



From the Desk of Pastor Meyer

This month, I'm going to stir the pot a bit, not to cause controversy, but to challenge you to take a thoughtful, Biblical worldview.

On June 27, 2024, via video, the Oklahoma Superintendent of Schools declared, "We will be issuing a memo today that every school district will adhere to, which is that every teacher and every classroom in the state will have a Bible in the classroom and will be teaching from the Bible in the classroom." It paralleled the move earlier in the summer with Louisiana and Alabama requiring the Ten Commandments to be posted and taught in public schools. Reactions in all three states, and across the nation, were swift and loud. Some argued against it, saying such rules were failures of the separation of church and state clause of the US Constitution, while others cheered that the rules were a return to the basic teachings which society is built upon. *How do you feel about these rulings?*

Here's where I am going to stir the pot. I think such rules are a terrible idea. I have several reasons why.

- 1) As Lutheran Christians we cannot assume that the Bible or Ten Commandments will be taught with a Christ-centered message with the forgiveness of sins as the overarching theme. If the Bible is taught as nothing but a book of morals, the Bible becomes nothing more than a sanctified Aesop's Fables, a return to the Law of Moses. That is not the intention of the Bible.
- 2) As a Lutheran Christian, I do not want a non-Christian, an agnostic, an atheist, a Muslim, a Jehovah's Witness, teaching the sacred Scripture to the children of my congregation. Their confession (or lack thereof) would prevent them from teaching Jesus as the Way, Truth and Life. What does He then become? Nothing more than a model for moralism – a far cry from who He is.
- 3) Have you seen the TV commercial where a high-speed cable technician tries to teach English? The class is an epic failure and even the students call the "teacher" out. As Lutheran Christians we cannot assume that the teachers are students of the Bible, are Christians, or have the same Biblical understanding that we have. There is a reason you are a Missouri Synod Lutheran and not _____. At its most fundamental basis, will the Bible be taught as God's Word that does not change, or will it be said that it merely contains God's Word that can bend and flex with the times?
- 4) Equal opportunists will want other "sacred texts" taught as well. As Lutherans Christians, do you want your child learning the Bagvad Gita (Buddhist), the Quoran (Muslim) or the Book of Mormon, told that all such texts are equal, or worse, that they are even greater than the Bible?
- 5) Even if the Bible were taught "merely" as a Bible as literature class, it strips the sanctity away and treats it as a parallel to Norton's Anthology of World Literature. One does not need to use the Bible to find literary examples of poetry, exhortation, rhetoric, etc.
- 6) Regarding the Ten Commandments as a guideline for morals and ethics, I preached a sermon on this in March (<https://crossesandwoodshavings.blogspot.com/2024/03/the-ten-commandments-are-not-answer.html>). The Ten Commandments were given by God to establish boundaries around His people and around His gifts to His people, over and against how the rest of the world lived. "I am the Lord your God," the commandments began. It establishes the relationship: God and people,

people and God. But, unless those commandments are seen as completed and fulfilled in Christ, the result is, at best, pietism; at worst, self-righteousness.

- 7) The devil doesn't care if the Ten Commandments or the Bible are in the classroom. In fact, he is probably dancing jigs because he can use these as fuel for anti-Biblical demonstrations and a continued push against Christ and His Church.

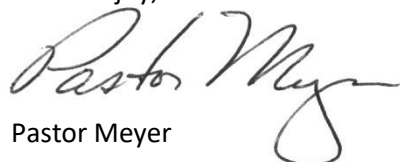
While I am on a roll, raising blood pressure and heart rates, I'll also speak against public prayer in the classroom. As Lutherans, do not assume that all prayer is equal. Generally, schools don't care what is prayed if it is neutral, inclusive, and un-offensive. How can one be neutral in prayer? Christian prayer is an intimate conversation with God through Christ Jesus. If prayer is allowed, other religions, false religions, would have equal right to offer prayers to their deities. A Sikh, Jew, Muslim, or even a pastafarian (look it up: that is a legit Federally recognized religion) could lead prayer. Too, listen to what passes for "Christian" prayer at these events. The goofiness and downright unfaithfulness mock Christian prayer. I offer as my chief example, the Baptist preacher who prayed for the Fords, Chevys, Toyotas and Dodges, along with his "smokin' hot wife," before a NASCAR race. *Sigh*

Dear parent: it is your vocational responsibility to teach the Scriptures to your children, so that they see Christ clearly in the pages of the Bible. Luther pushed for *the home* to be the primary place of learning the Scriptures, not Sunday school or confirmation class, with the parents, not the pastor, as the primary teacher. It is your vocation as parents and sponsors (and as the body of Christ) to see that children are raised in the fear and knowledge of the Lord. You made that vow in the Baptismal liturgy. While there are many faithful, Christian men and women who serve as public school teachers, living their faith in front of their students, this is your task. Do not surrender this responsibility to public schools, regardless the placement of a Bible or Ten Commandments. Teach the faith in your home. Open your Bibles together as a family. Learn the Catechism together. Pray together. Model faithfulness in devotion and in life so your kids see you and emulate you as they grow and become adults.

While I might not support prayer in schools, I strongly urge prayer for schools. As your children and grandchildren return to school, remember those teachers and administrators and school staff members in your prayers. Pray for their health and wellbeing; that they may be instruments of learning; that they are granted peace and grace and strength to meet the many challenges before them. Pray for your children and grandchildren and their classmates, that they are given open minds to listen and learn and grow; that they are challenged and pushed to attain new levels of learning; that they are given inquisitive minds. Pray for administrators who are often overwhelmed by what is expected and demanded of them from above while trying to meet the needs of those below, both staff and families.

There are plenty of things to note in this month's MESSENGER, so read carefully. Watch for updates for Junior Confirmation in the weeks ahead in the bulletin – we start class after Labor Day. MVES will be using our building again on a regular basis throughout the school year. As always, don't be afraid to pick up your phone and call or text people whom you haven't seen in a few weeks in worship. Let them know they are missed and you hope to see them soon. Finally, this is that last MESSENGER to be mailed out to the whole congregation. The September issue will be available the last weekend of the month for you to pick up at church. We will mail it to our home-bound and shut-in members. If you want to confirm being on that list, give us a call at the church by August 20.

Peace & joy,



Pastor Meyer