

Important Dates for NCLC in August

Sunday School each Sunday at 9:00 a.m.
Worship each Sunday at 10:00 a.m.
Each Thursday beginning at 10:30 a.m. – Bible Study and Prayer
Sunday, August 2 – Food Collection for GAFF
Tuesday, August 4 – Old Men’s Breakfast at Timberwoods at 9:00 a.m.
– Quilting for Disaster Response at 1:30 p.m.
Sunday – Wednesday, August 9-12 – Vacation Bible School with Thrive Church
6:00 – 8:30 p.m. each evening
Saturday, August 15 – Men’s Ministry 9:00 a.m. at church
– Installation service for Pastor Weisner at 3:00 p.m. with reception
Wednesday, August 19 –Church Council at 6 p.m.
Wednesday, August 26 – NCLC Ladies at 1:00 p.m.

Birthday Celebrations

- † Angela Williams – 11th
- † Allan Hermanson – 12th



Please let Beverly or Dianne know if we missed your birthday.

Worship Assistance Schedule

	<u>Readers</u>	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Flowers</u>
August 2	Beverly Watts	Angela & David Williams	Helen & Lloyd Wallace
August 9	Eric Stuenkel	Julie & Howy Copenhaver	Dianne Hermanson
August 16	Kristen Keller	Nora & Conrad Raymond	
August 23	Ingrid Farrar	Jim Tweedy & Mary Dawn Stuenkel	Beverly Watts
August 30	Pam Henderson	Ed Williams	

Looking Ahead



Family and Youth events are being planned for the Fall. On September 18, there will be a family movie night. Octoberfest is being considered for (you guessed it) October! Be sure to look for more information on these events in upcoming bulletins and newsletters.



New Covenant News

Volume 8, Number 4

August 2026

A Monthly Publication of the Congregational Activities of
New Covenant Lutheran Church in Morganton, NC



MISSION STATEMENT: New Covenant Welcomes God’s People
Founded in Faith, United by Love, and Gifted to Serve

Getting to Know Our Pastor - The Rev. Dr. Andrew Weisner



Pastor Andrew Weisner, a native of Rural Hall, NC, has devoted his life to ministry, teaching, and the formation of Christian community. He became a Lutheran while studying at Lenoir-Rhyne College, where he graduated with a degree in philosophy. His seminary training at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg included formative study under Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, along with ministry experiences in Washington, DC and New York City.

Ordained in 1983, Pastor Weisner began his ministry in Greensboro, NC, where he also met his wife, Claudia. He later pursued doctoral studies in Chicago, earning his Ph.D. in Church History.

From 1995 to 2020, he served as campus pastor at Lenoir-Rhyne, eventually becoming Dean of University Ministries as the institution grew into a multi-campus university.

Pastor Weisner joined the North American Lutheran Church after leaving Lenoir-Rhyne and served a long-term interim at Antioch Lutheran Church. He has served New Covenant Lutheran Church since May 12, 2024 and was extended a call to continue his service to New Covenant as our pastor on May 31, 2026. He also directs the NALC Carolinas Mission Region’s McDaniel-Yoder Center for Theology and teaches as an adjunct professor for the North American Lutheran Seminary. Pastor Weisner encourages specific practices related to Christian worship and spiritual life, including Liturgical Worship, the importance of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Communion), Corporate Worship, regular Prayer, and engaging with the Bible in studying and meditating on Scripture.

He and Claudia share a blended family and enjoy their grandchildren. Pastor Weisner loves music and church history—and Claudia jokes that his hobbies are “church, church, and church.”

Vacation Bible School: Journey to Rome!

Thrive Church and New Covenant Lutheran Church are gearing up for an exciting week of Vacation Bible School, and we'd love for your children to be part of the. From August 9th through the 12th, children will gather from 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. each evening to step into ancient Rome and discover the underground church with Paul. This year's theme invites kids to explore faith with courage, joy, and curiosity as they learn what it meant to follow Jesus in the early church.



Who Can Attend: Children ages 3 and up (must be potty trained) through those who have completed 5th grade are welcome to join us. Each night will include Bible stories, music, crafts, games, and meaningful lessons designed to help kids grow in faith and friendship.

Location: 215 Pete Britain Road, Morganton

Pre-Registration Encouraged: To help us prepare materials and ensure a smooth check-in process, families are encouraged to pre-register at www.newcovenantnalc.org.

We look forward to sharing this unforgettable journey with your children. Rome awaits—let's explore it together! (*FYI: Supper will be served.*)

New Covenant Lutheran Women

New Covenant Women will meet on August 26 at 1:00 PM at the church with a short business meeting, followed by a time of fun and games. All women of the congregation are encouraged to *come and see* how much fun and fellowship can be experienced with this group of ladies. You might be surprised! Bring a snack to share.

Carolinas Lutheran Women Convocation

The CLW Council joyfully invites you to the 16th Annual CLW Convocation!

When: Saturday, October 17th **Where:** Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, Faith, NC

Speaker & Program: Pastor Marty Ramey – “The Oil of Gladness”

Faith Lutheran and Organ Lutheran have teamed up this year with Organ Lutheran hosting and Faith Lutheran providing a large space to allow us to gather. Further details will be shared when they are available.



Bulletin Updates

If you have something to include in the bulletin or something to remove, please text or email Beverly Watts. This is helpful in adding or removing individuals from the prayer list and makes sure the correct information is shared. *Thanks, the Communication Committee*

So, why would Martin Luther himself, and the original Lutherans, and the Roman Catholics, and the Eastern Orthodox, and the "high-church" Anglicans (and others) observe a robust "Marian piety," appreciation of Mary? For one, because (as Luther wrote) she's worthy of it; she is, after all, the mother of God! The blood that flowed in the incarnate God's veins came from *her* body. Also, any community, society or culture that maintains deep, potent, consistent respect for women, mothers and children will be a healthy, loving, safe, and holy community. We can see in our current culture around us what happens when a healthy respect for women, mothers, and children is not maintained. Jesus' mother, Mary, is a woman: genetically, physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually like every other woman. When we in our Christian communities show respect and admiration for Jesus' mother, we are – or should be! – showing respect for every woman and every mother around us and throughout the world. *God Himself* chose to come to and accomplish salvation for his world *through a woman*. Therefore, *women* – the sisters of God's own mother – are deserving of the highest respect and honor. In recognition thereof, it would be fitting ("right and salutary") for our congregation, and every Christian congregation, to seek more opportunities to show thankfulness and admiration for the person, and role, of Jesus' mother.

I am thankful to everyone in our congregation for opportunities for this kind of discussion, prompted by our worship services and other occasions in our life together.

"The peace of the Lord be with you...."

Pastor Weisner



NALC Online Convocation

The national convocation will be held online this year on August 7 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. EDT.

Anyone can be a “visitor” at no cost but must register, using the following link: <https://thenalc.org/en-us/event/online-convocation/>.

From the Pastor...

Our district dean, Pastor Steve Johnson, strongly suggested that the installation service for New Covenant's newly-called pastor occur on a Saturday, sometime in late July or in August. Some folks are still vacationing and traveling in July, so we looked at Saturdays in August. We observed that one of the Saturdays in August is the 15th. In the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, August 15 is "feast" day, not a simple commemoration, celebrating our Lord's mother. (Note: a "feast" is more noteworthy and important than a commemoration; LBW signifies this by listing "feasts" in capital letters while "commemorations" are plain type; see pages 10-12 in the LBW). So, we decided to have the installation on a "feast day." Feast days on the Church calendar are supposed to be special occasions, but I imagine the more pressing, relevant question among us Lutherans is, "Why is there something on our *Lutheran* calendar about the Virgin Mary...isn't that a *Catholic* thing?" Here, a response...

In 1994 during a summer research sojourn in central Germany, I visited the Landes Bibliotek und Archiv (Territorial Library and Archives) connected to the University of Jena. For people interested in historical documents it is a delightful, amazing place. I was looking for a particular document composed by a 17th century Lutheran theologian who taught at Jena, but along the way, the custodian of some of the old and rare books showed me some items in his collection. Memorable and noteworthy were choir books from the University of Wittenberg, where Martin Luther was a professor before the start of the Reformation (usually cited as 1517) and throughout his career. The choir books were used by the choir for the daily worship services of the faculty and students at the university. The books were not just collections of hymns but, like we have in the front of our LBW, they contained appointed scripture readings, prayers, and verses to be sung for days of the Church year. Among the commemorations of special days and saints of the Church, the pages included September 8, "Nativitas Beatae Mariae Virginis" -- "Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary" -- with a large, colorful artistic illumination of Mary surrounded by angels at the left-hand top of the page. The page included the



verse that would be sung by the choir at the beginning of the liturgy (like our "Entrance Hymn"), the scripture readings for the day, the psalm and its chant tone, the verse to be sung as the altar was being prepared for the Eucharist, and a communion-distribution verse for the choir. These choir books, the librarian informed me, were certainly used before and throughout the 1520s, and likely later. They were moved from Wittenberg, he relayed, in 1547, when troops of Emperor Charles V invaded and captured Wittenberg. At that point the books were packed and cushioned with straw in barrels and moved to Jena for safety.

That was my personal experience of viewing Luther's and his university's piety during the early and mid-16th century. Now, for a more academic view, here is a quote from Luther in what he called *A Little Prayer Book* published in 1522. (Remember: The Lutheran Reformation is cited as beginning in 1517 with his 95 Theses, and he was excommunicated in 1521. Apparently, those events did not change Luther's "Marian piety," because in 1522 he wrote of Mary: "She is full of grace, proclaimed to be entirely without sin — something exceedingly great.

For God's grace fills her with everything good and makes her devoid of all evil." In a sermon on December 8, 1527, on the Church calendar as "the Conception of the Mother of God" (that day, too, was commemorated in the Jena choir books), Luther wrote: "It is a sweet and pious belief that the infusion of Mary's soul was effected without original sin; so that in the very infusion of her soul she was also purified from original sin and adorned with God's gifts, receiving a pure soul infused by God; thus, from the first moment she began to live she was free from all sin." In an essay written in 1539 on the doctrine of the Church, entitled, *On the Councils and the Church*, Luther stated, "God did not derive his divinity from Mary; but it does not follow that it is therefore wrong to say that God was born of Mary, that God is Mary's Son, and that Mary is God's mother...She is the true mother of God and bearer of God... Mary suckled God, rocked God to sleep, prepared broth and soup for God, etc. For God and man are one person, one Christ, one Son, one Jesus, not two Christs. ...just as your son is not two sons...even though he has two natures, body and soul, the body from you, the soul from God alone." This doctrine is not a reflection of medieval Catholic piety; it is a clear statement reflecting the doctrine of the Church established at the fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon in the year 451.

On Roman Catholic calendars August 15 commemorates the "Assumption of Mary." The doctrine behind this occasion states that Christ's mother, both body and soul, was taken into heaven at the end of her earthly life (much the same as the prophet Elijah in the Old Testament, 2 Kings 2:1-14). While this teaching was codified and declared as doctrine of the Roman Church only recently, November 1, 1950, the teaching can be traced back to the second or third century (according to scholar Stephen Shoemaker at the University of Oregon, in *The Ancient Dormition Apocrypha and the Origins of Marian Piety: Early Evidence of Marian Intercession from Late Ancient Palestine*, Oxford Univ. Press, 2002). While there are references to the assumption of Mary in centuries following the second or third, an actual "feast" recognizing it by name appears in the 9th century. The Eastern Orthodox Church on August 15th celebrates the "Dormition" (or, "falling asleep") "of the Mother of God" (or, as the East says, "Dormition of the Theotokos"), stating that the Blessed Virgin simply fell asleep (*perhaps* died) and ascended into heaven, and the feast of her Dormition was established in the 7th century.

On August 15, 1522, in Wittenberg, Luther preached in an "Assumption Day" sermon, "There can be no doubt that the Virgin Mary is in heaven. How it happened we do not know. And since the Holy Spirit has told us nothing about it, we can make of it no article of faith... It is enough to know that she lives in Christ." Only a few weeks later, September 1, 1522, Luther preached in a sermon, "The veneration of Mary is inscribed in the very depths of the human heart," and some years later, in a Christmas sermon in 1531, Luther proclaimed that Christ's mother is "the highest woman and the noblest gem in Christianity after Christ. She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. Still, honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures." And in 1537 (likely July 2, an older date for the Feast of the Visitation, now May 31), Luther "addressed" Mary in a sermon, saying, "No woman is like you. You are more than Eve or Sarah, blessed above all nobility, wisdom, and sanctity."

While there are many more writings by Martin Luther in praise and giving accolades to Jesus' mother, these are enough to demonstrate that Luther himself (with some of his colleagues of the Lutheran Reformation) never intended to completely eliminate all of their received "catholic"—big "C" or little "c" – tradition from their reform. Lutherans maintain infant baptism; Lutherans maintain confirmation; Lutherans maintain holy communion as the real presence of Christ; Lutherans even maintain individual — one-on-one, pastor and penitent, "private"— confession and absolution (see the *Augsburg Confession*, article 11; Luther's *Small Catechism*, article V, after baptism; and LBW page 196; I gave a lecture on this topic to a national gathering of Lutheran pastors in Indiana last month). And, of course, Lutherans maintain the public reading and proclamation of scripture, which was rich and full in the early centuries of the Church, dwindled in some places during the late Middle Ages, and was restored more fully as part of Luther's reform. And along with so many parts of C/catholic tradition received by the Reformers, Luther and others and the Lutheran Confessions maintained high respect for Jesus' mother, the Ever-Blessed Virgin Mary, or according to Luther, the "*Ever Virgin* Mary." (See his *Smalcald Articles*, Part I. 4, Latin text). All of this is the reason why I contend that the piety, liturgical and theological traditions, and the *identity* of Lutheranism is "C/catholic," *not* Protestant (if "Protestant" includes Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and many others around us).

In response to another question about Lutherans' perspective on Mary and the saints, have you ever experienced, or heard of, a scenario such as this. A 16-year-old young man who has just received his driver's license has permission to drive himself and a few friends in Dad's car to a movie, to return home by 11:00 p.m., and he shows up at home around 12:30 a.m., 90 minutes late. Mom and Dad are awaiting his arrival and meet him when he comes into the house. When he walks in, Mom asks, "Well! Where have *you* been, *pray* tell?" Now, what does that sentence mean? Is she asking the son to pray – to God? to her? to whom? Or does her statement mean, "Where have you been, 'I request you to tell?'" Especially in ages past, and sometimes now, the word "pray" can mean "request." There are many 16th century examples of this in, e.g., the works of Shakespeare, as in *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene 5, when Ophelia wishes to end a discussion with Hamlet's father, Claudius, she says, "Pray, let's have no words of this," meaning, "Please" (or "I request") "we stop this discussion." So, in older traditions of the Church, when people referred to "praying" to the saints, they did not mean praying to a saint for the saint to accomplish the ultimate goal; it meant making a request to the saint. And what was the request? That the saint pray – make a request – *to God* on behalf of the supplicant. We confess that we believe in "the communion of saints," the fellowship of all believers unbroken even by death. (This is evident in the conclusion to the Preface at the Eucharist: "And so with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven..."). So, just as I can ask you or anyone in our congregation to pray for me, I can also request – "pray" – that one of the saints now in heaven pray *to God* for me. At the time of Luther, among Luther and his companions, Jesus' mother was a very popular saint to whom people addressed requests – "prayers" – for intercession to our Lord and God Jesus. After all, she is his mother; he, we can assume, has a special affection for her. Perhaps he will respond to her more quickly or clearly than he would to me! Similarly, perhaps Christ will respond more quickly or clearly to the prayer of a holy and beloved member of our congregation than he would to me!

Mission and Ministry Update



Glen Alpine Food Pantry - UPDATE

The Pantry began food distribution on Tuesday July 14th. The plan is to continue the Tuesday evening schedule for the foreseeable future. REMINDER: Food Pantry is in *dire* need of volunteers: If you are at all interested or need more information, please speak with Angela Williams. You can volunteer once a week, once a month or as often you are able!



The Pregnancy Care Center of Burke County

Thanks to all who donated change, bills, and checks to the Pregnancy Care Center of Burke Baby Bottle Drive from Mother's Day to Father's Day this year! We were able to collect \$284.20 in coins and \$470.00 in cash/checks for a total of \$754.20 donated to the Center! Thanks again to everyone who contributed and supported this fundraiser! It truly makes a difference in our community!

Reminder: The 2nd Annual Burke County Day for Life Event, put on by the Pregnancy Care Center of Burke, will be held on October 10. See June’s newsletter for additional details. More information will be available in coming months!

Cleaning Crews

Thanks to all the Volunteers who agreed to be on the Janitorial Teams for New Covenant. The teams and schedule seem to be working well. Anyone interested in being a part of this group, please let Angela Williams know, as the new schedule will be developed in September for the remainder of the year!



We are the *ordinary* people doing the *extraordinary* work of the Lord!

Budget Activity Through May

Donations received	46,667.50
Interest Income	1,150.72
Expenses	<u>-43,076.24</u>
Net	4,741.98