



JESUS AND THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY
Jesus sat upon the ground, and with his fingers wrote on the ground, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. (John 8: 6, 7)

Recently I was asked whether freedom of speech is defended/guaranteed in the Bible. Freedom of Speech of course is a right protected in the U.S. Constitution, and with all rights, it is based upon the “inalienable rights” granted to human beings by their Creator (i.e., God). It is important to note, however, that this list of inalienable rights doesn’t necessarily come from the Bible. After all, many of the formulators of our nation’s constitution were Deists. They didn’t believe in the God revealed to us in the Bible – a God who is directly involved in the ongoing story and lives of His creation out of love for them. They believed in a divine watchmaker, a God who set everything in order, and then stepped away from the picture after setting everything in motion. For Deists, a God who interacts with humanity through acts of divine revelation (such as God does at Mount Sinai, the Transfiguration, and the Resurrection of Jesus) is nothing more than a myth. Instead, many Deists, including some of the founding fathers, believed

that God the Creator could only reveal Himself through the Law He had written upon the human heart “in the beginning.”

As Christians who recognize that God has directly revealed Himself through events such as the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, the Transfiguration of our Lord, and His miraculous rising from the dead, we must reject this image of a divine watchmaker. Yes, God did create all things, but He continues to sustain this creation and be directly involved in it. Because their concept of revelation was so different from what we as Christians know revelation to be, we should expect for their conclusions about what constitutes an “inalienable right” to be different from our own. How do we know what our inalienable rights are as creatures? We know them from the Bible, the Word of our Creator which directly tells us who we are, how we should live, and what His purpose for our lives is. On that note, the question of whether or not freedom of speech is a God-given right is still a difficult one.

Certainly, God does not compel human beings to say anything. We certainly have the freedom to say whatever we desire. Nonetheless, because we have the freedom to do something does not mean that it is always right to do anything. God has given us His Law – how we should live god-pleasing lives – to tell us what we should and shouldn’t do. As Christians, those

who have been forgiven their sins in Christ Jesus and set free from the condemnation of the Law for our sins, we are now lords of this Law. The Law does not determine our relationship with God. We are solely righteous because of Christ Jesus and His fulfillment of the Law. As Luther says, we are lords of everything. Yet, at the same time, since we have been redeemed by the Crucified One, we also have a different concept of freedom than that of the world. We are set free to serve our neighbor. So, while we are lords of everything through Christ Jesus, we are also servants of everyone.

For this reason, we live lives in accordance with the Law because the Law reveals how we might serve our neighbor. The Law shapes the way we should speak. We shouldn't talk negatively about our neighbors behind their backs (Proverbs 24:28-29), we should speak kindly and compassionately towards one another (Ephesians 4:23), we should seek to defend and build up our neighbor's good reputation because good reputations are a gift from God (Ecclesiastes 7:1), and we should always be willing and quick to offer a word of forgiveness when our neighbor sins against us (Colossians 3:13). Is freedom of speech an inalienable right given to us by our Creator? Yes and no. We have been set free from sin, condemnation, and the Devil by Christ Jesus. This freedom, however, takes the form of service for our neighbor. "If any would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." (Mark 9:35) Therefore, whatever we say and do as Christians is done freely out of service for our neighbor. In summary, just because you can say something doesn't mean that you should say something. Before speaking we should ask ourselves: Is what I'm about to say true? If so, is what I'm about to say necessary? And if so, how can I say it in a kind way that builds up my neighbor? Maybe we'll all become a bit quieter when we ask ourselves these questions. At the same time, we should become more loquacious for the sake of our neighbors like the civil rights activists did all those years ago. Happy Epiphany and a blessed Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Pastor Blake

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BAPTISM

We welcomed into our church family Stephen Paul Nicely Jr., son of Stephen & Kendi Nicely, grandson of Joyce Torres on Sunday, Dec. 22 through Holy Baptism. Welcome Stephen!

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BIBLE STUDIES

BIBLE STUDIES are being held on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m. at Christ Lutheran as we study the lectionary readings from the previous Sunday. St. Thomas holds their bible studies on Thursday evenings at 6:00 p.m. There are no bible studies on the 2nd week of the month as Pastor is at meetings that week. We would love to see you!

REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Kathy Braeshear	Palagia Hlava	Lorene Kozar	Bill Crile
Richard	Carol Poston	Heather Poston	Deb Wolff
Patty Abramovich	Allan	Isabella Andrews	Ray Bishop
Brian	Carl	Russ & Lana Carnes	Dan
Danny	Debbie	Sarah Dorris Earle	Yorum Fierenstein
Gary	Heidi	Anita Hlava	Daniel Gump and wife
Kenny Hanson	Ida Hoover	Jeff Pattie	Jerry
Jim	Jim	John	John
John	John Zema	Kathy	Kenny
Kevin	Kim	Larry Kraus	Laura & family
Logan	McGowan family	Dan Meenach	Amanda Nicely
Denise Nicely	Patriots family	Patti	Virginia Pollack
Roger Smith	Rev. Rob Sparr	Steve	Susan
Tina	Selby Vaughn	Rich Villers	Bennie Wegener
Mary Whittaker			

Our College Students—Grace Rohaley, Corey Hautmann, Thomas Ayers, Jacob Zimmerman

Our Military members—Troy Roman and Ben Wolff

The world/USA—racism and lack of love outside of God's words

Our military veterans All Natural disaster victims COVID virus patients

Gaza & Israel victims Ukraine refugees

**The power of prayer is so miraculous that we would love to hear good news about someone on this list!
Please let the church know or call Marla at 330-472-3045. Thank you!**

Our shut-ins—please send them a card

Carole Poston
12790 Chamberlain
Aurora, OH 44202

Lorene Kozar
8460 Westport Dr. #225
Mentor, Oh 44060

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JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays

6-Joanna Nicely
6-Gabe Manijak
12-Deb Wolff
21-Nicole Manijak
22-Sam Nicely
28-Logan Hagen
29-Rory Wolff
30-Becky Larkins



JANUARY BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS

Baptism Birthdays

11-Kathy Brashear
13-Ben Wolff
25-Grace Rohaley
31-Amy Rohaley

FACEBOOK

Thank you everybody! We have reached our 100 followers and we are now streaming live again of our services. You can watch live or on Facebook page at a later time. We couldn't have done it without you!

PROPERTY NEWS

The front doors have been replaced and the door in the sanctuary. They are working on the fellowship doors.

The Sound System has been replaced. Thank you to the men at Woodsy's in Kent, Gilbert Ayers and Rory Wolff.

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CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Thank you to everyone who helped decorate the church for our Christmas Eve service. The sanctuary looked beautiful. Thank you to all our readers and candle lighters, to Lynn Kanengeiser for her joyous song "Mary Did you Know" and to Amy Rohaley for her beautiful music.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

On January 9th at 6:00 p.m. we will celebrate Epiphany with a special Bible Study and potluck at St. Thomas. Christ Lutheran has been invited also. Come to learn about one of the most important seasons of the Church Year and enjoy fellowship and food. Bring a dish to share!

On January 19th from 6:30-8:30 we will be celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Day by watching the documentary "An American Conscience: The Reinhold Niebuhr Story" followed by discussion. Refreshments will be provided.

OUR SERVICE PROJECTS

We remember all those who are facing a crisis in their lives. Lutheran Missions Ministry is our main organization that we donate to. Mark on your envelopes "Lutheran Mission Ministry".

Please remember the families of Streetsboro by donating to the Streetsboro Community Pantry with a monetary donation or food donation. You can do this through the church through your offering or placing food items in the basket in the Narthex.

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Your January-March Portal of Prayers are here. You can find them on the stand by the door.

Church Council will be meeting Thursday, January 16 at 7:00 p.m. If there is something you would like the council to work on, please let one of the council members know. They are Steve Hlava-president, Del Groff-Vice President, Joyce Torres-Secretary, Deb Wolff-Financial Secretary, Guy Jeanblanc, Gilbert Ayers and Stephanie Manijak.

Contact Person: Please call Pastor Blake Martzowka at the church on Thursdays from 9-3 at 330-626-4945 or on his cell phone 989-372-5318 for emergencies or Council President Steve Hlava at 330 422-1959 for any emergencies or questions.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Thank you to our council members who gave us Stewardship Moments for the past 5 Sundays. They were very insightful and much appreciated.

If you haven't sent back your Stewardship form yet, please do so as soon as possible. Thank you.

Please pick up your new envelopes today. They are in the narthex on the table. Please put your name on the first envelope so Deb can put a name to a number.

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The 2025 budget was approved at our congregational meeting on Oct. 6. Our new weekly need is \$1,306.73. Please help us meet this goal through your stewardship giving. Thank you!

TREASURERS REPORT - Month of November 2024

	Current Month:	Current YTD	Prior YTD:
TOTAL INCOME - General Fund Only	7491.11	90444.09	52171.17
TOTAL EXPENSE - General Fund Only	9323.73	69096.34	60064.35
NET GAIN (LOSS)	(1832.62)	21347.75	(7893.18)
TOTAL INCOME - Special Funds (See Below)	264.00	6406.50	3435.42
TOTAL EXPENSE- Special Funds (See Below)	0.00	657.52	358.57
NET GAIN (LOSS)	264.00	5748.98	3076.85
Average General Fund Income Per Week	1872.78	1924.34	1110.02
Amount needed to meet expense budget - per week	<u>1306.73</u>		

Special Funds Include:

Special Building/Property, Pastor's Second Chance, Memorial Gifts, New Building, Lutheran Women's Group, 5th Sunday Benevolence



**P.O. Box 2247
9042 State Route 43
Streetsboro, OH 44241**

Change Service Requested

**THE PARISH VOICE NEWSLETTER
Office: 330-626-4945
Web Site: www.stthomasstreetsboro.com**

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

TRADITIONAL WORSHIP SERVICE 9:00 A.M.

PLEASE JOIN US INSIDE

LIVE ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

OR IN CHURCH PARKING LOT ON CHANNEL 96.9 FM

BIBLE STUDY THURSDAYS 6:00 P.M.