



REFLECTIONS

Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church
PO Box 440

Vol. 49 No. 5

May 2026



Dear Friends,

We are now entering the month of May. May is a month with a whole range of remembering, endings, and beginnings. The remembering part comes in two important ways, first, is Mother's Day, Blessing of the Quilts celebrated on May 10th. Mother's Day gives honor to the ones in our life whose example, support, encouragement and love guided us along life's path. When we honor those persons it can not only be a "biological" mother, but someone else who fulfilled that role in our lives. It can be a grandmother, an aunt, a next door neighbor, and even a father who fulfills that role. On Mother's Day one year on the front page of a newspaper in community

where I served was the wonderful story of two sisters who without fail gave their dad both a mother's day and father's day card because they felt he fulfilled both roles very well. May we honor and give thanks to God for the ones who fulfilled that role in our lives. The other major piece of remembering is Memorial Day. In some ways its meaning gets crowded out with it being the first "long weekend" of the late spring early summer season. However one cannot overstate how important it is to remember those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for this country. As one familiar, if not over used expression notes "Freedom isn't free".

This also is the month where three of our confirmands make their confirmation on May 3rd. In doing so they will be declaring that the faith their parents raised them has become their faith. It is a new beginning for them, and we must remember to pray for them that with the challenges the world brings to us all these days they would grow in their faith and it would be a guiding force in the days and years ahead. We will also be honoring our seniors this month on May 17th as they prepare to graduate on the 24th of this month. It is good we do that. Their graduation is important milestone in the journey of their lives. May God remind us from time to time to pray for them as they enter the next phase of their life's journey?

May also marks the pause of the school release time program on Wednesdays until the fall. Thank you to all the folk that make that program possible especially Nancy Belland who coordinates the program. In the increasing secularization of this world, with the number of school activities and sports taking up so much time in a young person's life, this exposes them to basic Christian teaching and values which they might not get anywhere else.

Finally May is the month that we celebrate the Day of Pentecost (May 24th). Some have called it the "birthday of the church". I like to think of it as the day the draws attention to the importance of the Holy Spirit in proclaiming and living out the Christian faith. Luther says in the Small Catechism, that "*I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts and sanctified and kept me in true faith*". In another place Luther has reported to have said that he could not even say "Jesus is Lord" without the Holy Spirit. Because sometimes the world gets fixated on certain phenomena associated with the Holy Spirit we tend to bypass or forget the important work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and the church in proclaiming in word and deed the gospel of our Lord.

So May is quite the month for these noteworthy occasions and milestones. May we acknowledge them, give appropriate thanks to God, and perhaps learn from them in our walk with God and in the ministry and fellowship of our churches.

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor John



“Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.” (Romans 15:7)

April 7, 2026

Dear siblings in Christ across the Western North Dakota Synod,

Grace and peace to you from God our Creator and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The word *welcome* has shaped my faith, my understanding of the church, and my ministry among you. It is a word that speaks not only of hospitality, but of belonging. Not only of invitation, but of grace. It is a word that tells the truth about who we are because of Jesus: a people who have first been welcomed and therefore a people who are sent to welcome.

As I write to you, it is with a full and grateful heart. After prayerful discernment, I have accepted a call to serve the wider church as Executive for Christian Community and Leadership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Because of this new call, ***I will not be standing for re-election as bishop at our upcoming synod assembly.*** My last day serving as your bishop will be July 31, 2026. I will join ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry’s executive staff in September.

It is difficult to put into words what these past six years have meant to my family and me. You have welcomed us—not only into this role, but into your congregations, your communities, and your lives. Together, our shared mission and ministry have invited us to walk through moments of deep challenge and surprising grace. Holy moments in small and large congregations that show up for their neighbors with quiet faithfulness. Holy moments with leaders—rostered and lay—who proclaim the gospel with courage and care. Holy moments as you accompany one another through loss, change, and new beginnings. Again and again, I have witnessed holy moments that bring to life what it means to “welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.”

This next season will be one of transition for our synod. Transitions can bring uncertainty, and they can also open space for renewal. I invite you to enter this time grounded in prayer. Prayer for those who will be discerning a call to serve as our next bishop, prayer for the voting members of the synod assembly, and prayer for the Spirit to guide and sustain this synod in the days ahead.

As I am preparing to step into this new role in the wider church, I know you will be with me. Though my call is changing, our shared mission and ministry remain the same: to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and to embody his welcome in a world that longs for belonging. Thank you for the gift of serving as your bishop. It has been one of the greatest honors of my life.

I trust that the Spirit who has guided us thus far will continue to lead you and me into the future God is preparing. I trust that Christ is already at work among you. And I trust that the welcome you have lived so faithfully will continue to glorify God in ways yet unseen.

In Christ’s peace,
The Rev. Craig A. Schweitzer
Bishop, Western North Dakota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Our Sympathy to the families and friends of Don Urlacher, Randy Crawford, Mavis Zahn May Jesus' triumph over death and the grave help sustain these families in their time of sorrow.



Badland's Ministries New England Day Camp will be held July 27th—30th



Join us on May 3rd as we celebrate our Confirmands and this meaningful milestone in their faith journey.

Special Dates this Month

- *National Day of Prayer, May 7, 2026*
- *Mother's Day, Blessing of the Quilts May 10, 2026*
- *Ascension of the Lord, May 14, 2026*
- *Armed Forces Day, May 16, 2026*
- *Victoria Day [Canada], May 18, 2026*
- *Day of Pentecost, May 24, 2026*
- *Memorial Day, May 25, 2026*
- *Trinity Sunday, May 31, 2026*



SYNOD Assembly May 29th –31st in Watford City.
We are looking for 2 individuals interested in attending. If you have any questions please ask Pastor John or any member of council.

Join us on May 17th as we celebrate our graduates. Come share in this special time of recognition, and community as we wish them well on their next chapter. All are welcome!

Celebrating
OUR GRADUATES



May 1 st	Connie Lutz Donna Rustan-Stang
May 3 rd	Brian Bautz Jill Erickson
May 5 th	Alexander Jahner Julie Rafferty
May 6 th	Amy Kuehl
May 9 th	Pam Nester
May 10 th	Grady Bock
May 11 th	Scott Tieszen
May 12 th	Anastasia Brinkmeyer Aiden Rafferty
May 13 th	Richard & Connie Lutz (A)
May 15 th	Stacey Opdahl
May 16 th	Geraldine Christiansen Michael Jung Shya Epperly
May 17 th	Jeff Hewson
May 19 th	Joshua Schatz
May 21 st	Grace Bieber
May 22 nd	Julie Opdahl Travis Zenker
May 24 th	Craig Brinkmeyer
May 25 th	Vic Johnson Bruce & Judy Bender (A)
May 26 th	Jon & Kim Lutz (A) Henley Johnson
May 28 th	Bonnie Bohlman Lexi Jones Brantly Epperly
May 29 th	Ann Redetzke Tucker Bock Shyann Awender Abbygail Schmidt
May 31 st	Scott Erickson Diane Klein Brian & DelRae Jung (A)

WORSHIP HELPERS

USHERS:

May	3 rd	Nancy
May	10 th	
May	17 th	Aiden & McKoy
May	24 th	
May	31 st	Lee & Judy

Altar Guild: Dorothy

READERS:

May	3 rd	Leah
May	10 th	Bonnie
May	17 th	Tucker & Jordan
May	24 th	Diane W
May	31 st	Lee

COMMUNION:

May	3 rd	Tara
May	10 th	Rita
May	17 th	Emma
May	24 th	
May	31 st	

April 15th Council meeting minutes



Mark called meeting to order, pastor made devotions

Secretary's report – motion to approve by Judy second by Teresa

Treasure's Report – motion to approve by Doug, second by Kristen

Pastors Report – Pastor had a nice time at the night at the races

Pastor John possibly planning trip to Germany Oct 26- Nov 5

Also planning to attend boundary training in Bismarck recommended by synod April 17th

Synod Assembly May 29 – 31 Watford City/Bishop Election

Planning Vacation July 2 – 15

Considering new members classes on Sundays after church (3 classes) no dates set yet, possibly fall of 2026

Discussed church school release program, NE school board to discuss also

Committee reports-

Mission and ministry – brunch this Sunday 19th worship in the park dates (June 14th, July 26, August 16th) Badlands Ministry day camp is July 27 through 30th, brunch this Sunday after church

Education – confirmation May 3rd, May 17th is senior Sunday, Badlands Medora fun is cancelled, Badlands ministry day camp, volunteers to house and feed (evening meals) ministry members May 27th -30th - Dinner(supper) meals needed for Monday and Wednesday for ministry members (3 people)

Property – Laurie contacted A1 sprinklers to complete spring start up service, motioned by Judy, Teresa seconded motion - leak identified in the heater water line, copper line is temporarily patched, Mark spoke to Martin heating and cooling to address issues, Mark to contact Austin M about fixing leaking pipe

Trust Fund – Sandy motioned to approved, second by Kristen to approved report

Old business –

Laurie contacted Chris Riendel about speakers for chimes, waiting to hear back

Looking for 2 delegates to attend Western Synod May 29th -31st Watford City

New Business –

Pastor to hold town hall, please direct comments/questions to the Pastor (Pastor John's request) town hall to be held Sunday April 19th

Sunday service, town hall, brunch to be served

Next Meeting – May 20th



WELCA News May 2026

Blessing of the quilts will take place on May 10. The quilting ladies will place the quilts on the pews on Saturday, May 9. Thank you to all the quilting ladies for your work on the quilts this year. Also thank you for helping to make covers for the ice packs at the Mott Care Center.

A Senior Reception will be held after the Senior worship service on May 17 for our NEHS graduates and their families. Cupcakes and treats will be served. A time will be set up the following week for the twenty-six NEHS graduates to come and pick out a quilt. Thank you to the quilting ladies for providing these quilts for the graduates. Congratulations to all the Graduates!!

Jodi Moore of the Mott Care Center has asked the ladies to come down for the monthly birthday party for the residents of the Mott Care Center. This will be discussed at our next meeting.





WELCA hosted the Potluck lunch for the Installation of Pastor John. Thank you to everyone who helped on this lunch. Delicious homemade food was served. WELCA also served rolls, fruit, coffee and juice on Easter Sunday morning, thank you to all the ladies who brought rolls, served and cleaned up. Thank you to the ladies who brought bars and served the Celebration of Life for Randy Crawford.

On April 23, six ladies went to St. Luke's Home to help serve their April Birthday party. Ice cream that the residents made was served. Flowers were given to the five birthday people for April. Ladies, thank you so much for helping with this event.



May is the month of promise and the sweet beginnings of summer. Where flowers bloom so does hope. Enjoy the flowers and the sunshine.

MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR.	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3 Coffee 9am Worship 10am Confirmation!! 	4	5	6 Bible Study 10am	7	8	9
10 Coffee 9am Worship 10am Blessing of the Quilts 	11	12	13 Bible Study 10am	14	15	16
17 Coffee 9am Worship 10am Senior Sunday!! 	18	19	20 Bible Study 10am Church Council 7pm	21	22	23
24 Coffee 9am Worship 10am 31 Coffee 9am Worship 10am	25 	26	27 Bible Study 10am	28	29 SYNOD Assembly In Watford	30

OUR REDEEMER'S LUTHERAN CHURCH - ELCA
PO Box 440
New England, ND 58647

CHURCH STAFF

Interm Pastor: John VanHaneghan
Secretary: Laurie Monke
Music: Julie Opdahl
Janitor: Laurie Monke
Treasurer Laurie Monke

name



GREATER LOVE

has no one than this:
to lay down one's life
for one's friends.

John 15:13, NIV

