4 latrines
- 1 fish farm
- 1 fruit tree nursery
- 4 women attending farming school
- 20 sets of farm tools
- 4 piglets
- 10 chicks
- 5 roosters
- 2 pair of goats
- 4 colonies of honey bees
- 1 month of medical supplies
- 1 classroom of school supplies
- 1 community of mosquito netting.

Thank you for your contributions to this ministry. You can continue to make individual donations to Good Gifts throughout the year. ELCA Good Gifts provide more than 50 different gift-giving options, starting at \$10, that fight disease and hunger, and transform lives around the world.

Remember in Prayer

Harry Brink, Willie Bergren, Harold Bonde, Marlita Buchholz, Trent Blessing, Judy Burruel, Sandy Carpenter, Carole Crain, Anne Decker, TJ Esco, Ellva Erickson, Pam Gardner, Tom Gearhart, Rachel Grack, Gerre Graves, Harold and Peggy Hall, Ron Jung, Tammy Kempke, Gertie Kenyon, Ruth Kramer, Norma Kringen, Gary and Bev Linafelter, Ken and Lois Morgan, Dick Mueser, Walt Neulieb, Red and Dede Parrish, Ruthann Raitter, Marcus Ramirez, Denise Shepard, Coby Snow, Julie Sternhagen, Linda Ward, Ski Wrybkowski.



Bereavement -- Jill Lui, her daughter Julie and family following the death of her son-in-law Eric.

Military Service -- Grant Davis, Ryan Harrison, Sean Harrison, Timothy Rupp, CJ Squires.

Financial News

“What You Have First Given Us”

Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us - our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

On the second weekend of each month we continue to prayerfully consider the challenge to double our offering. The reason for this proposal is the need to increase offerings and the belief many people have the ability to fulfill such a request. As we consider this challenge we can ask ourselves, “how come I don’t give more?” Thank you for your contributions to our growing ministry.

Internship Fund

The \$20,848 of contributions received for the internship program have been invested in an ELCA Mission Investment Fund account. The council will continue to evaluate the possibility of participating in the internship program in the futures or applying to other staffing needs.

Special note: At the annual meeting in January, it was approved to use \$6,000 of the fund to support the work of our tutor for our GED program this year.

Casa Grande Land Fund

Our property “growth fund” has a balance of \$14,618 for the purchase of a permanent Casa Grande site. Discussion of future possibilities is ongoing.

Council Meeting

The next meeting will be held later this summer in Casa Grande.

June Finances

Account information:

Offering Income for the Month: \$14,528

Balance General Fund: \$40,508

Average Monthly Expenses: \$19,000

Capital Fund: \$72,119 (includes \$30,000 savings from General Fund)

Internship Fund: \$20,848

Worship Schedule

Arizona City

Sunday - 8:30 a.m.

Casa Grande

Sunday -- 10 a.m.

Our Worship

Our focus is on the good news shared by God through Jesus Christ, and is celebrated through the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion.

Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday at all services.

Fellowship is held at both sites each Sunday.

Worship Assistants

You are needed to help as accompanist, greeter, usher, reader, communion server, offering counter, and nursery care. Sign-up to help.

Altar Flowers

Sign-up to provide flowers on the altar for a special remembrance or event.

Name Tags

We would like to have name tags for all of our worshipers. Sign up for yours.

Our Mission

“We are a Spirit-filled community of loving and caring, light-hearted people who joyfully invite all to share, through the Gospel, the love of Christ.”

Multi-Site Ministry

- Draw upon resources to meet the needs of each campus
 - Use of congregational resources based on needs
 - Programs at one or both sites
 - One governing body, one budget
 - Staff active on both campuses
 - Capital projects at both campuses
-

Church Family Photo Directory

Click here to go to the church [photo directory](#)

Contact Us

Church Office: churchoffice@centrallutheranaz.org
Pastor Thom Stephens: pastor@centrallutheranaz.org
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