

The Evangel

Issue No. 173—Winter 2014

A Publication of The American Association of Lutheran Churches



LUKE 2:4

⁴So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel appeared to them

¹⁵When the angels had and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Go to Bethlehem and see that has happened, which I have told us about."

¹⁶So they hurried off and Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the manger, went with them. ¹⁷When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about the child, ¹⁸and all who heard were amazed at what they had heard. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things and thought about them in her heart.

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Letter From the Editor

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ! As we draw closer to the end of the year, some of the most exciting celebrations in the church occur. First, at the end of October, we have Reformation Day. On this day, we not only celebrate the historical Reformation, remembering Luther's bravery in standing up for Biblical truths against a corrupt church, but we also celebrate our identity as confessing Lutherans today as we join together in proclaiming the truth that we are indeed saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by our own works. What a glorious truth!

Next, we have the Advent season, traditionally seen as a season of repentance in preparation for the celebration of the birth of Christ on Christmas. It is extremely tempting to become inundated with Christmas preparations during this time, but it is imperative that we take time to reflect on why God needed to send Jesus into the world to save us. God needed a perfectly righteous sacrifice to atone for the sinfulness of all mankind. What a glorious God we have that he would send His own son to do this for us! So, as we begin Advent season, I encourage you to reflect on these truths: that God Himself became incarnate, lived a perfect life, died a death in your stead, and rose again from the grave in order to reconcile the whole world to himself. Without Jesus being born a man, this would not be possible.

May God bless all of you, your congregations, and all of those you love and serve in your vocations as we look forward together to the blessings of God in this new year.

In Christ's Service,
Lisa Cooper

PS: Please keep in mind that we here at The Evangel would love to see what you are doing in your congregations and in your community. Send pictures and articles to theevangel@taalc.org.

Luther's Christmas Celebration

by TAALC Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins

Trees and Carols

Have you ever wondered how Luther celebrated Christmas? Legend has it¹ that the lighted Christmas Tree owes its origin to Martin Luther. One Christmas Eve as he was walking home through the forest, Luther was struck by the extraordinary beauty of the stars shining through the glistening evergreens. Once home, he tried to explain to his family his thoughts about the starry sky above the Bethlehem stable on the first Christmas Eve. When words failed to do justice to the inspiration in his heart, Luther cut down a small fir tree and placed lighted candles upon it in his own home.

Another story of Luther's home is recorded in an article by Paul L. Maier, "Celebrating Advent with Martin Luther."² The Luther house was a converted monastery on the east side of Wittenberg. Its spacious accommodations were home to Martin, Katie, their six children, and many students who also stayed there. One student recalls that as Christmas approached each year, Luther's heart was increasingly buoyed and cheerful. Imagine Luther breaking into song as his family and friends gathered around the dinner table!

The first Protestant hymnal was published in Wittenberg. It contained eight hymns in German, four of which were written by Luther. Tradition credits Luther with the composition of the famous carol, *Away in a Manger*, though modern scholars are unsure of its authorship. However, we are certain that Luther wrote another famous carol. Evidently, it was a Christmas gift from Luther to his five year old son, Hans. It is titled, *Vom Himmel Hoch*. You may know the carol by its English title, *From Heaven Above to Earth I Come*. It is a spectacular hymn telling the story of the coming of the Christ child in fifteen verses!

Clear Proclamation of God's Word

From what is written above, you may have the impression that Luther's Christmas was a comfy-cozy time of lighted trees, lullaby carols, and a warm fire, while visions of sugarplums danced in his head. If I have given you the idea that this is the extent of Luther's Christmas celebration, I have terribly misled you. It is in the preached Word that Luther most clearly demonstrates the heart of his

Christmas celebration. Even a cursory glance at his sermons will prove that his was no superficial or sentimental observance.

One of Luther's most famous Christmas Sermons is found in his Wartburg Church Postil, 1521-1522. This glorious declaration on Luke 2: 1-14 is 78 paragraphs in length and includes Law and Gospel, sin and redemption, God's glory and humanity's hope. In the excerpt below, Luther reminds his Christmas congregation to love Christ by serving others.

Now let every one examine himself in the light of the Gospel and see how far he is from Christ, what is the character of his faith and love. There are many who are enkindled with dreamy devotion, when they hear of such poverty of Christ, are most angry with the citizens of Bethlehem, denounce their blindness and ingratitude, and think, if they had been there, they would have shown the Lord and his mother a more becoming service, and would not have permitted them to be treated so miserably. But they do not look by their side to see how many of their fellow men need their help, and which they let go on in their misery unaided. Who is there upon earth that has no poor, miserable, sick, erring ones, or sinful people around him? Why does he not exercise his love to those? Why does he not do to them as Christ has done to him? It is altogether false to think that you have done much for Christ, if you do nothing for those needy ones. Had you been at Bethlehem you would have paid as little attention to Christ as they did...³

Educated Laity

Clearly, Luther pulled no punches. He preached the complete Word of God without restraint. Just because it was Christmas, he did not give his congregation "dreamy devotion." Nor did Luther dumb down his theology for the sake of the

(Continued on Page 4)

illiterate and uneducated masses. On the contrary, his preaching included clear explanations of Greek, Hebrew and Latin terms in order to provide his congregation with genuine, biblical truth. In Luther's Christmas Eve Sermon on Titus 2: 11-15, preached in 1522, Luther gave an explanation of ungodliness.

The appearing of grace, Paul says, instructs us in two things: one is described as "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts." We must explain these terms. The Latin word "impietas," which the apostle renders in the Greek "asebia" and which in Hebrew is "resa," I cannot find any one German word to express. I have made it "ungoettlich wesen," "ungodliness." The Latin and Greek terms do not fully convey the Hebrew meaning. "Resa," properly, is the sin of failing to honor God; that is, of not believing, trusting, fearing him, not surrendering to him, not submitting to his providence, not allowing him to be God. In this sin, those guilty of gross outward evils are deeply implicated indeed; but much more deeply involved are the wise, sainted, learned ecclesiasts who, relying upon their works, think themselves godly and so appear in the eyes of the world.⁴

It has been argued that Luther's clear proclamation of the Word of God and accessibility to it through his numerous pamphlets, sermons, and books, produced the most theologically astute and biblically informed populous in Western history. Could we positively influence our congregations and communities by following his example?

Contemporary Lutheran Christmas Celebration

Though I am not suggesting that our clergy immediately begin to include extensive Hebrew and Greek exegeses in their preaching, I am suggesting that, like Luther, we need not apologize for preaching the pure Word and full counsel of God. Instead of satisfying society's desire for a romantic holiday with a sermon of "dreamy devotion," what we truly need is a clear presentation of humanity's sin and Christ's incarnation for our redemption!

Truth be told, the trees are lovely and the carols are breath-taking. The presents are generous and the foods sumptuous. But, a cozy fire and a snow white landscape will not comfort a troubled heart, bring hope to a desperate soul, or save a fallen world. How did Luther celebrate Christmas? Of course, he enjoyed carols, trees, and gifts. But, Luther knew that the true beauty and eternal joy of Christmas were found in only one place, the Infant Child in the manger. This profound mystery is the Word that he preached and the carol that he sang:

*From heaven above to earth I come to bear goodness to every home;
glad tidings of great joy I bring, whereof I now will say and sing.
This is the Christ, our God and Lord, Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself your Savior be from all your sins to set you free.
Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child, make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
within my heart, that it may be a quiet chamber kept for Thee.
My heart for very joy doth leap, my lips no more can silence keep;
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue that sweetest ancient cradle-song.
Glory to God in highest heaven, Who unto us His Son hath given!
While angels sing with pious mirth a glad new year to all the earth.⁵*

References:

- 1 Maymie Richardson Krythe, *All About Christmas*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 63.
- 2 Paul L. Maier, "Celebrating Advent with Martin Luther," *Christianity Today* (December, 2008).
- 3 Martin Luther. *The Sermons of Martin Luther*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983). I: 134-160, n.58-59.
- 4 Martin Luther. *The Sermons of Martin Luther*, 8 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983). VI: 113-114, n.7.
- 5 *Vom Himmel hoch* by Martin Luther: vv. 1,3,13,14, and 15, first published in *Geistliche Lieder*, Leipzig, 1539.

ALTS Update

By Rev. Richard P. Shields, President

Greetings in the Lord. Much is happening in and with ALTS. Student enrollment continues to increase; currently we have 18 students in the online MTS program and one student enrolled for on-campus studies at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. We also have four prospects that will be starting online either in Winter or Spring Quarter. We are moving toward the goal of 50 seminary students by the year 2018.

We are also pleased with the congregational support. Your financial gifts are very much appreciated by the students. And your prayers raised in behalf of the seminarians and their families are critical.

This update also includes what might seem to be mundane, but it is necessary. With the added enrollment, our hand-maintained record keeping was becoming unmanageable. So this summer I began looking at possible solution for Seminary record keeping. After reviewing three systems, the Commission on Higher Education approved the commitment to a system to address our needs over the next five years.

Our goal is to have all current data and records transferred to the new system by the end of the year. Then we will begin using it for Winter Quarter. For those involved and students, we ask for your patience as we make this transition. The benefits will prove worthwhile.

The following diagram shows many of the enhancements for ALTS:

<p>For Administrators/Sub-Administrators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online Inquiries by Prospective Students• Online Admissions Application Processing• Student Records & Alumni Management• Management of any Other Contacts• Class Scheduling• End-of-Semester Grade Reports• Mid-term Grade Reports• Pre-University Transcripts• Full Academic Transcripts• Online Payment Processing & Invoicing• News & Announcements• Events Calendar• Custom Integrated Printing Module• Communication by Phone, Email and SMS• Custom Reporting Tools• Custom Data Export to other Systems• Dynamic form Builder• Library Record• Equipment Reservation• Financial Aid <p>For Instructors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grade Books• Attendance• Post Homework & Lecture Notes• Progress Reports• Send Class Announcements• Send or Respond to Messages from Students	<p>For Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online Registration and Enrollment• Access Class Communications• Online Grades & Progress Reports• Online Homework & Lecture Notes• Participate in Class Discussions Online• Online Assignment Submission• View Book List & Buy Books Online• Receive Alerts & Reminders• Make Online Payments <p>Benefits for IT Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Extra Hardware Required• No Extra Software Required• Tech Support Included <p>Benefits for Webmaster</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integration with School Website• Online Staff Directory Included• School News & Announcements• Events Calendar
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Becoming a Thrivent Financial Representative

There are people who spend their entire working career with the same company. I decided to dramatically change my career path at the age of fifty, transitioning from working thirty years in the chemical line of business to a financial representative with a faith-based financial services company: Thrivent Financial.

I moved to Lafayette, IN in 1984 to work in a chemical factory, and met my future wife Denise. In 1991, Denise, our two children, Krista and Kyle, and I moved back to Illinois so I could work at a new chemical factory in Kankakee as an operations technician. My most recent job prior to becoming a financial representative was at a factory in suburban Chicago as a warehouse supervisor.

I became unsatisfied with my job as a supervisor after a little more than a year with the company and began looking for employment elsewhere. In October 2010, I was at the annual chapter meeting of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and thought of the possibility of becoming a financial representative with the company. In December of that year, Denise and I traveled to St. Louis, MO to interview with the managerial staff at the regional financial office. The vote had to be a unanimous vote amongst the five managers to hire a representative.



Denise and I decided to take a leap of faith in May 2011, and I resigned from the factory so I could concentrate on studying to pass the necessary exams to become a representative. I passed the final exam in August of 2011. Shortly thereafter, on September 1st I began my career with the company. I recently surpassed my three year anniversary with Thrivent Financial. I have been very blessed by the love and support of many clients along with the great support from the company and my wife. As I have grown into my position, I have had a lot of contact with people that I did not know previously. I must confess that I am more happy in this career helping people and sharing my faith through action and prayer.

An exciting new concept Thrivent is rolling out is called "Action Teams." My clients have initiated thirteen actions team in just the four months, the concept is to promote volunteers coming together to help needy people or organizations. The action team I initiated funded building a ramp in the city where my office is located. One of my favorite action teams was that a member that is a director of a local 5K race, did the action team to help fund the race, therefore the parents of the girl that has cancer received more money to help defray the medical costs associated with the cancer treatment. Because I have been a runner for more than thirty years, this was an exciting way for me to serve my neighbor.

I spend time reading and watching motivational material and in prayer. I have several favorite Bible verses when it comes to business and life in general. 1 Corinthians 13:13 resonates with me very strongly; And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

In Christ's love,

Larry Burton

Faith Lutheran Church, Watseka, IL

Faith Lutheran Sunday School Mission Rally Day

by Rebecca Burdick

On September 7, 2014, Pastor Dean Stoner and John Morley visited Faith Lutheran Church in Watseka, Illinois to celebrate Rally Day. Rally Day is an event held at our church to raise funds for the Watseka Food Pantry. We played water balloon sling shot, a favorite of Pastor Stoner's, to see who could sling the water balloon the farthest without John Lubben, the president of our congregation, catching it and breaking it. Then, we played a team relay game to see what team could fill their buckets first.

The climax of the day was the cream pie auction. The pies auctioned off would then, as you can see in the picture, be smashed in the face of whomever the pie winner chose. The first pie was won by Janice Lubben, and used on her husband, John Lubben. He returned the favor with the second pie. Colyn Burdick-Temen received the remainder of Janice's pie from his grandmother, Rebecca Burdick. All together, the Faith Lutheran community raised \$125 for the Watseka Food Pantry.



At Left:

(From left to right) Back Row: Dustin Burdick, Sean Galyen, John Morley, Rodney Bohlman

Front Row: John Lubben, Destiney Schanda, Mason Galyen, Mitchell Galyen and Colyn Burdick-Temen

Below:

(From left to right) Colyn Burdick-Temen, Janice Lubben, and John Lubben



The AALC: Unique in the Body of Christ

By Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins, Presiding Pastor

This speech was originally delivered at the 2014 Pastor's retreat at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri. The pictures included are from the retreat.

As I visit with Pastors and congregations across the U.S., both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, I am frequently asked about the identity of The American Association of Lutheran Churches. Who are we? What makes us unique? I am excited and proud to answer these questions.

Three Cardinal Values

Three cardinal values have characterized the history of The AALC and are guiding the future of our church body. Our values are theological, relational, and missional.

Theological: This value has two components: 1. What is most important? For us, it is justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; 2. What is the source for that? For us, it is the Holy Bible, which is the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God. Therefore, the Holy Bible is the indisputable authority and rule in all faith and life. Also, we accept the Lutheran Confessions because (*quia*) they are the correct interpretation and explanation of the Holy Scriptures.

Relational: Our relational value states our commitment to be honest, gracious, and non-political in our dealings among ourselves and with others. Though The AALC has a tremendous sense of unity, we are mindful of the flesh that still clings to us. Therefore, as members of the body of Christ, we will oppose self-serving behaviors because they harm others and undermine the unity of the Church. While the AALC has a diversity of historic roots, it is the desire of the Pastors and congregations of The AALC to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Missional: Our missional value proclaims our desire to provide ministry beyond ourselves. Surely, we are

responsible to maintain the congregations and ministries that currently exist. But, the Kingdom of God did not stop when it reached us. We have been commanded to be His witnesses in our communities, country, and world. By the grace of God, we will reach unchurched and non-Christian people with our words and actions both in the U.S. and beyond. Every Christian is reminded to be an active witness to the Gospel regardless of location or vocation.

Two Distinctives

In addition to these three values, there are two distinctives that characterize us. 1. We are young. The AALC is only 27 years old. We are maturing and maturing quickly. But, there are many things that we have not yet faced and many things about which we do not yet have organized and unified answers. 2. Also, we are small. The AALC has fewer than 100 clergy and less than 75 congregations. We are a small congregation of congregations. That means that every Pastor and congregation is very dear to us.

In a small congregation, every single person is precious. When Miss Ida is not at church on Sunday morning, or Mr. Fred is sick, everybody notices and knows about it. Miss Ida is going to have phone calls and visits that afternoon. Mr. Fred will have chicken soup delivered to his door and an offer to get his medicine at the Wal-Mart. The AALC is like that. We are a small congregation of Pastors and people. Every soul is precious to us. There are no disposable Pastors or congregations. We are working hard to genuinely care for each one of them.





Our identity is uncommon; our guiding values are clear. The place of The AALC in the body of Christ is unique, with a growing voice that confesses Lutheran beliefs.

One Leadership Style

Our Lord Jesus has assembled a powerful leadership team. It includes the Executive Committee: Pr. Roger Twito, Assistant Presiding Pastor; Pr. Irv Stapf, Secretary; Dr. Dan Kruger, Treasurer; and myself. In addition, there are three men who currently serve the Executive Committee when requested to do so: President Rich Shields, ALTS; Pr. Joe Dapelo, Administrator (pro tempore); and Pr. Gary Benson, Administrator (newly Called). The leadership team also includes the National Office Staff: Pr. Joe Dapelo and Pr. Gary Benson (listed above); Pr. Dean Stoner, National Home Mission Developer; and Mrs. Bonnie Ohlrich, Secretary/Coordinator.

We have been purposeful about building and maintaining a cohesive and collegial leadership team. Using a model provided by Patrick Lencioni (*The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*), we have been working to build trust, eliminate politics, and increase efficiency. One of the ways that we have done this is by engaging in constructive ideological conflict. This is the art of honest discussion that focuses upon the issues on the table and not on the individuals in the room. We are committed to honest discussion, speaking the truth in love. We will honor and respect one another, and if a personal problem arises, we are committed to seeking resolution by addressing it quickly and kindly. We will hold one another accountable and support group decisions.

Already, our time together has been very productive. We have established goals for the Quarter, Year, and Next 5 Years. We have begun developing a strategy for the accomplishment of these goals and assigned persons with responsibility for various steps and processes.



By articulating our Identity, Values, and Goals, we hope to provide a clear path forward for our beloved church body, through united and collegial leadership. If you have questions, concerns, suggestions, or needs, please do not hesitate to call or write me, or any of the people on the leadership team. We are here to serve you!

Unique in the Body of Christ

I am excited and proud when people ask me about The American Association of Lutheran Churches. God is blessing our beloved church body. You are each a part of the mighty work that He is doing among us and through us today.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1: 9)



Meet a Seminarian

by Lisa Cooper

As you have undoubtedly seen in the letters from Rev. Shields, the President of our seminary, we have a growing seminary population. To help you, the population of TAALC, get to know these men better, and to know how to pray for them, The Evangel is starting a new reoccurring column: "Meet a Seminarian."

The first seminarian you will "meet" is Pastor Chris Rosebrough, who is currently serving Kongsvinger Lutheran Church in Oslo Minnesota. Pastor Rosebrough and his wife of 26 years have two daughters and a son, and one grandson. He is also responsible for Pirate Christian Radio, an online radio station that features podcasts and other audio materials by Confessional Lutherans. He is the host of Fighting for the Faith, a program that interacts with popular Evangelical and mainline Christian materials from a Lutheran perspective by "Comparing what people say in the name of God to the Word of God" (a tagline you will most certainly hear when listening to his program).



The first Pirate Christian Radio conference was held this year (you will read more about this later in this issue), which provided a more formal setting for the men who have programs on the radio station to present lectures on the means of grace. Ultimately, Pastor Rosebrough has a passion for not only spreading the Gospel, but caring for those who are young in understanding. There are so many competing voices in contemporary "Christianity," that people can easily become confused or persuaded into thinking that Christianity is not about Christ and him crucified for us. This is why Pastor Rosebrough has remained bi-vocational even after his call to Kongsvinger Lutheran Church.

We are excited to have Pastor Rosebrough in our seminary, and look forward to seeing his ministry continue to flourish.

The Pirate Christian Radio Conference

By Lisa Cooper

On August 14th and 15th, the first annual Pirate Christian Radio conference was held in Clinton, IA at Saint John's Lutheran Church. Pastor Chris Rosebrough, Rev. Jordan Cooper, and our Presiding Pastor, Rev. Curtis Leins, represented TAALC as keynote speakers. Brent Kuhlman, the pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Murdock, NE was the fourth keynote speaker, representing the LC-MS.

The theme of the conference was "Shalom and the Means of Grace," focusing on problems in the contemporary church, and their solutions found in the objective means of grace given to us in the Lutheran understanding of the sacraments. The first day of lectures focused on four "tyrannies:" anfechtung (terrors of the conscience), the tyranny of the subjective, the tyranny of fruit-checking, and the tyranny of purpose. The second day of lectures provided solutions to these tyrannies with lectures on the Word of God, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Absolution. At the end of the lectures, there was a panel discussion and time for people who attended to ask questions directly to the speakers.



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There were two worship services: the first was led by Pastor Lewis Polzin of Trinity Lutheran Church in Bemidji, MN; and the final Vespers service was led by Pastor Daniel Pool of Saint John's Lutheran Church in Clinton, IA. These services were a great example of the fellowship we have between synods.

The conference drew a crowd of about fifty people, some of whom traveled as far as from Texas, Connecticut, and Florida. This is particularly exciting news for our synod. Not only are we reaching people in our nuclear communities, but the online ministries of these men have reached many people throughout the country. All of the lectures given at the PCR Conference will be available online to stream on the Pirate Christian radio site: www.piratechristianradio.com



Reformation Day

by Pastor Jordan Cooper

On October 31, the church celebrates the great work that God did through a German monk, Martin Luther, with the feast of the Reformation. In the midst of a time of great corruption in the church, Luther was shown the light of the Gospel while he was studying St. Paul's letter to the Romans. He struggled over one particular phrase: "the righteousness of God." Luther had been taught that God's righteousness referred to his justice, whereby he punishes sinners. Thus, when Luther read about God's righteousness in the book of Romans, he was scared! Martin Luther knew that he was a sinner. He knew that if God was going to judge him strictly according to his own works, he would not pass the test! But then a great light fell upon him. Luther suddenly realized that God's righteousness is not his strict justice, but God's righteousness is a gift that he gives to sinners! Salvation does not come from works of the Law, but it is a gift given by God, which is to be received by faith! This is the great reformation discovery, and it is at the heart of the Lutheran faith.



The reason why Reformation Day is celebrated on October 31 is not to counteract Halloween, but because that is the day when the Lutheran Reformation began. In the sixteenth century, the church faced a dilemma. The Pope really wanted to build a new Cathedral, St. Peter's Basilica, but the church had run out of money. And so they came up with a plan to raise money for the building of this church. They sent out a man name John Tetzel to get money. He did this by traveling from town to town to sell indulgences. These indulgences were supposedly given to free people from purgatory. Thus, if you gave money to Tetzel, you would help save the souls of your relatives. Tetzel used the famous phrase: "When a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs." This practice still exists in the Roman Catholic Church today.

Martin Luther knew that this practice was not Biblical. One cannot be saved by giving money to the church, but instead by faith and repentance. Because of this dangerous practice, Martin Luther decided to write up ninety-five problems with the practice of selling indulgences, and he nailed it to the church door in town. Luther intended this to be read so that there might be theological debate around this issue, but God had much bigger plans. Someone took Luther's theses, and brought them to a local printer. God had providentially led man to create the printing press just a few years before this. And these theses were soon widely printed, and spread throughout the Holy Roman Empire. Luther soon became a hero of the German people, and a danger to the Papacy. At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Martin Luther was called to recant everything that he had said against the Papacy, and the corruption of the church. He refused, and at that moment the Lutheran Reformation began. Martin Luther and the other followers of the Reformation were separated from the Roman church, and had the freedom to proclaim the Gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. At this time of year, let us praise God for bringing Martin Luther, and us, to the wonderful Gospel message of God's grace.

News From Emmanuel Lutheran Church of Kelliher, MN

by Justina Halvarson

Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Kelliher, MN is a small church in northern Minnesota. A homegrown window project started several years ago was recently completed. Each of the 10 windows in the church tells a Bible story, the majority focusing on the life of Christ. Comments from the community included how nice the windows look and that the church building looks more like a church with this added window dressing.



As a part of our community outreach, our church hosted the second annual Suicide Prevention and Awareness Walk on June 14th of this year. About 100 people gathered in the church yard for prayer before beginning a 5k walk/run. The proceeds from this walk were given to Evergreen Youth and Family Services in Bemidji, MN for programs in schools and colleges and community support. Those participating returned for a potluck meal served under a tent in the backyard of the church. Handouts were made available dealing with various misconceptions regarding depression and suicide while providing greater understanding of Biblical truth and the scope of God's grace. Several area residents who took part in the walk became acquainted with what our church offers in spiritual matters.

During the Big Bog Festival later in the summer, we shared the history of our church with some folks enjoying the parade on chairs we set out in front of the church. Our church members meet on Sunday mornings for Bible study and AALC sermons from the internet. We are alive in the love of our Lord!

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.

December:

Please pray for:

1. Your local AALC church
2. Rev. Leins, Presiding Pastor
3. The future of our seminary
4. The AALC Foundation
5. Unity in the Church
6. Pastors and church workers
7. The persecuted church
8. Your local AALC church
9. Rev. Twito, Assistant to the Presiding Pastor
10. Rev. Shields, seminary president
11. The Commission for Higher Education
12. Unity in the Church
13. Pastors and church workers
14. The persecuted church
15. Your local AALC church
16. Rev. Irvin Stapf, Secretary
17. Our seminarians
18. Commission on Doctrine & Church Relations
19. Unity in the Church
20. Pastors and church workers
21. The persecuted church
22. Your local AALC church
23. Rev. Dean Stoner, Mission Developer
24. For all who work over the holidays
25. Thanks be to God for sending Jesus into the world!
26. Unity in the Church
27. Pastors and church workers
28. The persecuted church
29. Your local AALC church
30. Regional Mission Developers
31. For God's guidance for the AALC in the new year

January

Please pray for:

1. For all of the saints who have gone before us
2. Unity in the Church
3. Pastors and church workers
4. The persecuted church
5. Your local AALC church
6. Dr. Dan Kruger, Treasurer
7. The future of our seminary
8. Board of Appeals and Adjudication
9. Unity in the Church
10. Pastors and church workers
11. The persecuted church
12. Your local AALC church
13. Pr. Joe Dapelo, Administrator
14. Our seminarians
15. The Clergy Commission
16. Unity in the Church
17. Pastors and church workers
18. The persecuted church
19. Your local AALC church
20. Pr. Gary Benson, Administrator (newly called)
21. Our seminary professors
22. The Commission for Commissioned Church Workers
23. Unity in the Church
24. Pastors and church workers
25. The persecuted church
26. Your local AALC church
27. Mrs. Bonnie Ohlrich, Secretary/Coordinator
28. That God would raise up church leaders
29. The Commission for Evangelism
30. Unity in the Church
31. Pray for our pastors and church workers

National Home Mission Developer

As the recently called National Home Mission Developer for TAALC, I wanted to discuss the continuing strategy for congregation revitalization established nearly 18 months ago. At that time National Home Mission Developer Curtis Leins (now Presiding Pastor) identified five areas of ministry in need of revitalization within our TAALC congregations: Community Outreach, Men's Ministry, Leadership Development, Youth (including Christian Education) and Young Adult Ministry, and Worship Life. Dr. Leins then offered regional workshops to our congregations across the country to begin the work of addressing these needs. Initially these congregational workshops (either regional or individual gatherings) looked at the broader context of all five areas of revitalized ministry.

I believe these workshops have been an invaluable service to our TAALC congregations and will continue to be offered. However, TAALC team of Regional Mission Developers and I will stress the first two areas of revitalization, Community Outreach and Men's Ministry, as a point to start, in all upcoming workshops of 2015. This strategy does not mean to suggest, however, that the other areas of ministry revitalization will be ignored. On the contrary, each of these five areas will continue to be discussed and analyzed in all upcoming workshops. It is important to note that not all of our congregations are at the same place with this endeavor, so our workshops may be adapted to fit the needs of specific congregations in specific situations when needed. Some congregations may be more inclined to focus on Leadership Development, for example, and that is just fine. But because much of this work is rather new to the majority of TAALC, the first two areas of ministry will continue to be our starting point.

If you haven't had an opportunity as of yet to get involved in a revitalization workshop, I invite you to talk with your Regional Mission Developer or contact me. Our workshops are usually just a few hours in length, often on a Saturday or Sunday, and are designed to help you identify your God-given gifts and resources as the body of Christ, and where they may be put to use from a missional perspective. In addition, these workshops also evaluate many new ideas that other congregations have found helpful that our TAALC congregations might be able to adapt to their own situation. It is my prayer that this TAALC revitalization strategy will be instrumental in providing the tools and encouragement necessary for congregational growth and viability, as well as for expanding the Kingdom of God.

Rev. Dean Stoner
National Home Mission Developer
(260) 515-7789

Regional Mission Developers:

Eastern Region: Rev. Fred Balke
West Great Lakes Region: Rev. Paul Hueter
Greater Heartland Region: Rev. Robert Snitzer
North Plains Region: Rev. David Huskamp
Western Region: Rev. Eric Ishimaru

The American Lutheran Theological Journal

The second edition of 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 Rev. Jordan Cooper working as editors of this publication, this scholarly journal provides articles written by other TAALC pastors and seminarians.

The theme of this second journal is The Two Kinds of Righteousness: our passive righteousness before God in Christ, and our active righteousness in love toward our neighbor. Articles in this edition are written by: Rev. Jordan Cooper, Rev. Michael Badenhop, Lisa Cooper, Rev. Mark Surburg, and Dr. Eric Phillips, along with a sermon by Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins.

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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The Evangel — Issue 173
Winter 2014

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The Evangel

The Evangel, a publication of The American Association of Lutheran Churches, is published bimonthly. A one-year subscription is \$10.00.

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