



The Olive Branch

Loving Christ in Worship, Fellowship, Education and Service

June 2026

OUR FIRST FREEDOM

Because this coming U.S. Independence Day (Saturday, July 4th, 2026) is the 250th birthday of our United States of America, I've decided to make it the topic of my June newsletter article.

Two and a half centuries ago in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, delegates to the Continental Congress declared independence from Britain, appealing to "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" and holding as self-evident the truth that we are "endowed by [our] Creator" with the "unalienable" right to life, right to liberty, and right to pursue happiness. As American Citizens and Lutheran Christians, we pause to give thanks to God for the remarkable blessings of liberty that we enjoy in this land of the free, and especially for the principle that stands as the primary foundation of American civics, society and culture: that is, The Freedom of Religion (our "First Freedom").

The great *First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution* begins not with the freedoms of speech, press, or assembly, but with the freedom of religion and religious expression: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Our founders placed religious freedom at the top of the list, first and foremost, because they understood that this right is the root from which all other liberties grow (including speech, press and assembly). When the human heart is free to respond to God's call to righteousness and piety, the whole society flourishes. Remove that foundation, and even the best-written constitutions eventually become empty words. Religious liberty is not merely one freedom among many; it is the soil in which our American Republic was planted.

This truth resonates deeply for our Lutheran confession. Martin Luther taught that the gospel of Jesus Christ must be proclaimed freely, that faith is a matter of our human conscience transformed by the Word of God freely shared and heard, and that the Church and the State each have their proper God-given spheres. So, generations of Lutherans have not only valued the many economic opportunities afforded by our industrious nation but also the freedom to confess, profess and assemble "in accordance with the divine Word" (*Augsburg Confession*). Here, under the protection of our First

Freedom, our congregations have been able to baptize, teach, worship, and serve, without fear of interference or forced conformity by the State.

Moreover, freedom of religion has shaped our national character far beyond the church doors. It fostered a culture that values the dignity of the individual, encourages free association and voluntary charity, and insists that government itself is under God (in a general non-sectarian sense). It has allowed people of every creed and religion (or none) to contribute their best gifts of citizenship while protecting all from coercion by the State in matters of the spirit. In a nation of diverse ethnicities and traditions, our First Freedom has been the principal foundation that makes "E Pluribus Unum" possible without tyranny of conscience and soul. In fact, every single totalitarian system (such as Marxism) always targets the free exercise of religion for destruction, because a people who look to a higher power and authority than the State is a people who cannot be subjugated. Therefore, we sing in *My Country, 'Tis of Thee...*

**My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills.
My heart with rapture thrills
Like that above.**

As we mark this coming Semiquincentennial (or Quarter-Millennium as I prefer to say), let us commemorate this national anniversary with deep gratitude for our imperfect yet exceptional and laudable nation. Additionally, let us observe it with heartfelt prayer and good citizenship. For the Holy Scriptures declare: "**First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone... and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity**" (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Consequently, giving thanks to God for the liberties we enjoy, we pray for our leaders and our fellow citizens. And we resolve to use our freedom rightly as it says in Galatians: "**For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for sin, but**

through love become enslaved to one another... If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another” (Galatians 5:13-15).

On Sunday, July 5th, many congregations of the Church of Jesus Christ throughout our country will gather for worship with national songs and patriotic hymns. May these celebrations be marked by joyful thanksgiving, recognizing that **“every good and perfect gift”** — including the gift of our First Freedom under the *Constitution of the United States* — comes **“from the Father of lights” (James 1:17).**

May the Lord continue to preserve this First Freedom for generations yet to come, that the good news of Jesus Christ may be freely proclaimed and that we may serve our nation as Christ’s Kingdom Ambassadors in a world that still groans for the ultimate freedom from enslavement to death and decay (see Romans 8:18-23).

Together in Christ,
Pastor Tim

Pam’s Pearls of Prayer

Scripture of the Month: Psalm 93:4

*“Mightier than the thunder of the great waters,
mightier than the breakers of the sea—
the Lord on high is mighty.”*

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Thought for the Month

As we enter this summer season, let us remember the strength of our Lord. He is mightier than all! He is our fierce protector and advocate. Any time we need Him, He will be ready and waiting! Halleluiah!!

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Prayer for the Month

Dear Lord, please help us to remember to rely on Your strength and not just our own. Guide us through any obstacles that we might encounter and keep us ever faithful to Your Word. In Jesus’ blessed name, we pray. Amen.

Mt. Olive Preschool Update

We can hardly believe we are wrapping up our final month of our academic year. In a few short days we will be having our Graduation celebration and Promotion for all the students at our school. This year has flown by and we have had so much fun.

This month we kicked off celebrating a family member near and dear to our hearts, MOM! We had a special brunch, performed a fun song, and showered mommy in homemade gifts. It was a special day that moms will cherish forever.

Next we learned all about life cycles. We learned how flowers grow, how caterpillars metamorphasize, and the stages of Ladybugs, and strawberries! We have also been watching our own Caterpillars go through their life cycle. We have a couple who have already formed Chrysalis! We can't wait until they become butterflies so that we can release them into our Garden.

Finally we are learning about Farms. So many of our food and produce come from farms and it has been fun to learn about a farmers job, how veggies grow, and how cows and chickens are what give us milk and eggs! We have learned fun animal noises and played with toy tractors and barns! It has been a blast!

Even though Graduation approaches and we get to celebrate all of our accomplishments together over the year, we don't have to be sad yet. Summer is approaching and we have a lot of fun things planned with our kids before they move onto TK and Kindergarten! We wish all of our graduates the best and can't wait for them to make more memories and learn so many more things in Elementary School!

Blessings,
Mrs. Ashley, Mrs. Amanda, Mrs. Robyn, Mrs. Kameny and Ms. Emily

Community Luncheon

We had our final Community Luncheon for the season on May 13th. Several members of the congregation provided a variety of salads. The food was great and the entertainment was wonderful with P3 Theatre Company once again giving us an amazing program!



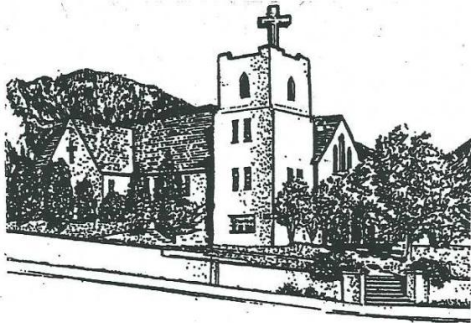
Worship Bulletins Display



Here’s a lovely way to use our bulletins! This is at the home of one of our members who wants to remain anonymous. It includes bulletins from the First Sunday of Lent through the Seventh Sunday of Eastertime.

**FROM: MT. OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH
3561 FOOTHILL BLVD.
LA CRESCENTA, CA 91214**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



TO:

DATED MATERIAL – DO NOT HOLD

BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH

3 – Jane Peterson	18 – Kaye Coats
5 – Alma Zelaya	21 – Mickey Meeker
6 – Joe Cody	21 – Jerod Plummer
6 – John Cody	24 – Louanna Kurtz
15 – Todd Meeker	28 – Wendy Fragosa

ANNIVERSARIES THIS MONTH

25 – Berni & Larry Hovland	No. 60
28 – Bill & Vi Reardon	No. 68

SOME MEETINGS & EVENTS THIS MONTH

6 – “Day After Day” by P3 Theatre Company	1:30 pm
7 – Potluck & Congregational Meeting	10:45 am
8 – Threads of Hope	9:00 am
9 – Church Council	7:00 pm
10 – Greece Tour 2025 Slideshow at LCIF	7:00 pm
14 – Door of Hope Presentation	9:30 am
20 – Breakfast Bible Study at Panera	8:30 am
21 – Food Donation Sunday	9:30 am

Spring Luncheon & Silent Auction

This year’s Spring Luncheon & Silent Auction was held on Saturday, May 9th, at 12:00 pm. We had wonderful food. Larry Hovland and Yuki Tagawa prepared the quiches and Nanette McIllwain (once again) provided us with yummy desserts.

This year’s auction proceeds went toward the mural installation and continuing traffic safety education for our community. The mural will be placed at the corner of Foothill Blvd. and Oro Vista Ave. in Sunland. We were able to raise \$1518. Our guest of honor, Evelyn Serrano, is in the first picture on the left.



Miracles for Father

Abraham was given a child when old,
God kept his promise, by the bible we're told,
Abraham obeyed, he offered his son,
God spared his life, the test was done.

Joseph was given a child as his own,
Told by the angel he'd be great when grown,
A savior, a king, to give us true life,
Joseph with thanks, took Mary as wife.

Be faithful to God, be always true,
So God can work great miracles for you,
Doing what's right let's God give his best,
And there will be added, all the rest.

May God the Father bless your life,
Help your family, children and wife,
God give you courage, strength for your role,
May your peace and joy be specially full.

Walk with God, stay on his road,
Receive his blessings to carry your load,
God's plan for you, is very great,
Being a father, has the most weight.

It's what God is, to all his children,
And what he shares with special men,
Who on this day, deserve our praying,
Happy Father's Day! We all are saying.

-- Paul Berchtold

