



The Messenger

October 2026 Edition

A Monthly Newsletter from St. John Lutheran Church and School

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Gather. Grow. Go. To the Glory of God!

Devotional Corner



Devotion Corner: Take Out the Trash!

*Cast all your anxiety on him
because he cares for you.
1 Peter 5:7*

If you were asked to write down your top-ten favorite places, it's hard to imagine a landfill making anybody's list. There's nothing pretty about a landfill. There's nothing attractive or inviting about a place where trash is piled high and deep. It's no fun to be at a landfill; all you can do is watch the pile get bigger. And you certainly wouldn't want to take home any souvenirs!

But in 1 Peter 5:7, God is inviting us (if it can be said this way) to treat him like a landfill. "Pile it up!" he says. "Keep it coming! I can take it! Cover me with it!"

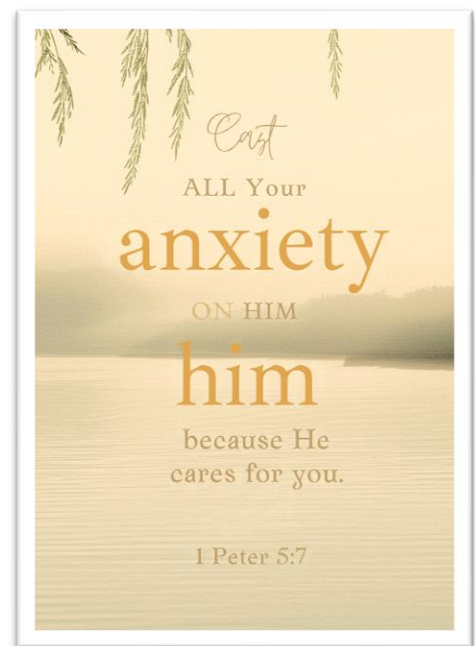
What kind of trash is God asking us to cover him with? Anxiety. Worry about the future. Stress of the present. Burdens from the past. All the things that pile up and make life feel like an endless slog through a murky, mucky swamp. All the things that press hard and cause pain, on the inside and the outside.

God says, "Throw it all on me!" He wants to take away all those burdens. He wants to remove the guilt from the sins of the past. He wants to hold us up under the stress of the present. He wants to assure us about the future.

But, as ugly as it sounds, he does this by taking our burdens onto himself. In fact, he already has taken our burdens when Jesus Christ bore the sins of the whole world. He carried all of them when he died on the cross. He didn't drop anybody's burden of sin. He didn't leave anybody out so that now they're stuck carrying their own.

Do you know people who help others so much that they hardly have any time left for themselves? You can marvel at how much they give of themselves, how many burdens they carry for other people. But if you would ever ask them how they can possibly do so much to help others, the answer might come back so plainly, "I just love them."

God's attitude toward you is so full of love—so overflowing with love—that no matter how many of your burdens you pile on him, his love will still spill out for you through Jesus. So take out the trash! Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.



Worship With Us Sundays at 9:00 am

Christian Parenting Today

Christian Parenting Today: What Do Christian Parents Need To Know About AI?

A Focus on the Family article by Rev. Luke Thompson

I have spent the last three years researching the relationship between theology and artificial intelligence (AI) and helping our called worker training school, Martin Luther College, prepare for AI in the college classroom. This is a wild time to be a college professor.

But I'm also a parent. I have a son just starting high school and a daughter just starting middle school. So, from one Christian parent to another, here are three things Christian parents ought to be thinking about—but might not be—when it comes to AI.

1. You are not talking to anyone. Can you think of any tool other than AI that, in order to use it, you need to pretend that it's not a tool? Where you have to treat it as a person instead? We “talk” to AI. We describe AI as thinking, understanding, deciding, responding. Yet AI doesn't really do any of those things, even though it feels like it does.

Large Language Models (like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Grok) are machine-learning systems that produce outputs that look like speech. Imagine typing in the question, “What does my dog chase?” From its training, it calculates that “cat” is highly likely to come next, “squirrel” somewhat less likely, and “elephant” extremely unlikely. So, it outputs “cat.” Does it know what a dog, cat, squirrel, or elephant is? Of course not. It doesn't know anything except which symbols are more likely to follow other symbols. There's no mind in there, no person to know what a dog is. Yet here is the strange part: You cannot really use the technology without acting like it knows things. It's in vogue to say that you're using AI as a research assistant, but research assistants are persons! An AI agent is just as much a person as a calculator.

The problem is how we act slowly shapes what we believe. Imagine saying, “Christ's body and blood aren't really present in the Sacrament” dozens of times a day. Even if at first you don't believe what you're saying, how long until it does start affecting how you see the Lord's Supper? Or imagine you tell your spouse, “I know I love you, but I'm going to say, ‘I don't love you,’ from now on every time I see you.” Would we

think that's healthy? So, how will acting like machines are persons daily eventually change what our children believe about persons?

2. AI is biased. Large Language Models are not neutral sources of information. What AI outputs is based on roughly two sources: its training data and its programming. It was “trained” on billions of pages of text, but then programmers create filters on what can ultimately be output. For example, ChatGPT can't use vulgar language. That's not because of its training but because its programmers programmed it not to.



I recently “asked” ChatGPT, “To what degree would you say your programmers programmed bias into you?” Its answer: “Quite a bit!” It explained that most of its programmers have very different ideas from WELS about what constitutes “the conception of the human person, freedom, happiness, sexuality, authority, harm, justice, and the good life.”

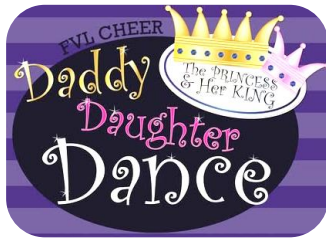
Now, that's the programming. What about the training data? Much like the programming, the training data will produce an AI oriented to a different worldview than ours, because a good deal of our worldview is not respected in the training data right now (for example, our views on evolution or human sexuality).

This might seem inconsequential if you're “asking” the AI to teach your son eighth-grade algebra. But what about questions about history, politics, religion, science, psychology, philosophy, or ethics?

Part of growing up is learning who the trustworthy authorities in life are. Who is telling me this? Why do they believe it? Is what they're saying consistent with God's Word? AI makes this harder because we can't help treating it like an authoritative person, even though we know it's not. And neither can our children.

Article continues on page 7

Upcoming Events



FVL's Daddy/Daughter Dance- Saturday, October 3rd

Girls ages 3-13 and their dads (or other special guy) are invited to dress up and spend an afternoon together filled with dancing, games, crafts, snacks, raffle baskets, and memories to last a lifetime! FVL's annual Daddy/Daughter Dance, sponsored by FVL cheerleaders, will run from 1:30-4:00 pm. Each princess will receive a tiara. Complimentary refreshments, photo booth ticket, and 1 raffle ticket per participant is included with the cost. Cost is \$30 for one daddy/daughter combination, \$45 with two daughters, \$50 for three or more, or \$20 per person at the door.



Trunk or Treat- Saturday, October 24th

Get your cars decked out and your candy stocked- it's time for our annual Trunk or Treat! Join us on Saturday, October 24th from 1:00-2:30 pm for this great community event. We are hoping to once again host dozens of vehicles and hundreds of trick-or-treaters in costume. Tractor rides will be available. If you plan to bring your vehicle and hand out candy, please register at <https://qrco.de/bh2R3p> or contact Miss Crowley at mckenzey.crowley@stjohnwrightstown.com so that we have a general idea of how many spaces to set aside. We will start arranging vehicles in the lot at 12:30. If you are bringing the family to trick-or-treat, there is no need to register; just come at 1:00 and join in the fun!

FVL Fall Sacred Band and Choirs Concert- Sunday, October 4th

Join us in the FVL Auditorium on Sunday, October 4th from 2:00-3:30 pm to witness FVL band and choir students sharing their faith through music and song. Admission is free and registration is not required. Those who can't attend in person can view the concert online at FVL's YouTube page: youtube.com/@FVLFoxes.



Mark Your Calendars!

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| Oct 2 | No School- Teacher Inservice |
| Oct 3 | Soccer Camp
Daddy/Daughter Dance at FVL |
| Oct 4 | FVL Sacred Band and Choirs Concert |
| Oct 5 | Cross Country Meet at St. Mark GB |
| Oct 6 | Martha's Circle |
| Oct 7 | Board of Education Meeting |
| Oct 9 | K-4 th Field Trip to The Little Farmer |
| Oct 12 | Cross Country Meet at Emmanuel, NL
Elder's Meeting
Church Council Meeting |
| Oct 13 | Fellowship Meal |
| Oct 14 | School Picture Day |
| Oct 16 | Family Movie Night |
| Oct 18 | JAM Sings in Church |
| Oct 19 | 8 th Grade Welcome Night at FVL |
| Oct 20 | Outreach Committee Meeting |
| Oct 21 | Breakfast and Bible Study
EC Pastor Play Day |
| Oct 22 | Early Childhood Field Trip to Mulberry Farm |
| Oct 23 | End of First School Quarter |
| Oct 23-25 | FVL Presents: The Curious Savage |
| Oct 24 | Trunk or Treat
FVL Grade School Dance Camp |
| Oct 26-28 | School Spirit Week |
| Oct 27 | PTO Meeting |
| Oct 29-30 | No School/ State Teacher's Conference |
| Nov 4-5 | Parent-Teacher Conferences |

Church and FVL Highlights

Pastoral Call News

On Sunday, September 20th, we called Matthew Kiecker to be our pastor. He is 48 years old and married to Gretel. They have 3 children, ages 19, 15, and 14. He is currently serving at St. John in Lomira, Wisconsin. If you would like to contact him, he can be reached at 219-309-6021 or pastor@stjohnslomira.com. Please keep him in your prayers as he deliberates where he can best serve in God's kingdom.



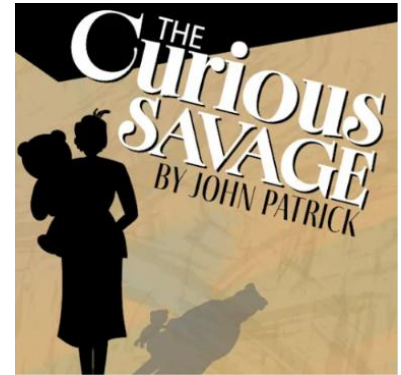
8th Grade Welcome Night at FVL

If you are considering sending your 8th grader to FVL next year, you are strongly encouraged to attend the 8th Grade Welcome Night on Monday, October 19th as a family. Students can come hang out, grab some pizza, enjoy music and fun activities, and meet your future classmates! Parents should join us for refreshments, campus tours, and a variety of engaging 20-minute information sessions. Discover what makes our school special and learn more about School Choice, STEM opportunities, after-school activities, and more. We'd love to answer your questions and help you envision your student's future with us! Doors open at 5:00 pm and the event lasts until 7:45 pm.



FVL Presents: The Curious Savage October 23-25

FVL Theater is proud to present its fall play, *The Curious Savage*! Mrs. Ethel Savage has some very curious ideas about what to do with her late husband's estate—specifically, she'd like to create a charity to



promote foolishness in any form. Her behavior has her children, the normal Savages, concerned. They have her committed to an institution, where she meets a colorful group of residents and settles into a world of unusual characters, unexpected friendships, and surprising discoveries. *The Curious Savage* is part comedy, part mystery, and all heart!

Shows will be held on Friday, October 23 at 6:30 pm, Saturday, October 24 at 6:30 pm, and Sunday, October 25 at 2:00 pm. Online ticket sales open October 1, with reserved seating for \$7 plus a convenience fee for all credit/debit card transactions. Tickets will also be available at the door. Students with a 5K-8th grade FVL Events Pass are free (valid at the door only). FVL students with school ID are only \$5.00 (also valid at the door only).

October Birthdays

Happy birthday to our church members celebrating in October!

Oct. 1- Bryce Herlache
Oct. 2- Lisa Pohlman
Oct. 4- Dominic Myers
Oct. 5- Dale Abrahamson
Oct. 5- Amara Buchholz
Oct. 6- Jason Uitenbroek
Oct. 8- Porter Micke
Oct. 8- Dave Rosenbaum
Oct. 10- Gavin Hein
Oct. 10- Carl Uitenbroek
Oct. 11- Brock Grossheim
Oct. 13- Jacob Bruecker
Oct. 13- Collyns Nielson

Oct. 14- Owen Ratkowski
Oct. 14- Arlen Wicks
Oct. 15- Owen Raddatz
Oct. 18- Eric Olp



Oct. 19- Kevin Vande Hey
Oct. 21- Colson Steiner
Oct. 22- Madelyn Buchholz
Oct. 22- Robert Maass
Oct. 23- Michael Pennenberg
Oct. 23- Lynn Ratkowski
Oct. 24- Caleb Ritter
Oct. 26- Megan Adams
Oct. 26- Shelly Meulemans
Oct. 29- Leah Cisler
Oct. 30- Braxton Evenson
Oct. 30- Nora Olp
Oct. 31- Amy Leonhard

School Highlights



School Picture Day- October 14

Put on your fanciest outfits and your biggest smiles, it's time for school pictures! Harmann Studios is returning to St. John on Wednesday, October 14th to take photos of all students and staff. If your child does not normally attend on Wednesdays, they are welcome to come around 8:00 am to get their picture taken or wait for retake day on Monday, November 16th. Watch for more information to come soon and ordering information to be sent home on picture day.



Parent-Teacher Conferences- November 4th and 5th

Our first quarter of the school year will be wrapping up on Friday, October 23rd! With the following week being shortened for the state teacher conference, report cards will be issued on Monday, November 2nd. That will still leave time to review them before parent-teacher conferences on Wednesday and Thursday, November 4th and 5th. Conferences will be held in 15-minute slots from 3:00 to 6:00 pm. Please watch for an email with a conference sign-up to come out in mid-October. We ask that all families make plans to attend conferences, and that any families unable to meet with their child's teacher on the scheduled dates please contact them to arrange an alternate time.



Spirit Week- October 26th-28th

We are having a special spirit week to help us celebrate fall and Halloween during the week of October 26th-28th! On Monday, wear your comfiest fall flannels to school. On Tuesday, come head to toe in Halloween colors- black, orange, and purple. For Wednesday, dress in your favorite costume (as long as you can use the bathroom independently in it). Please keep any costume weapons at home. Teachers will be arranging their own classroom celebrations on Wednesday, October 28th, so watch for information from them regarding snacks and fun activities.

School Birthdays

Happy birthday to our students celebrating in October!

Amara B.- October 5th
Porter M.- October 8th
Mila G.- October 9th
Gavin H.- October 10th
Shaliah V.- October 10th
Cecelia R.- October 15th
Audrey T.- October 15th
Madelyn B.- October 22nd
Emory G.- October 22nd
Marcie R.- October 25th
Aspen M.- October 28th
Noah R.- October 28th
Braxton E.- October 30th



What Do Christian Parents Need to Know About AI? *Continued from page 3*

3. We do not know what this will do to developing minds. As a teacher, I think about this a lot. Researchers call having AI do the thinking for you “cognitive offloading.” When you “ask” AI to summarize a book instead of reading and summarizing it yourself, you have offloaded the thinking. What happens in the long run if our kids do lots of this cognitive offloading? We don’t know. The technology has only been around for a few years.

As a society, we are right now running an experiment on our children just like we did with social media and cell phones 20 years ago. We decided to let our children have unfettered access to social media. That experiment didn’t go so well. Are we treating this one any differently?

Although we don’t have the long-term studies yet on how using AI will affect brain development or learning, what we do know about the short term is concerning. If you stop using the muscles in your arms and legs, they shrink. You get weak. Your brain also develops when you use it. And when you stop using it, its function diminishes.

As a society, we are right now running an experiment on our children just like we did with social media and cell phones 20 years ago.

Researchers are focusing on at least two ways unregulated AI usage diminishes the mental capabilities of users. First, mental effort diminishes. You simply don’t try as hard to do mentally taxing tasks. Second, you begin to lose whatever skills you’ve been offloading. You might feel like you still have the skill, because AI is doing it for you, but it’s just a feeling. Researchers call that feeling “the illusion of learning.” The skills, the effort, they’re slowly fading.

I think Christian parents can think about AI differently than the rest of society. Instead of simply asking, “What can AI do for my child?” the better, deeper question is, “What is my child supposed to become?”

Now there’s no need to panic. God is in control, and he’s working all things out for his church, your kids included. But there’s also no need to repeat what we did with smartphones and simply hand our children a powerful new technology and worry about the effects later. Let’s slow down and think about how we can best carry out our vocations as parents together in this quickly changing world.

To view the article in its original format, visit

<https://forwardinchrist.net/christian-parents-and-ai/>

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