

The Evangel

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Letter From the Editor

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! As you may have noticed, the baton has once again been passed, and I have, with great gladness, accepted the role as the new editor of *The Evangel*. A little information about me: I am currently enrolled as a student at ALTS, and I am the chief copy editor of Just and Sinner Publications, a publishing house started by my husband and myself. I am married to Jordan Cooper, the pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in Brighton, Iowa, and during the day I am a stay-at-home mom. It is extremely exciting for me to be able to serve TAALC in this way, and I can't help but be thrilled by all of the changes that are taking place in TAALC, while still staying so committed to our fundamental confession of faith.

This issue of *The Evangel* comes to you on the heels of the 2014 TAALC General Convention, so all of the articles included seek to capture what occurred during that week. If you were present, you would already know how wonderful this time of fellowship was. If you were not present, however, I hope that the articles written here will help you get a sense of not only the speeches and the meetings that took place, but the general edifying spirit of the entire convention. The University of Northwestern was beautiful, and it was extremely exciting to see all of the pastors, pastors wives, and congregants gathered together in worship and fellowship.

The theme verse for the Convention was Ephesians 4:11-14:

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”

In Christ's Service,

Lisa Cooper

***On behalf of The Evangel and TAALC as a whole,
we would like to thank Rev. Dick Day for taking
pictures throughout the Convention.***

Biennial Report: Poised for Growth

by TAALC Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins

There are times in God's salvation history when Our Lord does unexpected and wonderful things. He extends His Hand of blessing and the Word of God increases with prevailing power. The book of The Acts of the Apostles records several such moments of increase. The first occurs on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. Peter called his hearers to repent and be baptized. In Acts 2, we learn that three thousand souls received the Word and were baptized that day. Later, in Acts 4, the number of men who heard the message and believed was about five thousand. These two events were extraordinary moments when the Word of God increased miraculously.

Is it possible that God is still providing extraordinary moments when His Word increases and multiplies greatly? Perhaps, one of those moments was when Martin Luther received the revelation, "[T]hat a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). The Reformation was surely a time when God's Word increased. Perhaps, another of those moments of increase was when Dr. Lindberg and other men and women of faith were inspired to form The American Association of Lutheran Churches. Yes. Those were days and years of miraculous increase. Is it really too much to believe that Our God is still watching over us and providing extraordinary moments when the Word of God increases and is multiplied?

There are several things that lead me to think that once again we may be entering such a moment of increase in our history. First, there is a sudden influx of interest in our seminary. We have been praying for this. Please join with me and keep praying! In recent years, all seminaries across the U.S. have suffered a lack of funds and a loss of students. This is especially true of Lutheran seminaries. But, at this wonderful, God-ordained moment, there is incredible interest in TAALC and American Lutheran Theological Seminary. Pr. Shields and I receive frequent inquiries every week. Pr. Shields has spoken with at least one new, potential student every week, and has been for the last three months. Who has made this happen? No human being can make men come to seminary. It is an act of God, and it is happening right now in God's perfect timing.

Second, it is no coincidence that at the very moment when we have about 2 dozen new students and need funding for approximately 24 seminarians, The Lutheran Foundation has become reenergized and has sprung to into action. I remember speaking with Pr. Thomas Baumgarten last year. It was clear that God was doing something new. Then, God inspired Mr. Alan Zacharias to join with us. Our Heavenly Father gave excitement to our Foundation Board members, and gave the gift of generosity to the Lutheran Legacy Foundation. At this decisive moment, a funding campaign has sprung to life. Already, there is great desire to generously support this effort. Why? The Lord is moving hearts to provide funding for Lutheran Theological Education, so that the truth of the Holy Bible and the Lutheran Confessions will be passed on to the next generation.

There are other things that I could mention that evidence a moment of increase: new interest in and commitment to planting mission congregations, to supporting international missions, to strengthening inter-Lutheran relations, and to beginning ecumenical dialogue, to name a few. But, the final demonstration of a new moment of increase is found in the ministry of Congregational Vitalization. For the past 9 months, something new has been happening across TAALC. In the most recent edition of The Evangel, you will find a publication by the Commission for American Missions. You will see seven congregations highlighted. They are meeting real needs in their communities, serving as the heart and hands of Jesus Christ.

Last August, I was Called as the National Home Mission Developer of TAALC. I suggested some possibilities for a path forward to deal with some of the challenges that stand before us. The response was eager and enthusiastic. Each Region selected a Regional Mission Developer who was asked to work with the Commission for American Missions and with me in Congregational Vitalization. We began to focus our attention on five areas for Congregational Vitalization: Community Outreach, Men's Ministry, Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Leadership Development, and Worship Vitalization. With the help of the Regional Mission Developers and the oversight of our Regional Pastors, we organized Area Events. In various areas

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across TAALC, we gathered clusters of churches and Pastors. We offered ideas for new programs and ministries. But, each Pastor and congregation made specific application of these ideas in their own particular congregation and community. Almost immediately, God demonstrated positive results in those congregations.

In the coming months, each Regional Mission Developer will do follow-up work with Pastors and congregations in his Region regarding Vitalization ministries. We endeavor to supply every Pastor and congregation with personal support and care. CAM is publicizing new and innovative congregational programs and ministries. At the same time, we are working on planting several new congregations. This requires training for each Pastoral Pioneer, and some funding for the new work. Also, we are devising new ways to provide pastoral leadership for congregations that need a Pastor.

I continue to provide individual congregations with workshops and personal support. I have plans to visit the remaining approximately 33 congregations on site in the coming months. The National and Regional Mission Developers will remain readily accessible for consultation, workshops and support with the goal of congregational strength and vitalization for every one of our churches.

As Assistant Presiding Pastor, it has been my goal to respond, the same day if possible, to each phone call, text or email that comes to me or to the National Office. We are here to serve you in moments of crisis, transition, concern, or need. The National Office Staff and Executive Committee are working to provide immediate pastoral care and resources for the varied needs of our Pastors and congregations. Our Association's foundation stones remain in place: adherence to the inerrancy and infallibility of Holy Scripture, "quia" subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, recognition of Congregational Authority, and commitment to Missional Outreach. At the same time, we are looking ahead to take steps so that The AALC will have a strong and vibrant future.

It is clear that these next three to five years are going to be ones of extraordinary challenge and transition for TAALC. But, the greater truth is that God's Hand of blessing still moves in unexpected and wonderful ways so that the Word of God increases with prevailing power. The book of The Acts of the Apostles teaches us that when the disciples proclaimed the message of Jesus Christ, God's Word increased. When they delegated authority and developed leadership, His Word increased. When they faced persecution, His Word increased and multiplied. When they stood for Christ against false teaching and evil spirits, the Word of God increased and prevailed mightily.

At this crucial moment in God's salvation history, I am not discouraged. No. I am excited. There are increases taking place now in TAALC for which no man can take credit. There are increases in the Church which no man can curtail. There is an increase not because of our faithfulness, but because of His; not because of our power, but because of His; not because of our word, but because of His. Therefore, because of the increase of His Word, we are Poised for Growth!

Amen.

Installation of Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins as the New Presiding Pastor

By Trent Demarest

On Thursday evening, the convention delegates and guests gathered in Nazareth Chapel to participate in the Installation Divine Service, a beautiful communion liturgy held in high festal style to celebrate and give thanks for the election of a Presiding Pastor, Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, and to install him in the office. The Service of the Word was conducted by Rev. Richard Shields, and Rev. Thomas Aadland. Convention guest speaker Rev. Dr. Dean Nadasdy served as lector for the reading of the Holy Gospel, which was done in a high liturgical setting, complete with a processional to the middle of the nave. Dr. Nadasdy also preached the sermon, in which he focused on the convention theme of "Equipping the Saints" with a special emphasis on God's grace for leaders in the Church. Following the Service of the Word was a brief order of Installation, with Rev. Shields presiding. Then, in accordance with TAALC custom and that of the wider Church, Dr. Leins, as newly-installed Presiding Pastor, took his place as celebrant for the Service of the Sacrament in the full traditional Lutheran Eucharistic vesture. Convention attendees were blessed to receive Word and Sacrament from Christ's faithful undershepherds, and glad to witness the installation and blessing of a new Presiding Pastor.



ALTS Report - 2014

By Rev. Richard P. Shields, President

Greetings in the Lord. ALTS encompasses pastoral training in two paths: on-campus at Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS), Fort Wayne, and online with Master of Theological Studies (MTS) program. Four years ago we had two students studying on campus. Both men completed the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program and have been ordained. We have one student, Phillip Johnson, who has been accepted at CTS, Fort Wayne for Fall 2014. We have another man who is considering this route.

The last four years have seen dramatic changes in ALTS, and the future is looking very good for our seminary and our church body. The 24th General Convention marked a milestone in seminary preparation for pastors in TAALC. The resolution to approve the MTS program as a viable route toward ordination was approved unanimously, culminating five years of hard work.

In 2009, the MTS program began as a distant vision, looking at viable alternatives to the on-campus education, while maintaining solid theological training for future pastors. In Winter Quarter 2010, we began using online, live video seminary training; two students were enrolled. In Spring Quarter 2014, we had 14 pastoral students. Two of those students graduated at the Convention (Jordan Cooper and Dean Stoner). For this fall, we have 21 men enrolled.

Alongside the pastoral training route, we have designed a program for Deacons/Deaconesses (undergraduate or graduate level). There are sixteen courses in this program. We designed it to be complementary to the MTS program, taking the seminary courses that match their specific requirements. Brigitte Gassman completed the Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) deaconess degree program, receiving her diploma at this convention. We have one deaconess student enrolled for fall.

Currently we have three professors: Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, Rev. Dr. Craig Henningfield, and Rev. Richard Shields. In Spring 2015, Dr. Adam Francisco (professor at Concordia University, Irvine) will teach Apologetics with more courses the following year. All of our professors have advanced theological degrees covering all four areas of theology.

What can you do?

1. **Pray for our seminarians:** We will make available a prayer card with all seminarians listed. Pray each day for the seminarians; pray in your worship services, 3-4 at a time.

2. **Support a seminarian:** Your financial gifts will go a long way toward helping our future pastors achieve their goal and serving other congregations. And you can free pastors to serve without overwhelming debt.
3. **Raise up the next generation:** Encourage young people to consider serving the church. If you know of men in our congregations who have the potential to be pastors, encourage them in studies. If you know men or women who have demonstrated spiritual gifts that would make them suitable deacons/deaconesses, encourage them as well. Have them contact the ALTS office and begin the process of enrolling.

Looking ahead

The Lay Academy has laid dormant for many years. The purpose of this program is to supplement local pastors in providing additional training for lay leaders. We are just at the beginning stages of determining what, how, and when this will be developed. Stay tuned.

With the turn around in the ALTS program and the continuing needs of congregations, you see that our work is just beginning. We have set the foundation for looking ahead to greater teaching opportunities and areas of service. It is not enough, though, to maintain what we have. Rather we look to equip men to serve in our congregations and to plant new congregations. Regardless of the route, on-campus or online, we have great opportunities to support our seminary students.

We look to expand through innovative coordination of the MTS and on-campus programs. Some of our graduates show the ability to continue theological education with the goal that they might eventually teach in the MTS program of ALTS.

This is our future for the ALTS and especially for TAALC. Thank you for the opportunity and privilege to serve you, your congregations, and the men and women in various stages of training.

Watch for further outreach throughout seminary in the coming decade with exciting possibilities far beyond our congregations and nation.



Elected at the TAALC Convention in June 2014

Presiding Pastor - Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins (2014-18 term)

Assistant Presiding Pastor - Rev. Roger Twito (2014-16)

Secretary - Rev. Irvin Stapf (2014-18)

Clergy Commission - Rev. David Huskamp, Rev. Myke Main, Rev. Roger Twito, and Lay Person - Gary Brosamle (all 2014-18)

Board of Appeals and Adjudication - Rev. Tom Baumgarten, Rev. Ray Lorthioir, Rev. Gary Rokenbrodt and Lay Persons - Dr. Philip Gassman and Ted Knutson (all 2014-18)

Commission on Doctrine & Church Relations - Rev. Scott Bieker (2014-16), Rev. Joe Dapelo (2014-18) and Rev. Dr. Daniel Schroeder (2014-18) and Lay Person - Don Mathsen (2014-18)

Commission for Higher Education - Rev. Chris Schroder (2014-18) and Lay Persons - Emily Gerken (2014-18) and Debra Rokenbrodt (2014-18)

Commission for Commissioned Church Workers - For the Commissioned Church Worker position - Deaconess Kathy Awtrey (2014-18); and Lay Person - Kathleen Schuhmacher (2014-18)

TAALC Foundation - Marcus Schuette and Rev. Mark Homp (both 2014-18)

The Western Region met and elected the following:

Regional Pastor - Rev. Steve Lundblom

Association Council - Lay Rep - John Monday

Board of Trustees - Don Yount

Commission of American Missions - Chuck Schroeder



Equipping the Saints Keynote Address

By Lisa Cooper

At the 2014 General Convention, we were blessed to have Rev. Dr. Dean Nadasdy, the president of the Minnesota South District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod speak on our Convention theme, “Equipping the Saints.” To begin his presentation, Rev. Dr. Nadasdy grounded his presentation in the Gospel: the foundation of any view of leadership in the church must always be our justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. God begins the life of our congregants with the grace given to us in baptism, and sustains us in the faith through His Word and Sacraments.

With this in mind, Rev. Nadasdy began his discussion of our Convention theme verses: Ephesians 4:11-14. In verse 11, it is made clear that those who serve in the church (Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) are given as a gift to the church. Their purpose is clearly laid out in the latter verses: to equip the saints for ministry. What does this mean? The saints in the church, those who are set apart for the purpose and work of God, are equipped, meaning that they are made completely fit for a ministry of service. This ministry of service is firmly rooted in the doctrine of vocation. Every equipped saint has a life where they serve God and their neighbor through their everyday work, whether it be farming, running a business, being a stay-at-home mom, or simply being a parent or a child.

Rev. Nadasdy then offered some initial challenges in developing a church culture of equipping the saints. The main issue, according to Rev. Nadasdy, is the idea that, “I shouldn’t have to serve, that’s the pastor’s job.” This places the pastor in the position of a hired hand whose purpose is to serve in every leadership position because that’s what he’s paid for, right? Wrong. The pastor is called to raise up leaders in the church to do ministry. Rev. Nadasdy explored many other issues such as: if a church is small, there is believed to be no need for leadership development. Another common problem is that people are used only to “fill slots,” instead of raising up leaders who are interested and gifted in their positions. And, from a different vantage point, often times preachers neglect preaching imperatives in light of the Gospel, and instead only preach regarding our sin and our forgiveness. This preaching style offers the fullness of the faith, but no helpful, Biblical way to live out that faith.

There are many helpful tools that Rev. Nadasdy outlined to aid in the pastor’s call to “equip the saints.” The foundation for all equipping must always be the Word of God. In addition to the Scriptures, it can be helpful to ask your congregants to take inventories of their abilities

so that you can place them in a leadership position that fits them. You can offer courses in leadership to help set the foundation for how these congregants should go about leading in their positions. These can take the form of servant leadership courses, focused classes, and vocation retreats. Similarly, mentoring plays a huge role in raising up leaders. You can pair new leaders with people who have served in the same position previously, and you can also let your congregants “test drive” new jobs in the church to see if those particular positions are a good fit.

In his second keynote address, Rev. Nadasdy began by outlining some of the culture shifts in equipping churches. He argued for intellectual and practical paradigm shifts. Some of these shifts include: we must change our perception of the laity as consumers to the laity as servants and disciples. Similarly, sermons should not be in a vacuum. Sermons should equip the saints by not only preaching the Law and the Gospel in all their fulness, but by relating Law and Gospel to the real life of the Christian. And, the perception of leadership must change from being something that has to happen by default to being intentional about leadership development within the church.

He then presented a threefold division in types of leadership opportunities available to congregants in a church. First, he spoke about specific servant ministries. These leaders can be anything from ushers, to Sunday school teachers, to Council members. Secondly, he addressed community outreach ministries. These ministry leaders seek to serve the community outside of the church, and encourage church growth through their service in the community. This includes ministering to the community’s felt needs, along with Evangelism. The third type of ministry is the ministry of every congregant: the ministry that every person does in their own vocation. In each congregant’s vocation, they each have received a call from God to love and serve their neighbor in all that they do.

It is clear that Rev. Nadasdy has extensive experience in not only training, but raising up and equipping leaders in his churches. The information that he shared at Convention was invaluable to those of us who need help in any stage of this process. Whether we are just starting to think about equipping the saints, or if we have some leadership training processes in order, his advice and observations from his own life and service are not only helpful, but also extremely encouraging to all of us in any position in the church.

Equipping the Saints: A Study by Rev. Richard Shields

By Pastor Jordan Cooper

Rev. Richard Shields led a two part Bible study on the theme “Equipping the Saints,” overviewing the book of Ephesians. In the first part of the study, Rev. Shields expounded upon the doctrinal implications of what it means to be “in Christ” in the first half of Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians. For Paul, being in Christ includes what God chose for us before the foundation of the world. God predestined us to be blessed in Christ, as well as to have hope in Christ.

Rev. Shields explained two separate views of a passage in Ephesians (4:12) wherein the pastors are said to “equip the saints for ministry.” In one view, it is the Pastors who are to do ministry for the saints; in the other, it is the saints who are to do ministry insofar as they are equipped by pastors. Rev. Shields argued that the second view is the proper reading of the text, and showed that the pastoral role is not simply preaching and administering the sacraments, but consists in equipping the saints, that they too may be active in their Christian faith both in the church and out in the world.

The essence of ministry is the forgiveness of sins. The pastor’s role is to forgive sins, and in light of that forgiveness to equip others in the task of forgiveness. The apostle James writes that the one who breaks one of God’s laws is guilty of breaking the whole thing (James 2:10). This means that everyone is in the same situation under God’s law. In the same manner, in Christ, believers are on the same plane as perfectly righteous children of God. In light of God’s act of forgiveness, Rev. Shields encouraged us to treat others in light of that reality, as forgiven saints.

In the second part of his study, Rev. Shields spoke about relationships. He stated that the final chapters of Ephesians are focused on relationships. He spoke about several different aspects of our relationships as God’s saints. He speaks of our relationship to ourselves first. We are all dead in sins by nature, but in Christ we are made alive. Because of who we are in Christ, we need to treat other Christians well who are also in Christ. We should not act in anger, but listen to others and build them up. Rev. Shields then spoke about the relationships that spouses have with one another. Marriage relationships should be founded upon the forgiveness of sins that each of them receives through Christ, and the spouses must then forgive one another.

Another kind of relationship discussed in Rev. Shields’ study was that between a worker and boss. He reminded us that we need to submit to those who have been placed over us in our vocations, and that if we are over someone else, we must treat them well, with kindness, and with care. Rev. Shields ended his message by discussing the reality of spiritual warfare. He talked about the situation in Frasier Park, CA where his church has been broken into by witches. He encouraged us to remain steadfast in the Word, and to be diligent in prayer.



If you would like to listen to the audio of Rev. Shields’s Bible Study, it is available online at: www.ju-standsinner.com/equipping-the-saints-a-study-by-rev-richard-shields

Seminary Graduates

Brigette Gassman

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (Josh.1:9) This is the Bible verse that Pastor Twito wrote in the Bible which was given to me at my commissioning and installation service as Deaconess at Ascension Lutheran Church, Ames, IA this April. Interestingly, the same verse had also been given to me in 1977, when the Lord sent me back from Great Britain, where I had come to faith, to be a college student in Germany. That verse was also with me when I came to the USA as a student in 1980. After coming to the U.S. the Lord blessed me with my wonderful husband, Philip, as well as four great kids whom we home-schooled. The Lord led us in 2001 to Ascension and then led me in 2010 into the deaconess program.



Jordan Cooper

Jordan Cooper is currently serving as the pastor at Hope Lutheran Church in Brighton, Iowa. He felt a call to the ministry since he was in high school, and began studying theology at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. As a Presbyterian, Jordan began studying the theology of Martin Luther. Eventually, he came to realize that the teachings of Lutheranism represented the teachings of Holy Scripture better than his Presbyterian background. Jordan became a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in the summer of 2008. After graduating with a degree in Biblical Studies, Jordan married his wife Lisa. He then began working on a Master's degree in Theology at the Wittenberg Institute, which he finished in 2012. Due to the encouragement of his pastor, he did an internship at his home congregation for a year before receiving his first call to Hope Lutheran Church in the beginning of 2013. His son Jacen was born three weeks prior to his move to Iowa from Massachusetts. After two years of further study, Jordan finished his Masters in Theological Studies from the American Lutheran Theological Seminary. Jordan is also the author of two published books, and runs his own publishing house (Just and Sinner Publications) with his wife Lisa. He also runs JustandSinner.com.



Dean Stoner

Born in Toledo, Ohio, I lived most of my young life in Atlanta, Georgia. I attended Georgia State University, and later after I returning to northwest Ohio in 1980, went to the University of Toledo. I have an undergraduate degree from the University of Phoenix in Business Administration.

After having been in business most of my adult life, God called me to ministry, and I enrolled at Winebrenner Theological Seminary in the MDiv program in 2008. I served for 5 years at St. Paul's Lutheran of Napoleon, Ohio after transferring from Winebrenner to the American Lutheran Theological Seminary in 2010. I presently serve as Assistant Pastor of Peace Lutheran Church of Defiance, Ohio. Though I am currently enjoying the summer as a graduate of seminary, I look forward to the future and what God has in store!

My wife Tina and I will be married 30 years this September, and have enjoyed a life together that has been truly blessed!

Women of L.I.F.E.

Lutherans In Fellowship and Evangelism

Equipped...to Encourage Others

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks, for this is the will of God
in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

Before the 2014 convention of TAALC, the Women of LIFE had three blank lines on the ballot in key positions: Co-Chair, Secretary and Missions Outreach. There were many phone calls and emails but for various good reasons, no names could be added. We were praying that the Lord would raise up the right persons, that He was already preparing the hearts of those persons to accept these positions and responsibilities. We still had no names. The morning of the WOL lunch and business meeting, alone in my dorm room, I prayed not for names but for God's peace about the obstacles that nagged. God granted that peace! I felt reassured that the situation was in His hands and we only needed to await His timing. Listen, trust and obey – God is BIG! We pray, we rejoice, we give thanks and the Lord is good! He provided the women He chose to fill those vacant roles. *"I will lift up my eyes to the hills; from where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord."* Psalm 121:1-2 Women of LIFE was and is blessed!

With grateful hearts we thank these faithful women of God whose terms were completed: Audrey Staph, Co-Chair; Tina Stoner, Secretary; Rebekah Staph, Missions Outreach. We do not say goodbye or farewell to these sisters in Christ who were willing servants of God. We know the door of opportunity is wide open for these dear ones as they persevere in sharing the Gospel, in loving, listening and encouraging those they will encounter day by day. You have been a blessing and may God continue to richly bless you with His Holy Spirit as you remain obedient to Christ's Great Commission.

With grateful hearts through God's plan and provision, Women of LIFE welcomes the newly elected officers: Co-Chair, Karen Huskamp, Shepherd of the Valley, Sidney, Montana; Secretary, Laurie Dapelo, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Elk Grove, CA; Missions Outreach, Diana Wogan, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Elk Grove, CA.

We praise the Lord in thankfulness for your willingness to serve on this Commission, for obeying God's will for you and the continued growth of WOL and its ministry. You will be enriched by God's wisdom and direction.

In humble gratitude, I especially want to acknowledge and thank these WOL Officers and Regional Representatives who remain on the Commission: Treasurer, Katherine Hofinga; Materials Resource Coordinator and Eastern Region Representative, Bonnie Kay Ohlrich; Greater Heartland Region, Kathy Gleason; West Great Lakes Region, Jan Main; North Plains Region, Beverly Ashley; Western Region, Katherine Posey. We also appreciate our Pastoral Advisor, Rev. Dick Hueter. They, too, model a Godly life and are witnesses of God's love.

WOL came together to serve, not to be served. We want to encourage inward spiritual growth through Bible Study, community and personal daily devotions and prayer. We urge you to trust in God's promise to equip us with the ability and confidence to reach out to our sisters who don't yet know of God's love and sacrifice to save wretched sinners. Thanks be to God we are saved by His Grace.

Continue to pray for TAALC, the Seminary, our Pastors and families, those in leadership, and our nation. We thank you for your continued prayers for WOL and our Mission. We thank you for offerings received at convention and for the gifts that continue throughout the year.

I thank my God for all of you.

Kathy Buhr

WOL Co-Chair



Evaluating Womens' Bible Studies

by Lisa Cooper

Women's groups are increasingly active in Lutheran communities. This is why it is imperative that our women have the fundamental skills to discern the content in their Bible Studies. Often, we use materials from sources outside of the Lutheran tradition, and frequently, there is no pastoral oversight in the choosing of these Bible study materials. This is not to say that this is the case everywhere; in fact, many of TAALC churches use approved Lutheran studies like those made available through Concordia Publishing House or the Women of Life studies. Even still, it is imperative that women have the skills necessary to not only understand the content of the studies in which they are participating, but to also be able to discern if the content is consistent with the Word of God in Holy Scripture.



In my breakout session, I delved into the importance of Holy Scripture and how it is presented in Bible study. Without a proper view of Scripture, there is an increased chance of problematic teaching. First and foremost, the study should always be grounded in the Holy Scriptures. This means that verses are not isolated, but rather, the context is always used to determine meaning. There must, along with this, be a proper view of Scripture: that Scripture is, in fact, the very Word of God, that it cannot and does not err, it is the means by which God brings His people grace, and that it is consistent from Old to New Testament. All of the Scriptures are about Jesus Christ. These truths are foundational to any good Bible study.

Along with this, the doctrines of Law and Gospel must be properly distinguished. The Law is that which reveals our sin, it is what which we must do, and that which concerns us to obey, love, and honor God above all things, as in the Mosaic Law; the Gospel is that which concerns Christ's suffering on our behalf, having fulfilled the commands of the Law perfectly, and the free offer of righteousness that is not our own. The Law demands our merit, while the Gospel is entirely unmerited. If the Law and the Gospel are not properly divided, many problematic teachings result. Either it is taught that we merit salvation by something that we do, either by our obedience to the Law or by some other external man-made law, or we end up with a theology that throws out the usefulness of the Law in the Christian life altogether. Neither of these teachings are correct according to Scripture. We are called to live holy lives as Christians, but that holy living is only a result of the Gospel. It does not merit anything for us before God.

There are many conflicting Christian worldviews out there, and it has become more and more important for Lutheran women to be discerning. Just because something is called "Christian" does not necessarily mean that it agrees with everything that the Bible teaches. Through a proper view of Scripture and a proper distinguishing between Law and Gospel, it is possible for women to look at these studies and find where they are consistent with Scripture, and where they fall short.

Commission for Evangelism

The Constitution and Bylaws of TAALC clearly define the work of the Commission for Evangelism (CE). Here is a brief summary of the four different areas and how the CE has addressed or is working to address those areas.

First, the CE is to proclaim/propagate the Gospel and to facilitate renewal within the congregations of TAALC. We are all called to proclaim the Gospel through Word and deed. Throughout the past four years the CE has encouraged Good Newsing (evangelism) through articles in the Evangel. The task of congregational renewal is supported through the work of our Home Mission Developer.

Secondly, the CE is tasked to discover attractive and persuasive ways to present the Gospel and to support congregations to implement these methods. This is clearly a difficult task. We all would like to have effective resources that would allow us to easily and quickly lead people to Christ. We know that some personal evangelism tools might work at times and might bring a person to Christ. However, our commission is to "make disciples" (Matthew 28), investing ourselves in the lives of others over time.

Thirdly, the CE is to identify and call evangelists, people who work in that capacity within TAALC. We are still working on the best ways to actually do this.

Finally, the CE is asked to help whole congregations to reach out into their communities with Good News. In many ways this task is being fulfilled by the Home Mission Developer and the Regional Mission Developers. These men have encouraged congregations to find creative ways of reaching out and share these outreach approaches with the other congregations of TAALC. We had a special insert in a recent Evangel highlighting these different ideas.

How can the Commission for Evangelism fulfill its calling? What are the vision, hope and dreams of the CE for the upcoming two years?

As a commission we accept the commands of 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear

(Continued on Page 13)

Prayer Requests

The Prayer Request Bookmark was suggested by the Evangelism Committee as a way to encourage prayer within TAALC population for certain people, churches, or other Christian concerns worldwide. In the coming months, The Evangel will begin publishing an article focused on the persecuted church in each issue, so that we can continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering on account of their faith throughout the World. This being the first of the Prayer Request Bookmarks, the prayer requests are meant to focus on our newly elected officials and the future of TAALC.

August:

Please pray for:

1. One of our newly elected officials
2. Pastors and Church Workers
3. Unity in the Church
4. The persecuted Church
5. Your local TAALC church
6. The future of our Seminary
7. Rev. Dr. Leins, our new Presiding Pastor
8. One of our newly elected officials
9. Pastors and Church Workers
10. Unity in the Church
11. The persecuted Church
12. Your local TAALC church
13. Our seminarians
14. Rev. Roger Twito, Assistant Presiding Pastor
15. One of our newly elected officials
16. Pastors and Church Workers
17. Unity in the Church
18. The persecuted Church
19. Your local TAALC church
20. Rev. Shields, our seminary president.
21. Rev. Irvin Stapf, Secretary
22. One of our newly elected officials
23. Pastors and Church Workers
24. Unity in the Church
25. The persecuted Church
26. Your local TAALC church
27. Our seminary professors
28. The Clergy Commission
29. One of our newly elected officials
30. Pastors and Church Workers
31. Unity in the Church

September

Please pray for:

1. Pray for the persecuted Church
2. Pray for your local TAALC church
3. The future of our Seminary
4. Board of Appeals and Adjudication
5. One of our newly elected officials
6. Pray for Pastors and Church Workers
7. Pray for unity in the Church
8. Pray for the persecuted Church
9. Pray for your local TAALC church
10. Our seminarians
11. Commission on Doctrine & Church Relations
12. One of our newly elected officials
13. Pray for Pastors and Church Workers
14. Pray for unity in the Church
15. Pray for the persecuted Church
16. Pray for your local TAALC church
17. Our seminary professors.
18. The Commission for Higher Education
19. One of our newly elected officials
20. Pray for Pastors and Church Workers
21. Pray for unity in the Church
22. Pray for the persecuted Church
23. Pray for your local TAALC church
24. Our seminarians
25. The Commission for Commissioned Church Workers
26. The AALC Foundation
27. Pray for Pastors and Church Workers
28. Pray for unity in the Church
29. Pray for the persecuted Church
30. Pray for your local TAALC church

Commission for Evangelism, Continued from Page 14

from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” Our land needs healing, and people need the Lord. We need to pray!”

It is our conviction that only the Holy Spirit can lift that veil that blinds the world, making it our task to intercede for the world God loves. Paul reminds, “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Thus our dream is that every congregation of TAALC embrace prayer, that members would pray and that a team of intercessors would be formed in each congregation, that these prayer warriors would intercede for their communities, for the nation and the world.

What concrete steps is the CE taking to help facilitate increased prayer? The best way to reach everyone within TAALC is through the Evangel. So, with the support of the leadership of TAALC, our plan is:

1. To include a prayer calendar in each Evangel so that we are all encouraged to pray and are also able to unite in prayer. The hope is to design the calendar in a way that it would be easily removed from the Evangel and used as bookmark in your Bible.
2. To focus on prayer in the Evangelism articles of the Evangel.
3. To feature different congregations of TAALC in the Evangel so that we get to know each better and thus be able to pray more effectively.
4. To have articles showing the struggle of the persecuted Church in the Evangel so that we better understand how to pray for our Christian brothers and sisters in those difficult situations, who need our support.

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYER!

For the Commission on Evangelism:
Brigitte Gassman DSS

The American Lutheran Theological Journal

The American Lutheran Theological Journal (ALTJ) is now available! This publication is the first of many to come out of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS), and seeks to speak into the larger theological context of Lutheranism. With both Rev. Shields and Pastor Jordan Cooper working as editors of this publication, this scholarly journal provides articles written by other TAALC pastors and seminarians. The theme of this first journal is Holy Communion, and features articles by: Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, Rev. Shields, and Pastor Jordan Cooper. A sermon by Pastor David Spotts is also included, along with book reviews.

The second edition of ALTJ is focused on Two Kinds of Righteousness: our passive righteousness before God in Christ, and our active righteousness in love toward our neighbor. This issue will contain articles by Jordan Cooper, Lisa Cooper (the new editor of *The Evangel*) and Rev. Michael Badenhop.

This publication brings The American Association of Lutheran Churches into discussion with other confessional Lutheran church bodies regarding the doctrines of Holy Scripture, and will hopefully be a blessing to you as well.

Please visit www.JustandSinner.com and click the “Publications” tab to order your copy.

The Evangel – Online

Any of you who are familiar with TAALC official web site probably know that *The Evangel* is posted there in PDF format. You can read it online. In an effort to make further progress into the electronic media age, we are now offering an opportunity for you to get the link by e-mail to this on-line copy when it comes out.

If you would like to avail yourself of this opportunity, please visit www.taalc.org, scroll down to where you see an image of the most recent *The Evangel* cover. To the left, you will see “To receive future editions of *The Evangel* via email, [click here.](#)” Click the link to register yourself to receive the link to the on-line version of *The Evangel* when each issue comes out.

What are the advantages? You can read *The Evangel* with the free e-reader from Adobe called Acrobat. You can enlarge text and pictures for easy reading. Also, you can save the cost of postage and printing *The Evangel*. If you request this option, *The Evangel* will no longer be mailed to you (if you currently receive it by mail).

This is a small step in the direction of the inevitable – that most reading will soon be done electronically. At the same time, it keeps those of us struggling to keep up with the trends in technology in the loop.



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