

Portal Light

the monthly Newsletter of West Portal Lutheran Church and School

OCTOBER 2026

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**West Portal
Lutheran
Church Website:**

westportallutheran.org

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From Pastor Swenson

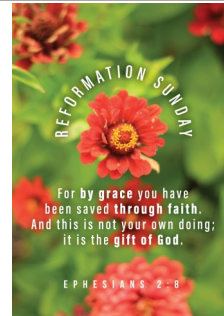
"By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless;
My soul, believe and doubt it not."

Lutheran Service Book #566

God's peace be with you through
the Lord Jesus Christ!

I hope the above words are familiar to you. If not, go ahead and pick up your hymnal or do a quick search. The hymn is called, "By Grace I'm Saved." We sing it from time to time here at the church. Our school children at the Sunset Campus just spent several weeks learning it stanza by stanza. They sing it great! I bet you can, too, and that you'll feel better after you sing it. This hymn is based on the portion of St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians where he says, **"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."** (Eph. 2.8-9 NKJV)

This is a Bible text that is near to our hearts as Lutherans, especially as we celebrate the Reformation at the end of the month. The Reformation is the period of time in the 16th century when God worked through His servants, like Martin Luther and many others, to restore to His Church on earth the true teaching of His



Word. Sadly, over the centuries, various corruptions snuck into the Christian Church and were not addressed as they should have been. The most serious was the idea that we must contribute to the work of our own salvation through love and good works.

The true teaching of Scripture is that we are not saved by our good works - we cannot be - and that our good works do not contribute to our salvation. Instead, it is God's good pleasure to save us by His own grace through faith in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. When we say that God has saved us by His grace we mean that God, by His own initiative and for the sake of His own great love, moved to save us from sin and death. Grace is not a power God infuses into us; it is something in God, His good favor toward us for the sake of Christ. God saved us from sin by sending His Son into the flesh for us. Then, He created faith in our hearts so that we might

(Continued on page 2)

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receive the Good News of Jesus ourselves. Such faith lives in good works but notice that flow. Salvation leads to good works, not the other way around.

This teaching is a precious and true treasure and an antidote to despair. If we take a good long look at our life, an honest look, we find that we fall far short of God's standard for salvation. He says in His Word that, if we desire to earn our salvation, we must be perfect - in actions, words, and thoughts. I know I fail to meet that standard. Many are those who reach that conclusion and then wonder, how can I be saved? On your own, you can't; but all things are possible to God! By His grace, you are saved! The Lord took your sins into His flesh. With His holy life He kept the Law of God that you were unable to. Then, on the cross, He shed His blood as the atonement for your guilt. He sent His Word into the world so that you might hear this, and through the Word created faith in your heart. If you believe these things, you, too, are saved by grace! Believe, and do not doubt; God never lies!

Yours in our gracious God and Lord,
Pastor Jacob Swenson



LET US PRAY TO THE LORD GOD for those who are ill, homebound, or recovering from recent hospitalization: Charlene Bruggemann-Wong; Vivian Char; Angie Cheung, Helen Bok's sister-in-law; Wilson Cheung, Helen Bok's brother; Bill Eves, Virginia Ferry's cousin; Virginia Ferry; Mary Jo Fischl; Jimmy Fong, Evelyn Fong's father; Paul Garrett, David's Garrett brother; Ray Holstead; Gilbert Mogyorossy; Bennette Nulph; Sigrid Rogge; Ruth Stresow; Diane and Ray Toloski; James Wavro, Virginia's son-in-law; Elise Wen, Patrick Man's friend; Cheryl Wong; Marilyn Wong.

Voters' Assembly – October 18, 2026

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 18, 2026 after the 10:00AM Service.**

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

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Rev. Jacob Swenson, Associate Pastor

May Luu, Administrative Assistant

Angie Holt, Church Secretary, PortalLight Editor

Ms. Sherise Lee, Principal

Amy Kao, Music Director

Worship Schedule

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

9:00 AM Sunday Adult Bible Study at the Parish Hall

9:00 AM Sunday School Bible Study at the Library

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

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

West Portal Lutheran Church Events



Saturday, 9-12-26 Class 2B
Accompanist Dechen Lu (2B)



Saturday, 9-19-26 Class 1A
Accompanist Kalden Lu (4A)



Saturday, 9-26-26 Class 4A
Teacher: Denise Fong
Piano Accompanist: Karston Chan (8B)
Flute: Nathan Chau (8B)
Cello: Tristan Leung (8A)

Sunday, 9-20-26 Class 6A
Accompanist Jesse Gunderson (6A)



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

Dear West Portal Lutheran Family of Faith,

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)



While our situation at Haake Hall to start the year has certainly been stressful and difficult, some of us on staff find momentary lightness in the irony of seeing so many contents of our building get thrown into a large bin that very closely resembles that of a coffin. With each load tossed, we have inwardly mourned its loss, almost like a funeral.

While we can find some humor in the physical loss of things, we recognize that we still mourn the loss of a "normal" start to the school year, the hours spent reimagining spaces and schedules, the mounting expenses of replacing items, and the sense of control and predictability. Sometimes it's in naming what we are grieving that helps us recognize that there is reason for our sadness, impatience, and frustration. It also helps me to know that God is present in this (mess) and while grief is so very real and palpable, so is the hope we have in the Lord.

The reality is that while we are present on this earth, its evils and various trials will

still afflict us, yet they will not, in the end, be victorious. In this new month we will be teaching our students that we need to learn to recognize and identify our grief - to realize that we are at times "not okay," and yet we have a God who will one day make all things new.

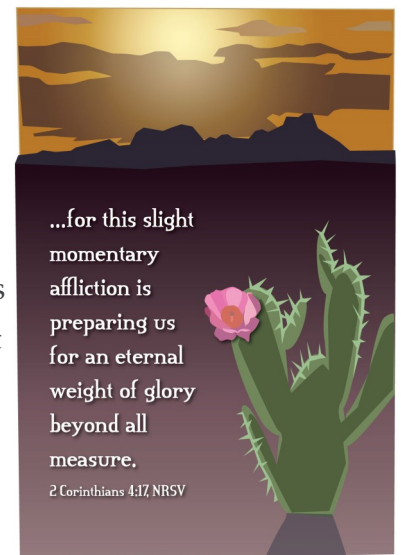
The song on repeat on my car rides to school has been "He Will Make All Things New."

The bridge goes like this:

*The blind will finally see, the lame will run and leap
The dead will rise and breathe for You have conquered
And every tear that fell will cry out "it is well"
The dark will be dispelled for You have conquered
The Lamb for sinners slain is coming soon to reign
Our hope is not in vain for You have conquered*

So while we mourn, we know this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (2 Corinthians 4:17). And certainly, it only gives more reason to celebrate 75 years at West Portal Lutheran School of God's immense mercy and grace through all that has transpired, both past and present.

Blessings in Christ,
Sherise Lee
School Principal



75th School Anniversary Celebration Recital Featuring West Portal Lutheran Students



Orchestra and handbells led by
Dr. Florence Fong

To view the recital, click on this link:
<https://youtu.be/hYnvYiOKQog>

Saturday, 9-26-26 Class 4A
Piano Accompanist: Karston Chan (8B)
Flute: Nathan Chau (8B)
Cello: Tristan Leung (8A)



Recital soloists by 8th graders: Amy Kao,
Sofia Pappas (8A), Melanie Lau (8A),
Glory Chan (8A), Nathan Chau (8B),
Caden Lu (8B), Tristan Leung (8A),
Karston Chan (8B), Lincoln Bong (8A)

75th School Anniversary, Sept. 26th

What a joy to gather commUNITY past and present this past Saturday to celebrate our 75th School Anniversary! How amazing to reach this significant milestone, yet how humbling to know that while longevity is rightly to be celebrated, nothing in this present life truly lasts forever. What endures is the word of the Lord, and to God's Word West Portal Lutheran remains committed to teaching and transforming lives with the gospel of Jesus Christ - the wonderfully good news of salvation as contained within Holy Scripture giving us life in the full. And thus we pray that the Lord may continue to establish the work of His hands in the lives of our students, families, faculty and staff, and church.



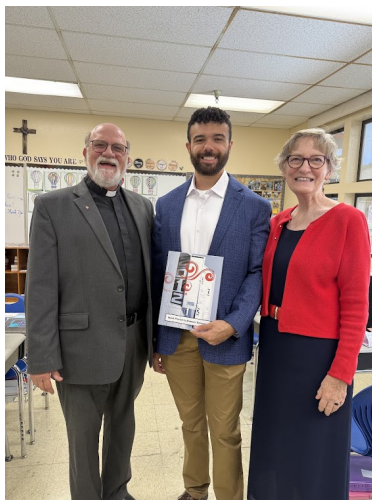
Many pastors attended the celebration including 3 previous pastors who served at WPLC: Rev. Dr. David Stechholz, Pastor Todd Arnold, Pastor Curtis Binz and current Pastor Jacob Swenson. The other 3 visiting pastors in attendance: Pastor Chris Ng, Rev. Dr. Martin Noland and Rev. Jonathan Priest



Rev. Jonathan Priest



Pastor Jacob Swenson & Family



Pastor Todd Arnold, Kathy & Tim (alumni)



Rev. Dr. David Stechholz & Janet



Pastor Curtis Binz & Stacey

Janssen Hall Displays

July 11, 1943

First service was conducted by Rev. Arthur Haake at the Empire Theatre on West Portal Avenue with 127 people in attendance.



April, 1945

Church site was purchased.

Church Site Purchased, April 1945



May 27, 1947

Ground-breaking Service



October 19, 1947

Laying of the cornerstone



September, 1951

Elementary school dedicated. First part of school opened with 59 children and 4 classrooms.



August 25, 1957

Dedication of school building with approximately 300 children enrolled (Haake Hall)



August, 1974

Purchase of property at 1701 - 37th Avenue for school expansion (site of current Sunset Campus).



June, 1982

Dedication of Janssen Hall and addition of Fireside Room to the church



February, 1993

Purchase of Luther House



June 22, 2001

Groundbreaking for Sunset Campus after tearing down the old Moraga Street school building. In 2003 - dedication of Sunset Campus Kindergarten through 3rd Grade students.



School Principals Through the Years



1957-1961 1961-1963 1964-1971 1971-2001



2001-2008 2008-2014 2014-2015 2015-2017



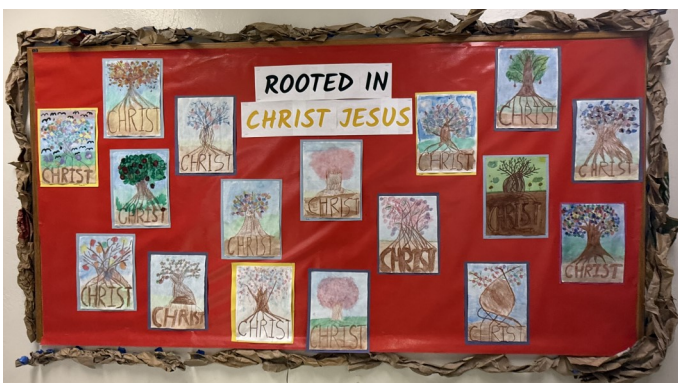
2017-2018 2018-2021 2021 2021-Present



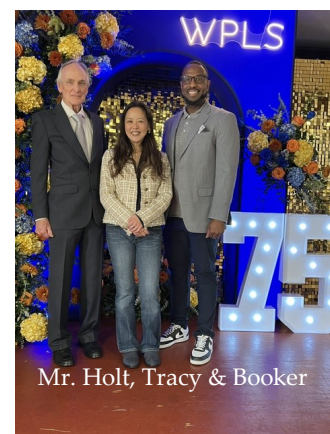
Sunset Campus Today



Sloat Campus Today



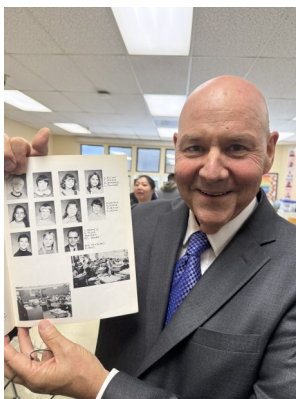
Alumni & Teachers



Judith (Smith) Iocco (Class of 1959) and Miriam Hitzeman, who is 101 years old, was an organist, pianist and a school teacher from 1953-1960 at WPL.



Principal Sherise Lee, alumni from 1959 and 1970's with Beatrice Priest-Alumni Coordinator.



Retired teacher: Michele Boyer



Retired teacher: Elaine Mills



Retired teachers: Daniel Holt & Leslie Valstad Dani

School Principals Through the Years



1957-1961



1961-1963



1964-1971



1971-2001



2001-2008



2008-2014



2014-2015



2015-2017



2017-2018



2018-2021



2021



2021-Present

Current Faculties





Antonella Demartini-75th Anniversary Coordinator and 1996 Alumni and family



Rev. Dr. David Stechholz and some members of WPLC after the Sunday Worship Service, Sept. 27th.

Trunk or Treat

Sunday, October 25

4-6 PM



GAMES | CANDY | FUN | [HONGRY KONG](#) FOOD TRUCK

This is a family event. 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 school or church offices.
- 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.

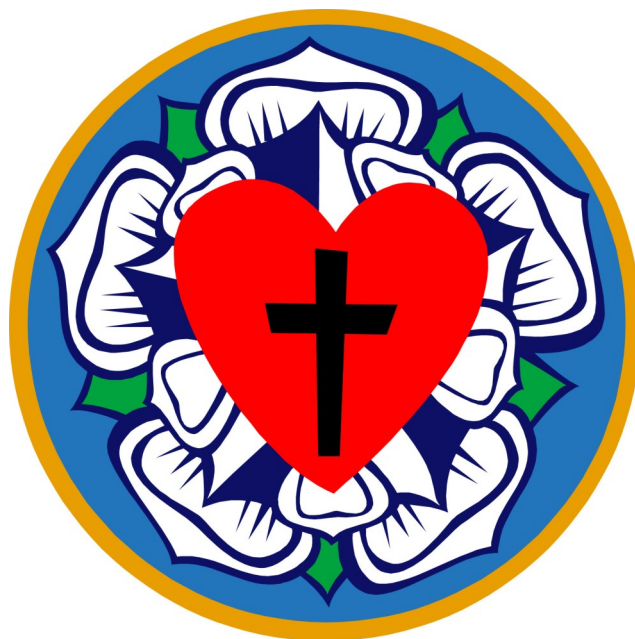
WPLC Music Academy will hold its Fall Piano Recital on Saturday, Oct. 31st at 2:00 PM in the Fellowship Hall at 200 Sloat Blvd, S.F. Admission is free and everyone is invited. Our talented students are eager to share their beautiful music with you!



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 509 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 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

Pastor Appreciation Day - October 11th



1 Nami Murata	14 Justin Lew	1 Javier & Brittney Rosas
1 Steven Toloski	15 Virginia Rumbaugh	2 Edward & Betty Wong
2 Kathleen Chon	16 Terry Kitagawa	10 Gordon Shiozaki & Dona Fuchiwaki
2 Brandon Wong	17 Gary Lee	12 Waily & Cynthia Tom
3 Ryan Aymard	17 Kyle Chao	15 Walter & Sophie Louie
3 Rebecca Kang	17 Mable Mai	16 Anton & Sylvia Mrabe
3 Barron Ungson	17 May Wong	19 Michael & Melinda Miyagishima
5 Rev. Jonathan Priest	18 Desiree Pornphannukun	19 Michael & Maggie Aymard
6 Kristie Tom	18 Stanley Tom	22 Paul & Eugenia Kolsanoff
7 Rebecca Chan	18 Virginia Ferry	22 Kevin Chan & Helen Hsu
7 Art Jann	19 Deanna Biermann	25 Ken Li & Mable Mai
7 Sarah Stofferahn	21 Denver Wade	28 Ricky Liu & Jennie Fong
7 David Wendt	21 Kimberly Wong	
8 Diane Toloski	22 Gerda Beisel	
8 Keith Tom	23 Moses Chiu	
8 Clifford Wong	23 Nicolai Swenson	
9 Brian Hau	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 Amy Roe	
12 Sherisse Hutchinson	31 Kurt Schober	
12 Madelyn Wong		
13 Chloe Cheng		

"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.



Saturday, 10/3	10:00 AM Quilt Class
Saturday, 10/3	5:00 PM Worship Service-Partners-In-Faith
Sunday, 10/4	9:00 AM Sunday School-Sanctuary to the Church Library
Sunday, 10/4	9:00 AM Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 10/4	10:00 AM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Monday, 10/5	6:00 PM Membership Class-Church Library
Wednesday, 10/7	11:00 AM Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 10/10	5:00 PM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 10/11	10:00 AM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 10/11	11:15 AM Altar Guild Meeting-Fellowship Hall
Monday, 10/12	Church and School - Closed for holiday
Wednesday, 10/14	11:00 AM Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 10/17	5:00 PM Worship Service-Partners-In-Faith
Sunday, 10/18	9:00 AM Sunday School-Sanctuary to the Church Library
Sunday, 10/18	9:00 AM Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 10/18	10:00 AM Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 10/18	11:30 AM Voter's Assembly
Sunday, 10/18	12:30 AM Voter's Assembly
Monday, 10/19	6:00 PM Membership Class-Church Library
Wednesday, 10/21	11:00 AM Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 10/24	5:00 PM Worship Service-Partners-In-Faith
Sunday, 10/25	9:00 AM Sunday School-Sanctuary to the Church Library
Sunday, 10/25	9:00 AM Adult Bible Study-Fellowship Hall
Sunday, 10/25	10:00 AM Reformation Sunday Worship Service-Lord's Supper
Sunday, 10/25	4-6 PM WPLS Trunk or Treat
Monday, 10/19	6:00 PM Membership Class-Church Library
Wednesday, 10/28	11:00 AM Midweek Bible Class
Saturday, 10/31	2:00 PM Fall Piano Recital
Saturday, 10/31	5:00 PM Worship Service

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.

