

LIFELINES

of

LORD OF LIFE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Once saved always saved?

NOTE: Recently I received a very good question from a guest of our congregation. It seems a few weeks back I made a comment in the sermon that we need to be vigilant about our faith or we are at risk of giving in to sin and losing our salvation. The guest, who does not come from a Lutheran background and was not used to hearing this kind of admonition, sent me an email with some thoughtful questions. In response, I tried to give an equally thoughtful answer to each of the questions. The response was well-received and the guest is now considering membership at our congregation, and since one question in particular is often asked by those with a Calvinist background (ex: Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist and many non-denominational congregations) I thought I would share the question and response for your consideration.

Question:

Since works of the law cannot justify a person, how can violations of the law un-justify a person before God? If works cannot save a person, how can works un-save a person? Would that be conflating justification and sanctification?

General Response:

Thanks for your excellent questions. I love discussing theology and not merely in some academic sense, but because doctrine is life. As you recently read in the Augsburg Confession, the Reformers were concerned with the false teaching of Rome, not because they wanted to best their opponents, but because they knew that false doctrine burdens the consciences of Christians. With that in mind, I think your concern about the possibility of losing one's salvation is focused on the right question: How then can we have peace, if we do not know whether we will be saved?

In my experience, those who hold to a once-saved-always-saved perspective also have a problem of knowing where they stand before God. Let me illustrate... suppose you have someone in the church who outwardly lives a decent and faithful life and is a leader in the church. He is a life-long member who was baptized, confirmed, and has for

years regularly attended worship, says prayers with his family, attends Bible study, receives the sacrament, etc. etc. But then, to everyone's shock and disappointment, it is discovered that he has been carrying on an affair. The marriage is destroyed, friendships are strained, and the man leaves his wife, takes up with his mistress, stops going to church, and now refuses to even talk to the members of his church and gives no outward expression of faith. Naturally the question people wonder is: was he ever a Christian, or was it all a lie? Was he at one time a believer, or just a full-blown hypocrite?

Usually when I present such a dilemma to someone who holds to the once-saved-always-saved perspective, the response is that the person was never really a Christian to begin with. In order to fit their understanding, they have to conclude that the man was a hypocrite all along. But what if that doesn't line up with the story line of the adulterer and the life of the man as people closest to him knew him? What if, he really did lead a decent Christian life, and by all outward appearances trusted in Christ for salvation. But then, for some reason, (let's say his wife grew cold and unloving) and at a time when he was particularly weak and having a mid-life crisis or

(Continued on the next page)

whatever, he was just smitten with his young beautiful mistress who was the first pretty woman to pay attention to him in years? In other words, he really was (as far as anyone could tell) faithful (not perfect, but forgiven like the rest of us) until he fell in love with sinning and decided to rationalize away the sin of adultery to justify his illicit behavior for the sake of his own pleasure? (In other words, he did not flee from sexual immorality like Paul warns in 1 Cor 6:18)

The problem is, if you maintain that he was always a hypocrite, then what does *real* Christian faith look like? How do any of us know if we aren't also hypocrites just pretending to be believers? Are you certain that you really are one of the elect? How do you know? After all, your life looks just like the other guy's did, maybe not even as good! So do you really, really have true faith, or do you just think you do, like that adulterer did for all those years?

Further, if you conclude that man was never a Christian, then, like most Calvinists would, you probably conclude that God did not elect him to eternal life. If so, then is it a waste of time to try and win him back if he is predestined to hell and never going to be a real Christian? Why bother trying to appeal to him and show him his sin and win him over? (ex: Matthew 18:15-20 and note also, the previous verses, 7-9 where Jesus is also warning about removing temptations so you do not end up in hell.)

My point is, that I agree that surety of the Gospel is important for Christians to have, but the once-saved-always-saved explanation is not a good solution to the problem outlined above because it provides no surety to any of us whose lives look remarkable similar to the life of the hypocrite, or maybe even not as good. Further, writing off an erring brother because they never were a Christian, only raises doubts about who really is a Christian. I think a better solution is to say, we must pray for our brother who has given in to sin, that he will by the grace of God, be led to repentance and receive God's forgiveness.

I have much more to say about this and would like the opportunity to discuss it with you further. Consider also: 1st Cor. 10:1-13.

Specific Response:

A person is justified because the Son of God paid for their sins with His blood on the cross and the benefit of this sacrifice is received through faith, which is not a work, it is the gift of God so that no one can boast. (Eph. 2:8-9) Violations of the law (sin) happen all the time. As believers, we are not immune to sin, but constantly struggle against it (See: Romans 7) in the hope that we will not become entangled in it (ex. Hebrews 12:1 and see also Galatians 5:16-21) or overcome by it. God helps us in this struggle too, so it is not right to think as though it is up to us to save ourselves. His Word and Sacrament are vehicles for the Spirit and strengthen us for the fight and call us to repent and turn from sin when we err. But the gift of faith and the salvation it receives by trusting in Christ (whose works alone merits salvation and are credited to those who believe) are not forced on us. We are not robots some programmed for salvation and others programmed for damnation. We have free will, but only enough to damn ourselves. We can choose sin and reject the gift of faith. This is not usually a deliberate decision, but a consequence of bad choices and habits, laziness, apathy, etc. though, as in the above illustration, it may happen quickly when someone allows himself to indulge in a pleasure and then discovers he loves sinning and does not want forgiveness from his Lord.

PrS



Another Look at the Beatitudes

I imagine most of us have read the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11) and wondered at the apparent contradiction or irony of these words of our Lord.

How does being poor in spirit or mourning lead to blessing? How does being meek or persecuted or insulted lead to blessing? Are these traits to which we should aspire?

On the other hand, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being merciful, pure in heart and peacemakers are traits that display Christian character.

There's a temptation to view the blessing that the beatitudes promise as Divine compensation for the suffering we experience in the first group of traits I've listed or as a reward for faithful exhibition of the second set of traits.

However, this reduces God to some kind of score-keeper, who 'repays' us for our tribulations or 'pays' us for our good deeds or attitudes.

This, of course, contradicts the basic Gospel message – that God blesses us and brings about our salvation purely out of His love for us and not as a result of anything we do.

So, what are we to make of this? Here's an alternative way to understand these traits and the blessings they bring.

Being poor in spirit and mourning is not our being 'depressed' or 'saddened' by our life experiences or environment; instead, it is our reaction, prompted by the Holy Spirit, to being convicted of our own sinfulness and our recognition of our inability to change our condition.

Similarly, being meek does not suggest that we must be 'soft' in interpersonal interactions; instead, it describes our subordination of self to God.

Likewise, our acceptance of persecution or insult for His sake is a submission of our will and our future security to His will and His providence. It shows that our desire to remain faithful to Him exceeds our need to defend or justify ourselves.

These beatitudes reflect the counter-cultural nature of the Christian faith. The World (that is, the society we live in) values strength, self-reliance, assertiveness and 'winning', but in these beatitudes, we learn the truth that it is only in our weakness that we leave room for God to act on our behalf.

We strive to be pure in heart and we hunger and thirst for His righteousness (to replace our sinfulness), we work to share His mercy and we preach the peace with God that He provides to others. We do these not to earn blessing, but to share the blessing that we have already received.

Finally, we are blessed to receive the kingdom of heaven, to be comforted and filled, to see God and be His children based on our faithful response to His calling in our lives. See how these blessing described in the beatitudes are mirrored in the description of heaven in Rev. 21:1-4.

We are, indeed, blessed by God when we hear and heed His calling, recognize our need for Him and know our place before Him.

In Christ,

Mike Kunschke, Elder

Lord of Life Small Groups

EMPTY NESTERS' CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Mike and Sandra Paradise at (972) 424-2951 or itsparadise.inplano@verizon.net
- † Will meet on Sat. July 15th at 5:30 PM

EPIC PARENTING

- † For 30ish couples with kids
- † For info contact Ben Scarth BenjaminScarth@yahoo.com
- † Usually meet one Sunday a month in the afternoon or evening

GOOD NEWS CARE GROUP

- † For info contact Chris Oltmann at (972) 727-6330 or Mike Kunschke at (847) 951-6974
- † Usually meet the 2nd Sat. of each month at 6:30 PM for Bible study

MIXED BLESSINGS

- † For info contact Fred and Ruth Bernhardt at (972) 398-0771
- † Will meet on Sat. July 22th at 6:30 PM

TWENTY SOMETHINGS

- † For couples and singles in their twenties
- † For info contact Pastor Shaltanis at PastorShaltanis@yahoo.com
- † The group is currently in transition, but has usually met on Sundays after late service

NEW SMALL GROUPS FORMING

- † Watch for information about new small groups starting in 2017
- † One will led by Tim Ozlowski and aimed at people in their late forties and early fifties. Times and dates TBD
- † In the works: a group for professionals without kids, a group for folks in their fifties, and a Gen X group



July 5, 2009 - Kyle Beaudreau
July 3, 2005 - Athan Shaltanis



- 1 Don Bunger
- 2 Emily Scarth
- 2 Ana Scarth
- 2 Vincent & Peggy Scagliano (57)
- 3 Nelda Schrank
- 5 Mike Phelan
- 7 Joe Bob Isbell
- 8 Robert Adcox
- 10 Luis Botello
- 10 Nathan & April Schutz (13)
- 11 Kelsey Cooper
- 11 Aaron Schutz
- 12 Susan Grabow
- 13 Sandy Ehrett
- 13 Ethan Hacker
- 13 Garrett Hacker
- 14 Carol Nance
- 14 Eric Wilde
- 17 Annie Joseph
- 17 Ben & Melanie Scarth (7)
- 18 Debbie Keffer
- 18 Stan & Donna Brown (32)
- 19 Carolyn Moudy
- 19 Emma Ziegelbein
- 19 Noah Ziegelbein
- 20 Vernon Bang
- 20 Daniel Frinsko
- 20 Ruth Kun
- 20 Magdalena Shaltanis
- 23 Charlie & Lynda Abbott (51)
- 24 Jonelle Peters
- 24 Matt Sims
- 26 John Frinsko
- 26 Winona Parish
- 29 Phil & Candace Klein (28)
- 30 Kenneth Tabor
- 30 Charles & Dixie Hacker (23)

New Library Additions

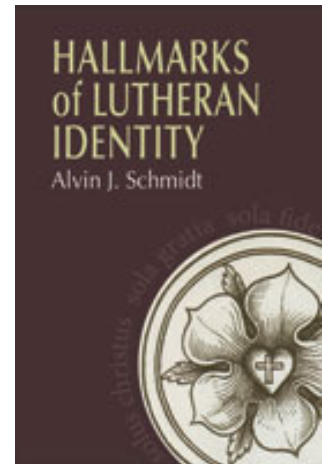
Recently added to our church library are the following recommended books:

Hallmarks of Lutheran Identity by Alvin J. Schmidt, Concordia Publishing House, 2017

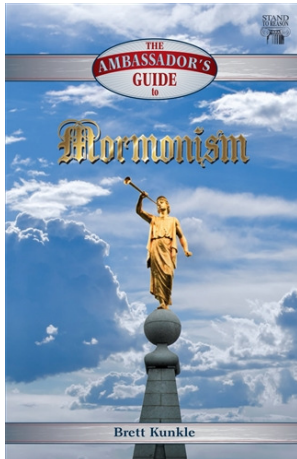
This new, easy-to-read book is divided into several short chapters on specific teachings of the Lutheran Church. Schmidt gives the Scriptural and historical basis for these unique “hallmarks” of Lutheranism and compares each with the teachings of other churches. Each chapter concludes with questions and this could easily be adapted for use by small Bible study groups.

From Concordia’s website:

Do Lutherans today understand their theological heritage well enough to maintain and defend their unique beliefs? Engaging and insightful for both layperson and pastor, *Hallmarks of Lutheran Identity* will deepen your understanding of Lutheran theology so you can confidently answer the question, “What do Lutherans believe?”



The Ambassador’s Guide to Mormonism by Brett Kunkle, Stand to Reason, 2012



This little book is a very good introduction to understanding your Mormon friends and neighbors and it also offers many helpful suggestions on how Christians can talk to Mormons and share with them the true Gospel.

From the back cover:

They believe in God. They believe in Jesus. They read the Bible and attend church every week. But are Mormons Christians? It’s time for some clear thinking on this question and *The Ambassador’s Guide to Mormonism* provides just that. This little tool will clarify the key issues and help you engage your Mormon friends and family with the truth.

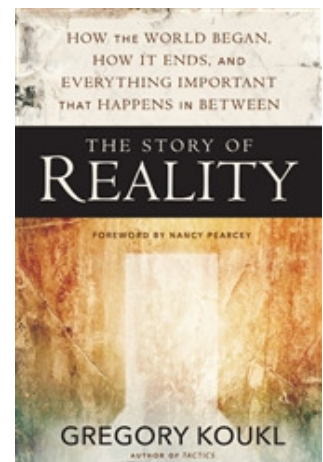
The Story of Reality by Gregory Koukl, Zondervan Publishing House, January 2017

From Stand to Reason’s website:

Biblical Christianity is more than just another private religious view. It’s more than just a personal relationship with God or a source of moral teaching. Christianity is a *picture* of reality. Christianity is a true story of how the world began, why the world is the way it is, what role humans play in the drama, and how all the plotlines of the story are resolved in the end. Our story begins with God. He created everything, but something went terribly wrong. So God initiated a rescue plan and entered the world that he had made by becoming like us in Jesus Christ. Jesus saved us from the wrongness in ourselves and in the world through his death on a cross. And how people respond to what he did will determine their future at the final event of history: the resurrection.

If you are already a Christian, this is your story. Do you know it? If you are not a Christian, this is still your story, because it explains the world in a way that nothing else will. It is a true story—the *real* story behind every other story we hear.

This resource is ideal for giving to friends and family—believers and nonbelievers alike.



Lord of Life, Plano,

You are all so special to our hearts. Thank you for the precious "welcome home," and for the very nice gift bag of remembrances and gifts. What a special day for us to always remember. May the Lord bless you and keep you and smile upon all you do to serve Him as you extol Jesus and God in love to your community and world. We love you!

Pastor Ric and Leslie

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What a joy it was for us to be back at Lord of Life to share with you are excitement about our life and work in the DR! Thank you all for your incredible support for Lutheran mission work! We are blessed to have you as partners and we pray that our partnership grows in the months and years to come. The Lord be with you as you carry out God's Gospel work at home and abroad.

In Christ - The Fritsche Family

The Texas Tech Lutheran Student Center, right across the street from the Texas Tech campus, would like to invite all incoming freshmen (and any other students) to come to our SOS (Supper On Sunday). Local pastors lead a Bible Study from 5:30-6:00. Area churches provide home cooked meals on Sunday evening from 6:00-7:00. (Dorms do not provide meals on Sunday evenings). After 7, there will be time for fun and fellowship.

The Lutheran Student Center is a place where students can come and have a quiet, relaxing place to just hang out, study, or play games. There is always a stocked refrigerator (waters and sodas). There is also a kitchen if students would want to come and cook. Our address is 2615 19th Street, Lubbock, TX 79410. The e-mail address is lsclubbock@gmail.com. The phone number is [806-763-3644](tel:806-763-3644). If someone will be here for orientation this summer and would like a tour of our facilities, please text me at [806-543-7215](tel:806-543-7215) and we can set up a time to meet.

The Student Center is equipped with WIFI throughout the building. There is a ping-pong table, foosball table, pool table, big screen TV with cable and board games.

Please check out our webpage at www.lsfttech.org.

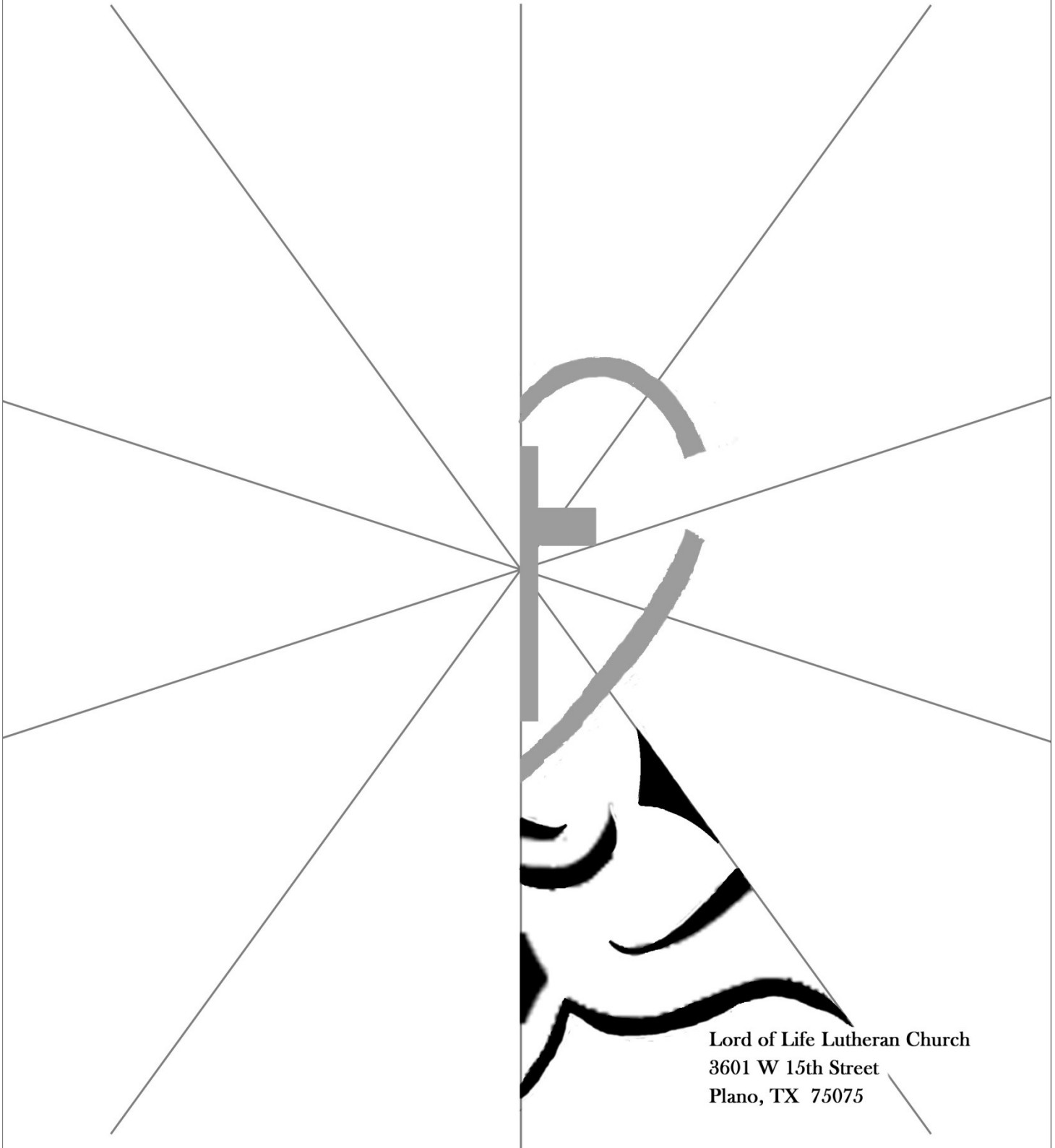
Blessings,

Kay Arellano
Office Manager
Lutheran Student Center
<http://lsfttech.org>

For all those bored kids this summer, here's something fun to try for Reformation preparation. Who doesn't love snowflakes in July!

Luther's Rose Snowflake

1. Fold along vertical line, keeping the shapes on the outside.
2. Accordion fold (like a fan) along radial lines, keeping the black shapes on the outside.
3. Cut out black shapes
4. Unfold to first fold and cut out gray shapes.



Lord of Life Lutheran Church
3601 W 15th Street
Plano, TX 75075

Serving in Worship in July

	July 2		July 9		July 16		July 23		July 30	
	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	8:00 AM	10:45 AM	10:00 AM	10:45 AM	10:00 AM	10:45 AM
Elder	Kunschke		Ziegelbein		Read		Lutek		Peters	
Common Cup	Read	Hite			Lutek	Ziegelbein			Read	Kunschke
Altar	Lynda Abbott, Charis Bennett and Carol Nance									
Greeter	Ves	McVicker	Schrank	Dorak	Martin	Manning	Vess	McVicker/Abbott	Schrank	Barnes
Sound	Botello	Hite	Wilkerson	Selveraj	Hacker	Pittson	Wolf	Raj	Botello	Hite
Usher	Scarth Bunger	Ozlowski Loewecke Ziegelbein	Paradise Read Frinsko	Moudy Cruz	Cinquelpalmi Hawkins	Oltman Berger McVicker	Schrank Hacker	Buckmeier Short Crabtree	Bunger Scarth	Ziegelbein Ozlowski Loewecke

FINANCIAL REPORT

January - May, 2017

		ACTUAL	BUDGET	VARIANCE
RECEIPTS:	Regular Offerings	\$279,195	\$299,820	(\$20,625)
	Other	\$3,408	\$100	\$3,308
	TOTAL RECEIPTS	\$282,603	\$299,920	(\$17,317)
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$292,253	\$307,337	(\$15,084)
	RECEIPTS OVER EXPENSES	(\$9,650)	(\$7,417)	(\$2,233)

OTHER INFORMATION

1. General Operating Fund Balance	\$90,514
2. Dedicated Funds Balance	\$154,196
3. Building Note Balance	\$398,353

DEADLINE FOR NEWSLETTER ARTICLES IS THE 20TH — lol.newsletter.editor@gmail.com