

Trinity Tribune: May 2025

Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church
Paola, Kansas

“The Lutheran View of the Papacy”

The death of Pope Francis has been on all the news, quite understandably. The pope is not just a religious figure, but he’s a world figure who is the face (whether we like it or not) of the Western Church and who leads a denomination of millions of people worldwide. What follows will be a conclave of the cardinals to choose the next pope.

What should we as Lutherans make of the papacy? After all, Luther famously broke from the “Catholic church” of his day. He criticized the pope as a worldly figure interested in power. These criticisms struck a nerve—after all, Pope Julius II (1503–1513) was indeed a pope who controlled many territories and even wore armor to go into battle against his enemies. Under his papacy the Papal States reached its heights, governing ~17,000 square miles, or roughly a fifth of the land area of Kansas.

The papacy has changed much since those days. He no longer marches into battle or controls an earthly kingdom. The Vatican today is a paltry 109 acres. Yet many of Martin Luther’s criticisms still ring true. Why? The deeper problems that we have with the papacy still remain.

Our Lutheran Confessions include a document called “On the Power and Primacy of the Pope.” It was written by a colleague of Martin Luther named Phillip Melancthon. He summarizes the three Lutheran oppositions to the papacy:

The Roman Pontiff claims for himself that he is supreme above all bishops and pastors by divine right.

Secondly, he adds that by divine right he has both swords, that is, the authority also to enthrone and depose kings, regulate secular dominions, and such.

Thirdly, he says that to believe this is necessary for salvation. For these reasons, the Roman bishop calls himself the vicar of Christ on earth.

This document includes many supporting Bible verses and is well worth reading. To summarize, the papacy claims all ecclesiastical (churchly) authority, divine authority to depose earthly kings, and regards himself Christ’s substitute on earth (which is what “vicar of Christ” means), outside of whom is no salvation.

For all these reasons, this Lutheran document makes an argument that may sound foreign to modern ears: that the papacy is the Antichrist (par 39 of Power & Primacy of the Pope). Firstly, I must note that the Antichrist is not some ghoulish figure as portrayed in some movies. Rather, “anti” can have

two meanings, both of which fit when combined with “Christ.” “Anti” can mean “against” but also “in place of.” The papacy is both against Christ and His words (because he claims all ecclesiastical power and the power to depose kings), and he seeks to *take Christ’s place* in the Church.

The Bible uses this term antichrist in both ways. First, there is not just one Antichrist who is against Christ, but many. St. John writes, “**Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us**” (1 John 2:18–19). The rest of the chapter is instructive. Antichrists “lie” and “deceive” (v. 22). There are many of them, because there are many in this world who hate Jesus. They array themselves *against* Christ.

The Antichrist also seeks to displace Jesus or pretend to act in His stead, ruling the church. St. Paul describes him as “the lawless one” in 2 Thessalonians 2: “**For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God**” (3–4). He continues: “**The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved**” (9–10).

The clearest part of this text is where the lawless one, or the Antichrist in St. John’s words, sits within the church, proclaiming himself to be God. We as Lutherans argue that this is what the papacy is claiming for itself: there is no salvation outside the Pope, who claims supreme and universal authority over the Church.

If the shoe fits, it fits. We may agree with some actions or decisions that a singular pope may make that seem more biblical. I agree with some reforms the Catholic church made in Vatican II (using vernacular languages in worship, for example). But at the end of the day, the papacy has not renounced its claim to power or its demands that all Christians ought to submit to his authority in order to be saved. While the papacy claims this, it is correctly identified by St. John and St. Paul as the Antichrist.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Woelmer



Birthdays

- May 1.....Clint Haley
- May 1..... Eric Prothe
- May 1..... Elijah Minden
- May 2..... Brad Hendrickson
- May 3..... Steve McMullin
- May 3..... Sondra Loftiss
- May 4..... Maysen Armstrong
- May 4..... Alex Brack
- May 4..... Tyler Vaughan
- May 5..... Sarah Berner
- May 5..... Kameron Alpert-Munir
- May 5..... Mallory Allcorn
- May 7..... Henry Vaughn
- May 8..... Garrett Rausch
- May 8..... Chloe Rausch
- May 8..... Jim Ohlmeier
- May 9..... Melanie Pana
- May 9..... Wrenley Hager
- May 10..... Bobbie Jo Debrick
- May 10..... Kathy Haley
- May 10..... Bobbie Kunard
- May 10..... Johnny Pagels
- May 11..... Denise Holtz
- May 13..... Kraig Kettler
- May 13..... Lucy Kettler
- May 13..... Nathan Peckman
- May 13..... Nicholas Peckman
- May 14..... Trish Armstrong
- May 14..... Miranda Ferrell
- May 14..... Beth D’Amato
- May 15..... Matthew Reynolds
- May 15..... Kris Stubbs
- May 15..... Bill Eilts
- May 15..... Carolyn Enyeart
- May 16..... Bernice Prothe
- May 17..... Lori Donahue
- May 17..... Dean Gerken
- May 17..... Sherri Webb
- May 17..... Schyler Bogle
- May 18..... Emily Kettler
- May 18..... Susan Ashley
- May 19..... Jackie Smith
- May 19..... Samuel Allred
- May 19..... Abigail Allred
- May 20..... Paul Sombke

- May 21David Herrs
- May 21Barb Koelsch
- May 21 Clifford Prothe
- May 21 Leslie Rudzinski
- May 23 Andy Brack
- May 23 Jeanne Hutchison
- May 23 Amanda Maisch
- May 23 Shane Gibson
- May 23 Ray Roeser
- May 24 Taylor Karrow
- May 25 Stephanie Debrick
- May 25 Roger Holtz
- May 25 Kristie McMullin
- May 26 Scott Gerken
- May 26 Sharon Grother
- May 28 Alyssa Holtz
- May 28 Kayla Massey
- May 28 Dale Prothe
- May 28 Rawena Shay
- May 28 Becky Hager
- May 29 Wendy Bryant
- May 29 Brandon Gibson
- May 29 Aliyah Lester
- May 30 Ginny Linville
- May 31 Sarah Pemberton
- May 31 Janet Koelsch
- May 31 Amanda Stubbs

Anniversaries

- May 1 Randy and Jennifer Rethman (27)
- May 1 Dale and Patty Moser (32)
- May 16 Ed and Marcie Reyelts (37)
- May 19 Mike and Linda Oberheide (46)
- May 19 Clifford and Donna Prothe 62)
- May 22 Wendell and Breanna Strawder (4)
- May 25 Jeff and Pam Thompson (45)
- May 25 Alex and Jeri Brack (6)
- May 30 Stan and Gayle Plummer (44)
- May 31 John and Lori Schlegel (22)

COFFEE HOUR

Everyone is invited to stay for Coffee Hour in the Gathering Room following worship. Our thanks to those that provide snacks each Sunday. The signup sheet to provide snacks for Coffee Hour in 2025 is on the counter in the Gathering Room. Consider signing up to honor birthdays, wedding anniversaries, etc.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS: "Survey of the Bible"

Our Bible Study is a Survey of the Bible, looking at each book of the Bible in overview. Although there are 66 books of the Bible, we will be combining a few and to make it through the whole Bible in a year. Join the Adult Bible Class at 9 a.m. on Sundays in the Heritage Room!

"LOOKING AHEAD" BIBLE STUDY

We meet on Wednesdays from 10:30–11:30 AM in the Heritage Room. We study the Scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday service, so you can get a "sneak peek" of what you will hear on Sunday.

VOTERS MINUTES

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Windler, followed with prayer by Pastor Woelmer. Roll was answered by 22 members; there were no new member requests. Financial reports by the home treasurer and mission treasurer were given. Pastor Woelmer's Q1 2025 report was given. Elders reported on updated church secretary job duties, and efforts to achieve a realistic membership count as reported to Kansas District. Trustees report included cleanup day went well, parking lot signage/handrailing/gravel work to be addressed, organ repairs to be addressed, and feedback is welcomed on weekly church cleaning. Reports were heard from the Endowment, Board of Education, Youth, and Blocktoberfest committees. New business items addressed included approval of transfers as noted in Pastors report, and formation of a committee to address accurate membership reporting (Pastor and elders to coordinate). Reminder was given to designate thrivent choice dollars, to update memorials list, to channel historian items to appropriate place, to check bulletin board for any correspondence, of upcoming VBS at First Lutheran, and that the church will be locked in conjunction with upcoming May elections.



Confirmation
Sunday

Confirmation and First Communion will be held during our Divine Service on May 4. This year's Confirmands are Bailey Chilson and August Meyer.

NURSING HOME SERVICES

You are invited to help Trinity provide brief worship services for nursing home residents this month. The simple services are approximately 20 minutes in length at each home. This month, we are scheduled for Sunday, **May 18th**. We will begin at 1:30 pm at Country Club Estates, and then go to Vintage Park around 2:15 for the second service. The residents really enjoy these services, especially singing their favorite hymns. It's great to have church members there to greet the residents and sing along. We have a few members who help but we could use your help too!



On June 1 we will observe Ascension Sunday with an outdoor service in the Shelter House! Other outdoor services for this year are July 6 in observance of Independence Day and our annual Blocktoberfest Outdoor Service on September 20.

WORSHIP SERVICES IN JUNE/JULY

Please note the upcoming schedule for June/July with some minor changes to the communion schedule, working around the Shelter House services!

June 1: Ascension Sunday
Shelter House, no communion

June 8: Pentecost Sunday
Holy Communion

June 15: Trinity Sunday
Holy Communion

June 22: 1st Sunday after Trinity
No Communion

June 29: 2nd Sunday after Trinity
Holy Communion

July 6: Independence Day service
Shelter House, no communion

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Vacation Bible School at First Lutheran has been scheduled for June 16–19, from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. A sign-up link for children will be posted after Easter, but reserve this week in your calendar! Volunteers (both youth and adults) are also appreciated—a sign-up sheet for this will be on the counter in the Gathering Room. The theme this year will be “Epic Australian Adventure.” Right on, mate!



AUBURN PHARMACY CAPS

Please save your Auburn Pharmacy caps, Trinity earns 25 cents for every specially marked cap collected from Auburn Pharmacy and submitted! There are 4 submission periods per year with an opportunity to earn up to \$2500 per period! There is a box in the gathering room for collection.

BLOCKTOBERFEST PLANNING

It's that time of year! Join us on Wednesday, May 7, at 6:30 p.m., at the Shelter House to kick off planning for this year's Blocktoberfest!



SHELTER HOUSE ONLINE RESERVATIONS

As we approach the summer months, a reminder that we have an online reservation system for the Trinity Lutheran School Memorial Shelter House. It automatically shows which dates and times are open up to two years in advance, and it is easy to make your reservations online. Go to our church website at www.trinitylcms.org/shelter. You will also find there the rules for Shelter House usage. If you do not have access to a computer to make your reservation, you can simply call or speak to Pastor Woelmer, and he will make the reservation for you.

BONUS ARTICLE: CONGREGATION-DISTRICT-SYNOD

There are some topics that I'll write about that I don't think are necessary worthy of being "above the fold" (newsletter parlance for being the first thing you see). This one is a bit of the background of our congregation as it relates to others that agree in doctrine and are united in purpose.

Our congregation, as chartered in our governing documents, is named "Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, Paola, Miami County, Kansas" (Constitution, Article 1). We are a stand-alone organization with our own baptized and confirmed membership. However, we also belong to a larger organization called a "synod." We are a member of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), along with 6000 other congregations and around 9000 pastors. Those congregations have collectively around 1.7 million members.

Just a note about the name of the LCMS: it used to be a longer German title with Missouri being the first state mentioned. "Ohio and other states" followed Missouri, but when we switched from German to English, this is the English name that the synod convention decided upon.

The LCMS does not control its congregations or their church buildings. In the words of the LCMS's constitution, it is "advisory." It can, however, remove pastors or congregations from its membership who stray from Lutheran doctrine. That congregation would retain its property rights, though. (Other synods like the ELCA tend to own the church buildings, making a separation much more difficult.)

There are many benefits to being in a synod with other congregations. For one, there is a sense of unity that we can have as we rely on one another for mutual support. If you are traveling, you can look up another LCMS church to attend on a Sunday morning and take communion there.

Second, the synod operates two seminaries for training pastors, one in St. Louis, MO, and the other in Fort Wayne, IN. There are six universities for training faithful laity in various vocations, especially teachers and other church workers. These are in Seward, NE; Mequon (Milwaukee), WI; Chicago, IL; Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN; Irvine, CA; and Austin, TX.

Third, we can pool resources easily for mission work, mercy work, and publicity. The LCMS has active mission work in ~90 countries around the world. It operates emergency response and disaster relief, and receives grants to support this activity. There is also an LCMS radio station, KFUE, that operates many syndicated and streaming programs on a variety of topics. There is also "The Lutheran Hour" that is heard by many Americans on Sunday mornings.

Fourth, we are able to support a publishing house, Concordia Publishing House (CPH), which publishes everything from curriculum to children's books to journals to professional volumes. You'll probably find something for you on their website!

Finally, the LCMS is in full doctrinal fellowship with more than 35 confessional Lutheran church bodies worldwide. We support theological education overseas and encourage other faithful Lutheran synods around the world.

The LCMS is further divided into Districts and Circuits. We are in the Kansas District, comprised of 155 congregations. There are also 206 pastors, 43 preschools, 15 elementary schools, and one high school. The Kansas District has 16 Circuits, and we are in the "Circuit 3 South" covering Gardner, Paola, Louisburg, and south Overland Park. Pastor meets monthly with the circuit pastors to study Scripture together and discuss difficult topics that we might come across in the ministry. Our "Circuit Visitor" is Rev. Andy Keltner, and our District President is Rev. Justin Panzer.

Districts are responsible for local mission work, such as church planting. It also serves us "on-the-ground" with congregations or schools that are calling, mission grants for congregational outreach, and other mercy work programs that we can join in.

Synod and districts meet triennially for conventions; our district convention is coming up in a few weeks to discuss and decide various topics relating to life and faith together. Paul Brack and I will be attending it.

If you want to know more, I encourage you to check out the websites for these various organizations.

LCMS: lcms.org

Kansas District: kslcms.org

Concordia Publishing House: cph.org

KFUE: kfuo.org

There are many more resources out there to help you learn and live and grow in your Christian faith.

News from the Clausing Family March Newsletter



Mrs. Anita Clausing

“She looks well to the ways of her household” – Prov 31:27

The tasks of day-to-day life take time in Moshi. Amazon does not deliver to our doorstep. There is no fast food, no neighborhood Walmart, no one-stop shopping destination. Household goods wear out quickly and require frequent maintenance. The yard (and its weeds) always needs attention. Although we have developed a network of trusted repairmen, watchmen, and house helpers to help us with these domestic tasks, managing this small staff is itself time-consuming. It's not uncommon to hear new American expatriates lamenting the fact that after tending to basic matters of food, clothing, and shelter, they have precious little time left for the work to which they have actually been called.

For over 20 years my wife Anita has been a full-time homeschooling mom, but as our children have grown older and more self-directed in their studies, she has assumed an even greater workload around the house, freeing me up to devote more time to the seminary and church. I was struck by the scope of Anita's work two weeks ago during our seminary spring break. I devoted most of that week to work from my home office, developing lesson plans and catching up on correspondence, but all the time I could hear the nearby sounds of construction as a steady stream of repairmen came and went from our house repairing some water-damaged ceilings, cracked concrete, and termite-infested doorframes. All these household tasks needed to be done, and Anita directed the work like a

professional foreman, no doubt saving me the better part of a week of time. To top it all off, just last night we received a whopping six inches of rain, and my heart sank this morning when my children pointed out a new wet spot on our living room ceiling. Before I could even decide what I wanted to do about it, Anita remarked, “I've already called the repairman, and he'll be over sometime early this week.”

Over the past ten years most of these monthly newsletters have been devoted to the work in which I'm engaged, and a few of them have been updates about our children. This one is dedicated to my wife Anita. She is a gift from God, and the ministry here would not go on without her.

The Clausings will be presenting for us on their missionary activity on June 11th at the Shelter House. Come on out for some food and to hear what they do!

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