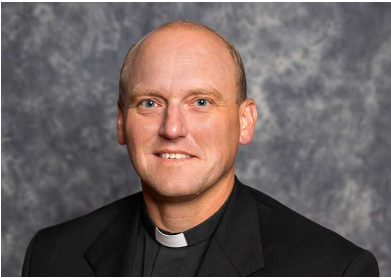


# PRESIDENT'S OFFICE



Rev. Justin Panzer | District President



**“The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”**

**(1 Tim. 1:15)**

In his lectures on 1 Timothy, Martin Luther wrote, *“Christ did not come to judge and destroy, but to give Himself for the salvation of sinners. Therefore, let no sinner lose hope. Rather let the one despair who does not want to be a sinner, as the self-righteous. The sinner has the opportunity to hope because ‘Christ has come.’ Like the devil, the law of Moses condemns. We do not need Christ to condemn us, nor was He sent to condemn. Yet we receive Him this way because we have neither read nor understood Scripture. ‘Of whom I am the foremost.’ (1 Tim. 1:15). Here there was an argument; that is: ‘I consider myself the chief for the sake of humility.’ He said this in all seriousness. ‘I know of no greater sinner in the church.’ David was a great one, but Paul perpetrated more than David, who neither persecuted doctrine nor misled. Let the text stand then. So Paul is saying: ‘I comfort all sinners. I stand here to sustain you. None of you can compare himself with me.”* (Lectures on 1 Timothy, 1:15)

The month of August will, no doubt, bring people back to church

after a summer of activities. **How will we welcome them?** The church is the hospital for sinners. We are forgiven by God through the merits of Christ. We should not be surprised by our own sins, nor should we be surprised at the sinfulness of sinners. The Lord Jesus has taught us to pray: *“Forgive us our trespasses.”* Unfortunately, some Christians portray themselves as morally superior to others, which hardly aligns with the Bible’s continual call to repentance (*Matt. 3:2*), nor with the confession of sins we hear on the lips of Paul (*Romans 7:18-19*), or the other great saints (*Psalms 32*).

**If our churches are truly hospitals for sinners, we confess that we are the foremost. We want, desire, and need desperately to receive the gifts of forgiveness given to us in Word and Sacrament.**

If Christ has **the** gift that forgives our sins and strengthens our faith, why would we not want to partake

of it regularly and often? We surely would never want to slap the hand away that wants to feed us, do we? Yet we do this very thing. We shun our God who freely gives what we need in Christ. For this, we must repent.

We have been saved by the precious blood of Christ, the lamb without blemish, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with His own life crucified in our place on the cross. Bodily risen from the dead, we have been made His without any merit or worthiness of our own. The Shepherd is calling you to dwell in the house that bears His Name, that He might feed and pasture you.

The Church is Christ’s, bought and purchased by His blood. The focus is always and only Him in everything that we speak, think, and do. His Word must predominate, and we must obediently follow that Word, shining His light and love to others in our words and deeds so that they, too, might be converted and saved. **To Him be the glory!**