

Portalight



the monthly Newsletter of West Portal Lutheran Church and School

OCTOBER 2025

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**West Portal
Lutheran
Church Website:**

westportallutheran.org

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From Pastor Binz

Our Help Comes from the

"I lift my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth" Psalm 121:1-2.



Growing up in the South Bay area we had the Santa Cruz mountains behind us and the East foothills in front of us. The actual community was Almaden Valley. In our psalm we hear of a song of salvation and a reminder where our help comes from.

"My help comes from the LORD."

In the church we learn that everyone helps in one way or another. Even those who are homebound help by keeping all of us in their prayers. For they know where their help comes from. As a pastor I regularly get help from church members in all the various needs and concerns of the church. I am truly grateful and thankful for everyone as we together look to Jesus our LORD for help and salvation.

"My help comes from the LORD who made heaven and earth." Not only does God help us in many and various ways but as creator God sustains and cares for all of His creation from the hills, seas, and even us. Despite our sinful nature God has sent His one and only Son Jesus to suffer, die, and rise so that our sins are forgiven and life and salvation are given by the very grace of God. That is the real help that we need.

The autumn air has a certain feel about it that helps us put summer behind us and enjoy the cooler days and watch the leaves change colors and prepare for the winter ahead. But we can be hopeful and confident that *"The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your*

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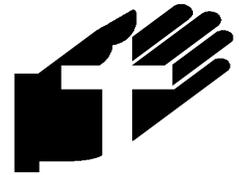
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going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore" Psalm 121:7-8.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Binz



God's people
pray...



LET US PRAY TO THE LORD GOD for those who are ill, homebound, or recovering from recent hospitalization: Elfriede Bonfert; Charlene Bruggemann-Wong; Angie Cheung, Helen Bok's sister-in-law; Bill Eves, Virginia Ferry's cousin; Jimmy Fong, Evelyn Fong's father; Gilbert Mogyorossy; Sigrid Rogge; Ruth Stresow; Ray Toloski; Cheryl Wong; Marilyn Wong; Franklin Yee.

Voters' Assembly – October 19, 2025

All Church Members are invited to come to any Voters' Assembly meeting. You can become a voting member when you attend two meetings within one year; your membership will continue if you attend at least one meeting during the following two years.

The next regular Voters' Assembly meeting will be **October 19, 2025 after the 10:00AM Service**. Information Packets will be available on the table in the Narthex starting October 11, 2025. We encourage you to attend this meeting.

Portal  **ght** is the monthly Newsletter of West Portal Lutheran Church and School

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Rev. Curtis Binz, Senior Pastor

Rev. Jacob Swenson, Associate Pastor

May Luu, Administrative Assistant

Angie Holt, Church Secretary, PortalLight Editor

Ms. Sherise Lee, Principal

Amy Kao, Music Director

West Portal Lutheran Church is a member congregation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Worship Schedule

5:00 PM Saturday Worship Service-Lord's Supper

9:00 AM Sunday School-Sanctuary

9:00 AM Sunday Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall

10:00 AM Sunday Worship Service-Lord's Supper

Thoughts From Pastor Swenson

God's grace and peace be with you, through Christ our Lord!

October is probably the month when we, as a congregation, think the most about the Reformation. October 31st is set aside in our calendar as Reformation Day — the day in 1517 when Martin Luther posted the *95 Theses* on the castle church door in Wittenberg. We celebrated that event's 500th anniversary a few years back. For many years to come, we'll also be celebrating other events.

We celebrate the Reformation not purely for the events but for the truth that God restored through them. We give thanks that God brought to light once again this glorious truth: we are saved by His grace through faith in Jesus. We learn this from Scripture. After the Scriptures, the most commonly studied book among us is the Small Catechism. The Catechism was published in 1529, but it came from humble beginnings some years before.

In 1523, in a place called Zwickau — a place in Germany famous for false teaching — a young pastor named Nicholas Hausmann wrote to his prince that the churches in Saxony might be visited and improved. He wrote again in 1524. This letter, in which he requested a "catechism for children," reached Luther's desk. Martin Luther wrote back to Pastor Hausmann in February 1525 that work had begun on a catechism, which work he had assigned to Justus Jonas and Johann Agricola. The writing of the Catechism, however, was delayed. Agricola moved to Eisleben to be rector of the new school there. So, Pastor Hausmann wrote more letters. He wrote, again, to the prince asking, "What kind of lessons should be held for the unlettered small children?" He wrote to

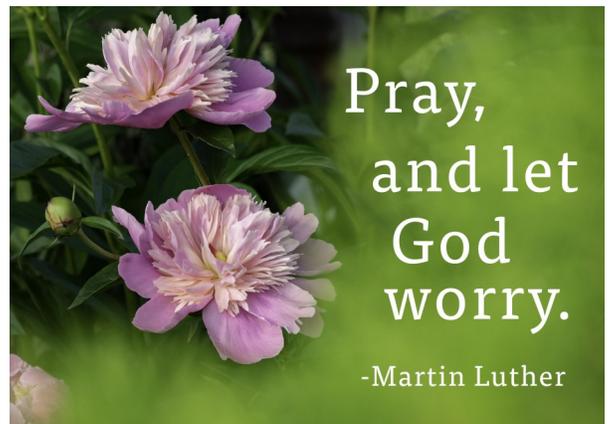
the assistant pastor at Wittenberg, "O that [the catechism] would be supplied and quickly published." (Quotes taken from Charles Arand's *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms*) These letters got Luther's attention, and he set to work himself. The Catechism was delayed by a few more years — serious things happened in between — but it was eventually published in 1529.

It almost cannot be stated how much good God has produced through such a small book. From its humble beginnings at the request of a regular parish pastor, the Small Catechism has gone out into the world. Every confirmed Lutheran has learned it and more — millions — still appreciate it. Let us give thanks to God for the Catechism this month and implore His blessing on all who learn and teach from it. Go read your Catechism!

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Swenson



Catechism



West Portal Lutheran Church Event

Noontime Concert on 9-7-25: It was a pleasure watching the great performance of talented musicians: Ms. Amy Kao, Hapsichord; Yi-Hsuan Lin, Violin; Chris Young, Cello; WPLC Choirs & WPLS Children's choir.



Ms. Amy Kao,
Dr. Lin-violin &
Mr. Young-Cello, both
are from Seattle, WA

WPLS Children's Choir



Through the waters of baptism we welcomed Aeris Ungson on Sept. 9, 2025 and Alex Hau and Brian Hau on Sept. 21, 2025.

Aeris Ungson (7A student) with parents and Pastor Swenson



Alex (8A student) and Brian Hau (4A student) with parents and Pastor Swenson



Save the Date 11-2-25 Swenson's Family Baby Shower

Please join us for a Welcome Baby Reception after the 10 o'clock service on Sunday, November 2. Both men and women are invited.

Pastor and Mrs. Swenson are expecting a baby girl!

There will be light refreshments in the fellowship hall immediately after the service. All are invited. No gifts necessary, but Faith is registered at Target and Amazon. Diapers and girl clothes are also welcome. Come celebrate this blessing!



To access the baby registry sites:

Amazon:

Amazon baby registry. On Find a baby registry by name, put Faith Swenson. Click Search. Then click Faith Swenson, San Francisco, Expected Arrival Date of December 12, 2025.

Target:

Target baby registry. On Find a register or wish list, put Faith Swenson. Click Search. Then click View on Faith Swenson & Jacob Swenson Baby San Francisco 12/12/2025.

Stacey Binz

Kathleen Garrett

Beverly Presley-Nelson

Lutheran Women in Mission Walk Recap

I want to thank everyone for all the donations you made to the Lutheran Women in Mission Walk that I went on this past June in Omaha, Nebraska. It was hot, but we had plenty of water and great breeze and made it the mile and half. I walked with my Mom (and 1,625 others) across the bridge into Iowa and then turned around and walked right back to Nebraska. West Portal Lutheran was so generous and donated \$1,517 to the cause. The walk itself raised close to \$75,000.00. THANK YOU! All that money helped jump start the Lutheran Women in Mission grant goal of \$2,622,270.00. Over the next two years, Lutheran Women in Mission will raise almost 2.7 million dollars to support the spread of the Gospel all over the world.

Are you interested in joining Lutheran Women in Mission? We're looking to get a group started at West Portal Lutheran Church and School. Contact Faith Swenson if you're interested 218-329-8515 or faithswenson88@gmail.com.

Faith Swenson

WPLC LWML Coordinator



Trunk or Treat

Sunday, October 26
4-6 PM



TRUNK OR TREAT is Sunday, October 26!
GAMES | CANDY | FUN | [HONGRY KONG](#) FOOD TRUCK

This is a family event. There will be games and crafts in the Gym. The parking lot will be closed to provide an opportunity for trick or treating at the trunks of various cars in the lot. Sound like fun? Here's how you can help:

- We need candies to give out as prizes during the games and to supplement the trick or treat candies in the trunks. Bags of wrapped candies may be left in the church office.
- We need volunteers who are willing to park their cars in the parking lot, open up their car trunks, and distribute candy to the trick or treaters.
- Help is also needed to create/host a game or decorate/host a trunk.
- Want to help or have questions? Please contact Sherise Lee, our principal, at (415) 665-6330 or email sherise.lee@wplsf.com by October 12th.

West Portal Lutheran School: News from the Principal's Desk

Dear West Portal Lutheran Family of Faith,
The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice. (Proverbs 12:15)

If we pinpoint the source of many conflicts, much of the reason behind them is a lack of understanding related to an inability to listen well. It can further be said that our poor listening is related to our own selfishness and human pride - do I really want to hear the other person when my way is correct? Sometimes, I feel so justified in my own thinking that it's hard to listen. It's especially tempting for someone in my position to go with "it's my way or the highway" and maintain an authoritative approach that ignores others. This is especially tempting when I'm feeling frustrated, tired, or irritable.

My prayer as we focus this month on listening is that we first understand that we have a God who has chosen to speak to us through His Word. We do well to read and listen to His Word to know what is truly God-pleasing and good. Second, we do our best to listen to others as a part of learning to love them well. When we listen to others, we can help them feel seen and heard. We can learn to grow the muscle of demonstrating empathy.

Imagine if we as a commUNITY listen well to each other and offer forgiveness for the many times we know we will fail each other - what a truly transformative community we would be! May the grace of God be upon us all as we seek to practice

this together and teach our children the same.

Blessings in Christ,

Sherise Lee

School Principal



School Board sponsored CommUNITY Building Townhall on Sept. 16th. Board members include: Danny Lau, Antonella Demartini & Pastor Swenson.

Student Clubs Fair on Sept. 17th at the Gym



West Portal Lutheran School Events



Student flute ensemble playing at a chapel service



Wildcat Mascot getting ready to bring out the school spirit for our first home games



1st grade showing some appreciation to our school staff!



3rd grade visits 826 Valencia to work on a published piece of writing!



3rd and 4th grade at the Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park

WPL School 75th Anniversary

During 2021, as we celebrated the 70th anniversary of West Portal Lutheran School and look forward to the 75th Anniversary in 2026, we have asked a number of former students, faculty, staff and friends to share their memories of WPL School. This month we feature: **Ronald Wong (Alumni 1990)**

A Trip Down Memory Lane: My Time at West Portal Lutheran School

I have countless fond memories from my time at West Portal Lutheran School (WPLS), where I attended from Kindergarten through 8th grade. Allow me to take you on a journey through those formative years.



Kindergarten:

Mrs. Cook (formerly Ms. Herrmann) made my transition to a new school feel seamless. She brought creativity and warmth to her teaching, using a porcupine puppet to introduce vowels, a rabbit cutout to teach us how to tie our shoes, and playful activities like running in circles to practice counting. I vividly remember thinking the porcupine puppet was a real animal!

1st Grade:

Mrs. George introduced us to the magic of writing sentences with her three-pronged chalk holder. She rewarded good behavior with weekly prizes, though I only earned one in the very last week of school. Looking back, I realize she extended a kindness that made me feel included.

2nd Grade:

Ms. Bingaman's enthusiasm shone through her guitar-led hymn sessions. Balancing both a first-grade and our second-grade class, she maintained an upbeat and positive atmosphere. She also introduced us to the groundbreaking Apple IIe computer, sparking our early tech curiosity.

3rd Grade:

As the "big kids" on the Sunset campus, we felt on top of the world. **Mrs. Stephenson (now Mrs. Heinzl)** challenged us with weekly math quizzes and guided us through our first state reports. I

proudly researched Texas. Fridays were especially fun with kickball games between the 3A and 3B classes, co-led with Mrs. Nebolt.

4th Grade:

Moving to the Sloat campus marked a new chapter. **Ms. Valstad** emphasized healthy living, often seen eating salads at lunch. She also gave me the honor of the class's first detention, something that I probably deserved, and it was a lesson well learned!

5th Grade:

Mrs. Mills brought history to life, teaching us about Martin Luther and the 95 Theses, which we recreated on a classroom door. She also ensured everyone had a role in our class play, fostering camaraderie and creativity.



6th Grade:

Mr. Morris had a great sense of humor and pushed us academically with frequent quizzes and tests to prepare us for the upper grades. I'll never forget him chuckling after hearing me sing during music class. It was his gentle way of hinting that my future likely didn't include a career in music.

7th and 8th Grades:

These years introduced us to a rotating schedule of dedicated teachers:

- **Mrs. Slettvedt (previously known as Mrs. Cordero) (Math):** Taught us the value of showing our work, a lesson I've carried through high school and beyond.
- **Mr. Lewis (Science):** Made biology unforgettable with frog dissections and science fairs.

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- **Mrs. Bruggemann-Wong (English):** Made Greek mythology come alive while fine-tuning our grammar skills.
- **Mr. Jacob (German/Geography):** Drilled vocabulary and geography into us with a thoroughness I now appreciate.
- **Mr. Frese (Religion):** Answered all our questions with patience and kindness, sharing God's love.
- **Mr. Moore (PE):** Taught us fundamentals of various sports throughout my WPLS years.
- **Mr. Holt (Social Studies):** Introduced us to public speaking through a Toastmasters course and inspired a love for history with research projects on U.S. presidents. Years after graduating, I was still learning from Mr. Holt, only this time on the basketball court where he always seemed a step ahead of me and many others, just as he once had been in the classroom.
- **Mrs. Boyer:** Although Mrs. Boyer wasn't one of my 7th or 8th-grade teachers, I first got to know her as a Kindergarten teacher when I volunteered in her class during my final year at WPLS. I saw firsthand how incredible she was with the children. Little did I know that years later, two of my own children would have the privilege of being in her Kindergarten class.

Coaches:

I am forever grateful to the volunteer coaches who instilled in us a passion for the game, the value of discipline, and the determination to persevere, no matter the skill of our opponents.

- **Chris**, WPLS's janitor, quietly kept the school running and stepped in to coach our baseball team when no one else could. His positivity and willingness to help left a lasting impression.
- **Coach Price and Coach Butler**, parents who volunteered to coach our basketball teams taught us everything from the basics of a zone defense to more advanced plays that I still use to this day while coaching my own kids' teams.
- **Coach Meija**, another parent who volunteered to coach our soccer team, led us to what I was told was WPLS's first CYO soccer championship.

Mrs. Finley:

As Assistant Principal, **Mrs. Finley** wore many hats—organizing sports teams, leading singing sessions, and uplifting everyone around her with her can-do spirit. Her unwavering belief in us was deeply inspiring. Whether I encountered her as a student at WPLS or years later as a parent, she always greeted me with warmth and positivity. Every interaction left me feeling energized. Mrs. Finley had a remarkable gift for seeing the best in each of us and made everyone feel like part of a family.

Mrs. Merrill:

Principal Merrill was the driving force behind WPLS's success. Her leadership built one of San Francisco's finest schools, with high acceptance rates to prestigious institutions like Lowell High School.

Looking back, I'm profoundly grateful for the exceptional faculty at WPLS. They nurtured our growth, instilled Christian values, and shared God's love. These are lessons I carry with me today.

Now, as a parent with children at WPLS, I see the same dedication in **Principal Lee's** leadership. You can see how much she cares for our children and the greater West Portal Lutheran community by her tremendous work ethic, approachability, and open mind. Like my parents' generation, I take pride in giving back through roles as a School Board Member, coach, and former room parent volunteer. WPLS is truly a Godsend, a hidden gem in our community.

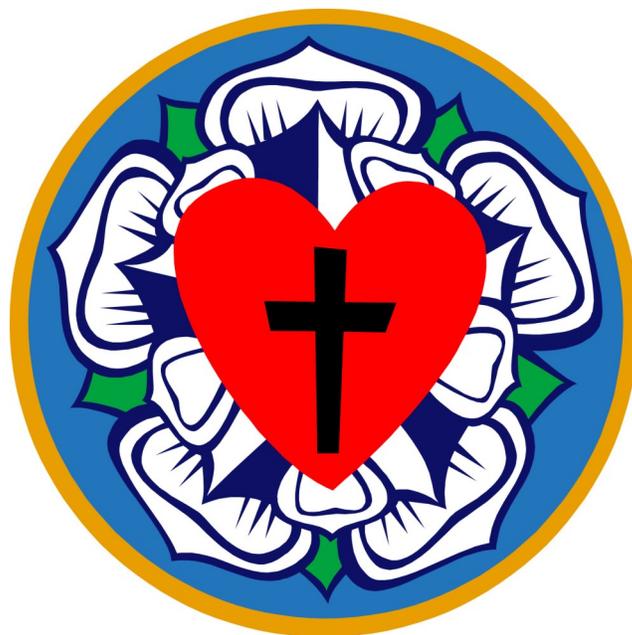
To all my former teachers and classmates: I hope you are well, happy, and healthy. I am grateful for each of you. May God bless you always.



REFORMATION BANNER

During the month of October and in preparation for Reformation Sunday, we will display our Reformation banner which features the Luther Seal. Each component and color of the seal has a specific meaning:

- The black cross reminds us we are saved from sin because Jesus died on the cross.
- The red heart reminds us we live because Jesus shed His blood for us. Our faith in Him has saved us.
- The white rose reminds us that our faith gives us joy, comfort, and peace. White is to remind us that this is peace like the angels enjoy.
- The blue background reminds us of the sky and the hope that we will one day meet Jesus in heaven.
- The gold circle is precious; it reminds us of heaven's endless joy. A circle is an endless shape.





October is Pastor Appreciation Month!

This month 508 years ago, Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the castle church door in Wittenberg. Martin Luther was the first pastor of what has become known as Lutheranism, or the Evangelical Christian Church. Luther believed in a return to the Word of God as written in the Holy Bible, with his simple statement of Solo Gratia, Solo Fide, Solo Scriptura..... Through this, Martin Luther was able to recognize the grace of God as a loving provider, who should be thanked for the creation and gifts He bestows on us every day, beginning with the gift of life. Martin Luther brought the Word of God to the people by publishing the Bible in the common language, from the "vulgate", so they could directly read the Word of God. Through this emphasis on God's Word, he returned focus in the church to justification by faith in Christ and revitalized the community of faith in Europe, and the world ~ catalyzing what has become known as the Reformation.

This month marks a time of special observance and recognition for the mission and evangelism done by pastors, as they bring the Word of God and the good news of His love, forgiveness, grace and new life through Christ. We are thankful for the unceasing work from Pastor Binz, Pastor Swenson and all others who bring this message of God to our community, our state, country and the world. God's commandment to go to all nations and make disciples is embodied by the faithful diligence and inspiring dedication, and joy, with which our pastors here are serving. We thank God for the blessings of our pastors and all who serve us here at West Portal Lutheran Church and School.

Sincerely,
The WPL Church Council

Clergy Appreciation Day - October 12th



1 Nami Murata	15 Virginia Rumbaugh	1 Javier & Brittney Rosas
1 Steven Toloski	16 Terry Kitagawa	2 Edward & Betty Wong
2 Kathleen Chon	17 Gary Lee	10 Gordon Shiozaki & Dona Fuchiwaki
2 Brandon Wong	17 Kyle Chao	12 Waily & Cynthia Tom
3 Ryan Aymard	17 Mable Mai	15 Walter & Sophie Louie
3 Rebecca Kang	17 May Wong	16 Anton & Sylvia Mrabe
3 Barron Ungson	18 Desiree Pornphannukun	19 Michael & Melinda Miyagishima
5 Rev. Jonathan Priest	18 Stanley Tom	19 Michael & Maggie Aymard
6 Kristie Tom	18 Virginia Ferry	22 Paul & Eugenia Kolsanoff
7 Rebecca Chan	19 Deanna Biermann	22 Kevin Chan & Helen Hsu
7 Art Jann	21 Denver Wade	25 Ken Li & Mable Mai
7 Sarah Stofferahn	21 Kimberly Wong	28 Ricky Liu & Jennie Fong
7 David Wendt	22 Gerda Beisel	
8 Diane Toloski	23 Moses Chiu	
8 Keith Tom	23 Nicolai Swenson	
8 Clifford Wong	24 Alexander Yeh	
9 Michael Mason	26 Tom Wedergren	
9 Bella Nulph	27 Grace Tsai	
9 Eric Pang	28 Kimberly Wendt	
10 James Lee	29 Lauren Jann	
10 Quinn Patrick	30 Celine Yon	
11 Lai Ching Choy	30 Currie Li	
11 Caprice Hong	31 King Wai Parnian	
12 Sherisse Hutchinson	31 Amy Roe	
12 Madelyn Wong	31 Kurt Schober	
13 Chloe Cheng		
14 Justin Lew		

"Pray for one another" (James 5:16)

Let us follow this command of God's Word. Use the birthdays and anniversaries list each month to hold up one another to the Lord in prayer. You may wish to keep this list on your refrigerator, in your Bible, in your Portals of Prayer, or in some convenient place. What strength we receive from Almighty God when we sincerely pray for one another! And in these "interesting times," a call to a member wishing him/her birthday or anniversary greetings would certainly be appreciated. It's particularly important that we keep in contact with each other these days.



OCTOBER

Wednesday, 10/1	11:00 AM	Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 10/4	10:00 AM	Quilt Class
Saturday, 10/4	5:00 PM	Worship Service-Partners-In-Faith
Sunday, 10/5	9:00 AM	Sunday School-Sanctuary to the Church Library
Sunday, 10/5	9:00 AM	Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 10/5	10:00 AM	Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 10/5	11:30 AM	Lifetime Plan for Giving Presentation - Parish Hall
Wednesday, 10/8	11:00 AM	Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 10/11	5:00 PM	Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 10/12	9:00 AM	Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 10/12	10:00 AM	Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 10/12	11:30 AM	LWML Meeting - Music Room
Monday, 10/13		Church and School - Closed
Wednesday, 10/15	11:00 AM	Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 10/18	5:00 PM	Worship Service-Partners-In-Faith
Sunday, 10/19	9:00 AM	Sunday School-Sanctuary to the Church Library
Sunday, 10/19	9:00 AM	Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 10/19	10:00 AM	Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 10/19	11:30 AM	Voter's Assembly
Sunday, 10/19	12:30 PM	Council Meeting
Wednesday, 10/22	11:00 AM	Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 10/25	5:00 PM	Worship Service-Partners-In-Faith
Sunday, 10/26	9:00 AM	Sunday School-Sanctuary to the Church Library
Sunday, 10/26	9:00 AM	Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 10/26	10:00 AM	Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 10/26	11:15 AM	Altar Guild Meeting-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 10/27	4-6 PM	WPLS Trunk or Treat
Wednesday, 10/29	11:00 AM	Midweek Bible Class

Your tithes and offerings support the mission and ministries of West Portal Lutheran Church. If you wish to make an online donation, please use the QR code below. PayPal covers all transaction fees. You are donating to PayPal Giving Fund, a 501C(3) charity.

