

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? (Numbers 23:19)

Well known reporters have made up stories. The internet is full of fictional stories pretending to be real. Stories in the newspaper are not always accurate. Who can we trust? A coworker lets us down. Our family member does not keep their promise. Our fellow Christian forgets about us. Who can we trust? God and his Word. The Lord did not tell us any lies last year and will only tell us the truth this year. The Lord did not forget about us in the past and will remember us this year as well. He promises forgiveness of sins and delivers on that promise through Jesus' sacrifice. He promises eternal life and will deliver on that promise when he takes us to heaven. He promises comfort and strength when this sinful world and the devil try to destroy us. God delivers on that promise through the Holy Spirit who comes to us in his Word and Sacraments. When others disappoint us, when we fail ourselves, turn to the God who never lies, never disappoints and never fails. Christ fulfills every promise of God. He is worthy of our worship and trust this year and forever.

Annual Statistics

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Sunday Worship (avg)	112.6	101.7	108.3	101.1	93.3
Lent (avg)	61.3	53.8	40.0	49.3	36.7
Maundy Thursday	73	88	69	63	50
Good Friday	79	89	76	69	88
Easter	209	145	147	178	130
Thanksgiving	55	50	40	30	55
Advent (avg)	46.3	54.0	58.0	50.7	51.3
Christmas Eve	151	171	181	170	125
Christmas Day	44	71	46	53	n/a
Bible Class (total)	1329	1127	1093	1087	1011
Sunday School (avg)	22.9	21.9	24.1	21.8	17.3
VBS	42	44	50	55	40
Visits	256	189	149	152	147
Website Daily Visits	223	219	108	141	120

Worship

In spite of a unique schedule that included New Year's day, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve on Sundays (with significantly lower attendance these days), average Sunday attendance was the highest since 2002. Thanks to our Lord for this increase and may Jesus move more hearts to gladly hear and learn his Word in worship. The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation was a focus for us in 2017 including hosting Branches Band for a special service on the 5 Solas of the Reformation. We purchased Christian Worship Supplement hymnals at the beginning of the year and used them throughout the year for hymns, a few Psalms and a gathering rite. We will continue to use these to add variety to our worship.

Christian Education

The stats show more in Bible classes and in Sunday School for the year over last year. Thanks to the faithful teachers for preparing lessons each week so our children may know in whom they believe. Though the overall numbers increased, we did reduce the number of classes offered. The Drake Bible class and the CAP classes did not meet. These can be offered again if there is interest. Please talk to me if you have ideas for Bible study topics, formats or if you would like to host a study in your home.

Evangelism

Outreach efforts included: Easter for Kids, summer VBS, Christmas for Kids, a tent at the 9th Street Festival, Christmas postcard mailing and door to door invitations. The Fall Festival became a Reformation themed festival with a German meal that drew neighborhood visitors even in a downpour. The church sign and website continue to draw interest. Visitors who leave contact information receive a thank you letter and a visit at their door with a card, coffee mug and chocolates. More people involved with evangelism, especially in planning these events would be a big help to our current team of Pastor and Steve Winecke.

Nuer Ministry (Sudanese)

Peter Gatkuoth is the lay leader for the Nuer group. They meet at 1 pm on Sundays when work and other schedules allow. Some more recent residents of Des Moines began the new member course in 2017 and we hope to complete this and have new members of the congregation in 2018. As membership changes show there was also a significant loss of Nuer members who have either joined the LCMS congregation or moved away.

Kunama Ministry (Eritrean)

Simon Kamaty leads this group of believers. We rejoiced to welcome several families in to our church family in 2017. The children meet for Kunama Sunday School on Saturdays at 12:30 pm and the families meet for worship at 3 pm on Sundays.

Pastoral Studies Institute

Pastor began working with Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to assist in the training of Luke Lu to be a Lutheran pastor. Academic work will continue this year as well as looking for ways to give Luke practical experience in a congregation.

Other

We were able to continue providing meals for the homeless on Sunday mornings. Consider helping to make sandwiches on Saturday afternoons, packing on Sunday mornings or going to deliver food and a word of encouragement from God's Word.

Fellowship events included: Easter breakfast, an Iowa Cubs baseball game, book club and the Reformation Fall Festival. Members continue to participate in LWMS.

We thank the Lord for the gospel work being accomplished outside of our congregation and rejoice that we get to support just a little of it. One member, Nyabil Reath, went with WELS Kingdom Workers to Ethiopia to train Nuer refugees in clean water practices. We heard presentations from Jessica Langr (Friends of China), Alex Lueck (Kingdom Workers, Chile) and Professor Allen Sorum (Pastoral Studies Institute) and supported them with prayers and gifts. Thanks to God that we were able to exceed our Congregation Mission Offering pledge to the work of WELS. We also gave special offerings to the Lutheran Military Support Group and WELS Christian Aid and Relief.

We thank the Lord that he enabled us to care for the property entrusted to us to support the proclamation of the gospel in this place. The 15 passenger van served our congregation, especially the Sudanese, well for many years. Because of increased need of repairs due to age and because it was rarely being used in the last years, it was donated to Prairie Lutheran Schools (WELS) in Fairfax and Gibbon, Minnesota. The technology team installed equipment to live stream sermon videos online and record for shut ins. Soon a TV will be available in the Bible study room for watching when a child needs a break from the sanctuary. Entry doors and an entry carpet were installed. We replaced a microwave and two vacuums. Toilets were fixed or replaced as well as other more minor repairs and maintenance. Thanks to all who donate time and offerings and materials for keeping up our facility.

2017 Membership Changes

Gains

By Profession of Faith – Simon Kamaty, Benyam Otan, Natnial Zekarias, Amanuel Gonge and Elizabeth Ashoro (Yohannes, Rozina), Aster Angelico (Marcko, Sembetu, Kasharmo, Sotina), Estephanos Boro and Nura Jenka (Jime, Badume, Jesuwa)

By Youth Confirmation – Zane Holmen, Maleah Pfeifer, Jackie Pippett, Conner Thielke, Brett Twelmeyer (5/7/17)

By Baptism – Sydney Rose Neitzel (2/26/17), Izabella Grace Butrum (9/5/17), Jack Henry Rice (9/10/17), Marko Estaphanos Gebreab (10/8/17), Cade Matthew Travi (11/19/17), Nathaniel Pei-en Lu (12/24/17), Anna Lee Dammann (12/31/17)

By Reactivation – Judy Solem

Corrections to records – Children of Peter Gatkuoth as baptized members (Jack and Park), Children of Kir Zuor and Nyabil Reath as baptized members (Nhial, Nyawarga, Nyadoar (also confirmed), Nyak, Chudier)

Losses

By Release – Paul Nyaok and Mary Paul (to LCMS), Mary Rom (to LCMS), Sarah Joseph (to LCMS with children Balat, Jal, Nyalual), Martha Jock (unknown location), Sarah Gach (unknown location), Barnaba and Daniel (unknown location), Daniel Menzel (to LCMS in Iowa City)

By Removal – Gary Phippen

By Death – Darlene Hunt (d. 3/23/17)

Communicants: 155

Baptized: 233

Pastoral Actions

Child Baptisms

Sydney Rose Neitzel (2/26/17)

Jack Henry Rice (9/10/17)

Suzi Abel Gabriel (4/16/17)

Marko Estaphanos Gebreab (10/8/17)

Riang John Kong (5/21/17)

Cade Matthew Travi (11/19/17)

Niyata Shullu Anguwi (6/4/17)

Nathaniel Pei-en Lu (12/24/17)

Izabella Grace Butrum (9/5/17)

Anna Lee Dammann (12/31/17)

Funerals

Darlene Hunt (3/30/17)

Weddings

Clyde and Charlene (Schippers) Sievers (9/2/17)

Dakota and Caitlyn (Fucaloro) Butrum (9/5/17)

Worship							Bible Classes								
Date	#	Total	YTD Total	YTD Avg	1 st Service	2 nd Service	Sun Adult	Wed Adult	CAP	BIC	Campus	Catechism	Sunday School	Sunday School Avg	
01/01/17	1	61	61	61.0	13	48									
01/08/17	2	105	166	83.0	39	66	26	9				14	21	21.0	
01/15/17	3	93	259	86.3	39	54	16	10				13	22	21.5	
01/22/17	4	106	365	91.3	40	66	21	5				16	21	21.3	
01/29/17	5	93	458	91.6	31	62		10				13	22	21.5	
02/05/17	6	101	559	93.2	48	53	19	8				14	21	21.4	
02/12/17	7	109	668	95.4	40	69	24	8				13	27	22.3	
02/19/17	8	104	772	96.5	31	73	11	8				11	27	23.0	
02/26/17	9	143	915	101.7	58	85	22					15	22	22.9	
03/01/17	1	68	68	68.0	68										
03/05/17	10	111	1026	102.6	50	61	23					10	19	22.4	
03/08/17	2	62	130	65.0	62										
03/12/17	11	99	1125	102.3	41	58	23					13	23	22.5	
03/15/17	3	58	188	62.7	58										
03/19/17	12	96	1221	101.8	29	67			5			15	13	21.6	
03/22/17	4	63	251	62.8	63										
03/26/17	13	118	1339	103.0	51	67	17		4			15	27	22.1	
03/29/17	5	67	318	63.6	67										
04/02/17	14	117	1456	104.0	42	75	24		5			14	28	22.5	
04/05/17	6	50	368	61.3	50										
04/09/17	15	92	1548	103.2	39	53	17		4				26	22.8	
04/13/17	7	73	441	63.0	73										
04/14/17	8	79	520	65.0	79										
04/16/17	16	209	1757	109.8	97	112		9	4			14			
04/23/17	17	118	1875	110.3	48	70	15						21	22.7	
04/30/17	18	115	1990	110.6	50	65	15	9		4		15	21	22.6	
05/07/17	19	137	2127	111.9	31	106	12	13	4	13			17	22.2	
05/14/17	20	111	2238	111.9	39	72	21	15	3	4			13	21.7	
05/21/17	21	142	2380	113.3	60	82		12	3	4			17	21.5	
05/28/17	22	93	2473	112.4	34	59		13							
06/04/17	23	159	2632	114.4	51	108									
06/11/17	24	91	2723	113.5	32	59				4					
06/18/17	25	116	2839	113.6	48	68				4					
06/25/17	26	84	2923	112.4	25	59				4					
07/02/17	27	95	3018	111.8	42	53				5					
07/09/17	28	98	3116	111.3	39	59									
07/16/17	29	112	3228	111.3	51	61									
07/23/17	30	122	3350	111.7	43	79									
07/30/17	31	157	3507	113.1	49	108									
08/06/17	32	132	3639	113.7	45	87							42		
08/13/17	33	115	3754	113.8	34	81									
08/20/17	34	107	3861	113.6	32	75									
08/27/17	35	118	3979	113.7	38	80						10			
09/03/17	36	110	4089	113.6	37	73		12		4		16			
09/10/17	37	103	4192	113.3	41	62	27	14				11	28	21.8	
09/17/17	38	109	4301	113.2	37	72	25					16	32	22.3	
09/24/17	39	124	4425	113.5	62	62		10				13	22	22.3	
10/01/17	40	112	4537	113.4	44	68	20	9				11	25	22.4	
10/08/17	41	157	4694	114.5	48	109	18	12				14	25	22.5	
10/15/17	42	87	4781	113.8	40	47	25	10				14	9	22.0	
10/22/17	43	116	4897	113.9	49	67	25	12				13	17	21.8	
10/29/17	44	111	5008	113.8	43	68	24	10				13	23	21.8	
11/05/17	45	115	5123	113.8	48	67	24	15				17	21	21.8	
11/12/17	46	94	5217	113.4	37	57	16	14				14	21	21.8	
11/19/17	47	139	5356	114.0	51	88						13	29	22.0	
11/22/17	9	55	575	63.9	55										
11/26/17	48	143	5499	114.6	50	93	16	8				15	29	22.2	
12/03/17	49	114	5613	114.6	50	64	17					13	28	22.4	
12/06/17	10	54	629	62.9	54										
12/10/17	50	102	5715	114.3	45	57	14					14	30	22.6	
12/13/17	11	41	670	60.9	41										
12/17/17	51	121	5836	114.4	59	62	17						33	22.9	
12/20/17	12	44	714	59.5	44										
12/24/17	52	84	5920	113.8	84										
12/24/17	13	151	865	66.5	102	49									
12/25/17	14	44	909	64.9	44										
12/31/17	53	50	5970	112.6	50										