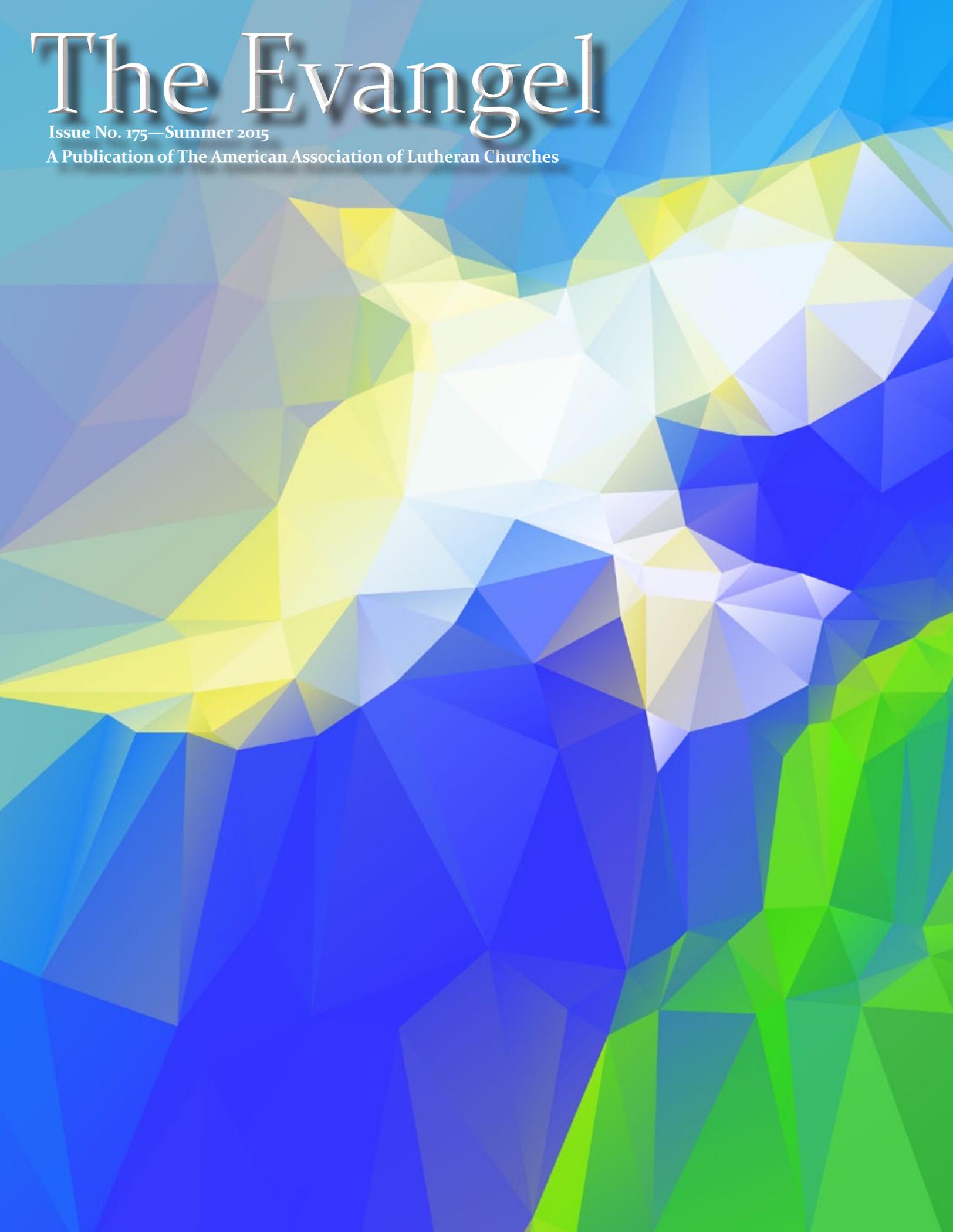


The Evangel

Issue No. 175—Summer 2015

A Publication of The American Association of Lutheran Churches



- Pg. 2 — From the Editor
Pg. 3 — From the Presiding Pastor
Pg. 5 — Pastoral Formation
Pg. 7 — Blessing of the Bikes
Pg. 7 — Cleanup of Highway 2
Pg. 8 — To Tell the Truth
Pg. 9 — Eastern Region Conference
Pg. 10 — Kongsvinger Valentine's
Banquet
Pg. 11 — The Ministry of Highway 135
Pg. 12 — Shepherd of the Valley
Lutheran Church Vacation
Bible School
Pg. 13 — Open the Doors Festival
Pg. 13-14 — Prayer Requests
Bookmark
Pg. 15 — The Evangel - Online

Photo Credits:

- Cover Photos — iStock Photo
Pg. 5 — iStock Photo
Pg. 6 — iStock Photo
Pg. 7 — Photos courtesy of St. John's
Lutheran Church
Pg. 7 — Photos courtesy of Poplar Lake
Lutheran Church
Pg. 9-15 (Graphics) — iStock Photo
Pg. 10 — Photos courtesy of Kongsvinger
Lutheran Church
Pg. 12 — Photos courtesy of Shepherd of
the Valley Lutheran Church
Pg. 13-14 — Photos by Lynette Badenhop

Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2007 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

Used by permission.

All rights reserved.

Editor: Lisa Cooper

Layout & Design by Lynette Badenhop

Letter From the Editor

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! The season of Pentecost is a wonderful time in the church year. Draped in green, our church sanctuaries remind us that this is the season of Christian growth. Despite our inevitably busy summer schedules, and the temptation to let this season be “optional” in the church year, it is important to keep in mind that the gift of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost did not wane after it was given, but went forth in power through God’s people. Be encouraged! The Holy Spirit is most certainly doing His work in you and in your congregations. How do we know this? We know that wherever two or three are gathered in the name of Christ—there He is! (Paraphrase Matt 18:20).

It is my hope that the articles contained in this edition of *The Evangel* will encourage you, that they will show you the great work that God is doing in our congregations. You will see not only the faithful work of our leaders, but also the work of God through our local congregations.

It has come to my attention—and forgive me for being so late to realize this—that there are some of you who would wish to send in articles, but have no means to do so electronically. In that case, please send your articles/pictures to Attn: Lisa Cooper, Faith Lutheran Church, 425 E. Lincoln Avenue, Watseka, IL 60970. Please include your contact information along with the article. For all of you tech-savvy people who want to contribute to *The Evangel*, please do so by emailing me at theevangel@taalc.org. All article submissions must include an indication of who wrote the article, and all pictures submissions must include picture credit. Thank you!

I look forward to seeing the amazing work that God is doing in and through your churches.

In Christ,

Lisa Cooper

Keeping the Fort & Taking the Frontier

by TAALC Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins

A string of forts stretched across the western edge of the North American frontier. From Minnesota to Texas, these havens of safety provided important outposts of protection and provision in a wild and forbidding land. In addition, the American fort served as a launching pad for westward expansion, and played a critical role in the settlement of 19th century wilderness territory.

In a similar fashion, we may think of the congregations of The AALC as fortresses of safety in a post-Christian frontier. Each congregational outpost is carefully positioned as a haven of safety, providing the protection of God's Word and the sustenance of His Holy Sacraments. Also, each congregational fort is an outpost from which God's people are sent forth with His commission of Kingdom expansion and Gospel proclamation into a wilderness culture of immorality and unbelief.

Keeping the Fort

Each congregational fort in The AALC is precious. Though some of our congregations are very small and some are located in remote areas, each one is connected to Christ Jesus and to the rest of our Association. We stand as brothers and sisters together, committed to the care and support of one another.

Approximately ten of our congregations have a worshipping community of twelve persons or less. Some of these congregations are without regular pastoral care. Most of them are increasing in median age and decreasing in Sunday attendance. Our first responsibility is to insure that each one of our congregations receives weekly proclamation of God's Word and at least monthly administration of the Lord's Supper. During the past several months, the National Office Staff has been working to identify these congregations and to provide them with the essentials of Word and Sacrament. To that end, our parish pastors are going the extra mile and our congregations are contributing extra dollars. We are working together to meet the needs of the smallest and most remote congregational forts. Many of our Emeritus Pastors are continuing to serve Christ and His people long after retirement. Some Parish Pastors, after conducting Sunday Services for their own congregations, are traveling to sister congregations in need. In other places, neighboring congregations are providing financial support so that smaller congrega-

tions can receive supply, interim, and even full-time pastoral care. God is providing in remarkable ways! Though this is an ongoing task, at present all of our congregations are receiving Word and Sacrament ministry and regular pastoral care.

Over one-third of our congregations have an average worship attendance of less than forty persons. We have identified these congregations. We have contacted them in order to offer them persons, programs, and resources that may assist them in growth and vitalization. This is no cookie-cutter ministry. God has given unique pastoral leadership to individual congregations, located in specific communities. The National Office is working to assist pastors and congregations in the development of their own, unique strategies for congregational enrichment and growth as well as community service and outreach. Pr. Dean Stoner, the National Home Mission Developer, is visiting congregations, offering vitalization workshops, and training and organizing Regional Mission Developers. Our goal is that each of our congregations with fewer than forty persons would grow to the point of being able to Call their own pastor, and to a size of at least 60 persons. This is an on-going process and a goal that may take several years to accomplish, but we have already begun to see miraculous results by God's grace!

Approximately 15% of our congregations are in the Call process. This is a good thing! It means that God is moving pastors to new positions of service and leadership. Also, it means that congregations are about to receive new pastoral care and ministry. Change in the Pastor-Congregation relationship can be unsettling and upsetting. However, we know that Our Heavenly Father holds each congregation and pastor in His Hands. We trust in God to provide for every congregation and every pastor according to His mercy, His timing, and His Holy Will.

In short, we are focused on *Keeping the Fort*. Every congregational fortress is precious and each pastor is a cherished member of the Ministerium. We want all to know that they have ready assistance and genuine care available through their Regional Pastor and National Office Staff!

Taking the Frontier

While most of the ministry of the preceding months has been focused on *Keeping the Fort*, the

(Continued on Page 4)

(Continued from Page 3)

National Office Staff and Executive Committee also have been attending to Christ's Great Commission. *Taking the Frontier* includes everything from congregational outreach to church-wide overseas missions. The gift of the Gospel of Jesus must never be hoarded as our personal possession, but instead must be shared with a world lost in spiritual poverty and eternal darkness. Right now, God is expanding the ministry of The AALC, motivating ministers and multiplying ministries.

You may have noticed a campaign that is now some two years in the making, a church-wide emphasis on congregational outreach. All across The AALC, in congregations large and small, we are seeing a new and determined commitment to represent Christ in our neighboring communities. Using programs as varied as a Motorcycle Blessings to a Father-Daughter Banquet, The AALC is putting their faith into action as the hands and heart of Our Lord Jesus. Each week, the National Office receives exciting stories about community outreach activities by our congregations. Many of them have been featured in the *Evangel*. Keep your eyes open for these testimonies that demonstrate God's blessing of our acts of service. Perhaps, your congregation will be featured as you *Take the Frontier* in the Name of Jesus!

God is providing an increase of seminarians and an expansion of our seminary ministries. In the past several months, new catalogues have been created, course descriptions composed, admission guidelines established, and course schedules set in place. Our seminary faculty has doubled in order to meet the growing need presented by a student body that is exploding! Already, we have 10 students registered for our Summer Greek Course, to be taught by Pr. Dave Spotts. We anticipate some 21 students to be enrolled in the courses that will be offered this Fall. While we continue to offer theological education via the internet, we are seeing renewed interest in residential education made available through Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. This is an outstanding M. Div. degree program

and must be a vital consideration for any seminary candidate. In addition, we continue our dialogue with the LCMS Seminary Presidents and staff, exploring the possibility of a joint degree program that would include courses from both of our seminaries. Absolutely instrumental in this growth in seminary interest is the internet radio ministry of three men: Pr. Chris Rosebrough, Pr. Jordan Cooper, and Seminarian Brandon Hanson. God has given an incalculable blessing to our church body through their gifted ministries. Finally, the administration and oversight of this tremendous season of development in our seminary is possible because of the dedicated and tireless leadership and service of our seminary President, The Rev. Richard Shields. He works in conjunction with the faithful members of the Commission for Higher Education, chaired by Ms. Emily Gerken. Together, they are seeing a new era of growth and excitement in ALTS and The AALC preparation for vocational ministry.

Over the past year, I have spoken with at least seven pastors about the possibility of planting new AALC congregations. Obviously, pioneering a new congregation requires infrastructure and financing, preparation and training. We need pastors with specific gifts and God's Call to church planting. Also, we need support from congregations, The AALC Foundation, and our whole Association. Though we are not yet ready to plant a new congregation, initial steps are being formulated.

An extraordinary step, filled with great possibility, is currently being taken by Pr. Thomas Baumgarten and Mr. Alan Zacharias and The AALC Foundation. During the next several months, specific information about the upcoming Foundation Campaign will be presented at Regional Conferences, Regional Pastors' Meetings, and the Annual Pastors' Conference. The goal of the Foundation Campaign is to provide financial assistance for: the next generation of seminarians; pastoral support and congregational vitalization for congregations with fewer than twelve persons; hands-on support and vitalization for congregations with fewer than forty persons; planting new

congregations; and raising the profile of The AALC and ALTS through publications, internet, and other media.

We thank God for outreach ministries that have taken place in the past year. The first is the beginning of an overseas ministry by Pr. Scott Yount, missionary to the Ukraine. We are so proud of this faithful and courageous Pastor. Also, we continue to remember with prayer and thanksgiving Dr. Thomas Aadland, Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Matango Lutheran Theological Seminary in Kenya, Africa, and his sending organization, Project Timothy. Finally, we are delighted to report the inception of a new outreach ministry. Pr. Dave Spotts is The AALC Chaplain of The Wittenberg Door, an AALC Lutheran Campus Ministry on the campus of the University of Missouri.

Clay Vessels

The nineteenth century North American fort provided protection and provision for the courageous frontiersman and woman. From that fort, he and she embarked on a journey through the uncharted western wilderness that finally resulted in the growth and development of our entire country. In a similar way, you and I have been given the gift of The American Association of Lutheran Churches. Each congregation is an outpost in the wilderness. Each congregational fortress provides the spiritual protection of God's Holy Word and the spiritual nourishment of His Holy Sacraments. From the safety of the Presence of God and the fellowship of the saints, we are sent forth on a journey. Some are sent to foreign countries; others are sent into their own communities. Each one of us, inspired by His Spirit and equipped with His Word, is sent on a mission into the wilderness for the sake of Our King and the expansion of His Kingdom.

With all of this said however, we know that our efforts of protection and expansion are fruitless without Him. Though He uses clay vessels like us, it is God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who is *Keeping the Fort* and *Taking the Frontier*. Hallelujah! Amen.

Pastoral Formation

By Rev. Richard P. Shields, President

Last week I had the privilege of updating the convention attendees at TAALC East Region about our seminary, American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS). My report included an updated status of the seminary, and especially the online program, Master of Theological Studies (MTS), as well as an update on the new database system that will support our continued growth. The other half of my report included some thoughts on Pastoral Formation, specifically related to online seminary. This is just a sketch of the topic; I am writing a more complete version for our theological journal.

When someone raises the issue of pastoral formation and seminary education, the focus always leans to the theological education. And rightly so, because a solid theological education is important for pastoral formation. In traditional terms we speak about four areas of theological education: exegetical, systematics, historical, and practical. Each area assists in providing the necessary tools, experience, and knowledge to effectively carry out pastoral duties in the congregation.

But other aspects influence Pastoral Formation. Here are four critical components in that formation: spiritual formation, character formation, catechetical formation, and churchmanship formation.

1. Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation involves three realms: worship, Bible reading/study, and prayer. Luther wrote about spiritual formation for all Christians as: *Oratio* (prayer), *Meditatio* (study), and *Tentatio* (affliction). This is vital for spiritual formation and growth. I leave *tentatio* out of this discussion at this point, only because it affects all areas of pastoral formation.

Worship: What kind of worship experiences has a seminary student had? Does he live in a congregation that has only one form of Divine Service? Where and how does the student learn about the great traditions of divine service? What can be done to help him learn not only history but also to practice that? As part of our seminary training, we examine how to best form the pastor regarding worship and leading worship. For online seminary this is a particularly challenging area.

Bible Reading/Study: In Peter's second letter he writes about end times and the Christian in the midst

of waiting for Christ's return. His last words express this point of spiritual formation: "...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18 NAS)

It might be a surprise to some, but pastors struggle with daily Bible reading and study. They study for preparing to preach a sermon or teach a Bible study. For some that is the extent of reading/studying. But the issue of spiritual formation is "How can someone grow spiritually without regular, consistent Bible reading and study?"

When I visit with seminarians and pastors I will ask what they are reading. Some respond with the latest theological books (which can be good). My concern is what are they reading in the Bible. I then say, "If I ask you what you are reading in the Bible, you should ask me what I am reading." So, for the record, my wife and I are reading through 1 Samuel, last night it was chapter 24. In my private reading I am reading through Genesis; last night I read chapters 28-30.

Bible reading and study are the means to grow in this knowledge. Yes, many theological books can help. But they can never replace Bible reading. To do so is to stunt the seminarian's spiritual growth. When a student learns Greek and/or Hebrew then the desire is to also read the Bible in those languages. If we are not reading God's Word daily, regularly, then we are short circuiting God's desire for spiritual growth. Ultimately the seminarian/pastor will have little to nothing to offer his people in sermons and teachings.

Prayer: Prayer is speaking to God. It is the human response to God speaking to us in His Word. Prayer is individual and corporate. It is often easy to get used to leading prayer in the corporate worship setting. But it can also become mechanical. The right entry phrases, the right endings, the appropriate statements of petitions.

When prayer is individual and privately with one or two other people, then the words may not come so easily. Instead prayer is the outpouring of a heart devastated by sin. Prayer reflects the struggle that we face in a sinful world. Prayer reveals our broken hearts, our desire for answers, our pleas for mercy. And many times it is joyful, but quiet contentment to praise God with hymns, songs, and spiritual songs. Prayer isn't necessarily learned by a book, but by imitating a praying person. I have grown

(Continued on Page 6)

(Continued from Page 5)

much in this area in the past four years because of a group of people who pray, pray, and pray. Philippians 4:6-7; Ephesians 5:18-20; 6:18-20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; and many other Scripture texts can be used to encourage and grow in prayer.

2. Character Formation

Most people are surprised to learn that there is only one talent/gift for a pastor: “he is apt to teach.” Everything else about the formation of a pastor has to do with character. And so little is written/spoken about this. We have a seminary class, Pastoral Theology and Life, in which we explore this whole concept of character formation.

It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:1-7 NAS)

This is a challenge, but also an encouragement to those who serve as pastors. It does not mean that pastors are perfect in all of these areas. But unless he wrestles through each of these, he is only examining his life to satisfy “what can I get by with?”

Character formation affects all relationships: with God, with spouse, with children, with members, with neighbors, with outsiders. Notice how especially negatives in 3-5 highlights the need for self-examination. For me, the one about “keeping his children under control with all dignity” became four decade battle and challenge. I almost left the pastoral office three times because of that. I have know some who struggle with drugs or alcohol. In reality, every pastor fails in these areas whether in deeds or in the thoughts. As always, when we fail, we confess and seek forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9), but we also recognize that there may be further consequences.

One particular issue that affects the current state of the church is that the pastor is not to be “pugnacious, but gentle” or as one translation has it, “not a bully but gentle.” Unfortunately the internet provides a platform for bullies in the church. But even worse is a pastor who

is a bully, whether on the internet or especially in his congregation in his dealings with people.

Paul provides the proper perspective on character formation, for everyone:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23 NAS)

3. Catechetical Formation

Catechetical formation is not “how to teach the catechism.” It is much more comprehensive than that. Catechetical formation refers to the entire approach of the congregation in “growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Thus, it includes catechism instruction, family devotions, family and church gatherings that reflect the life of grace and mercy, shaped by proper distinction and application of Law and Gospel.

How easy it is for the pastor to be distracted from this essential task. Meetings are important, but they do not direct the congregational life. Activities are important, but they can divert energy and interest away from learning the essential truths of the Christian faith.

Catechetical formation also involves a consistency throughout congregational life. Hymns, prayers, and readings done in worship form the basis for shut-in visits, hospital visits, family crises ministry. That is the faith confessed, and expressed, in worship is not about a la-la land, but of real life, lived in the trenches as well as on the mountains. Thus, catechetical formation provides the threads that unite and emphasizes the Christian life and growth. In our seminarian curriculum we have a course, Catechesis, in which we explore the dimensions of catechetical formation.

4. Churchmanship Formation

Of all the areas mentioned, Churchmanship formation is the least mentioned or even acknowledged as important. Yet, when Churchmanship is missing, everyone suffers. So what is Churchmanship?

In church life, life can be messy for the church and for pastors. Churchmanship calls pastors and lay leaders to stand up to do what is right, whether it is popular or not. Paul gives some guidelines here:

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the

(Continued on Page 15)

The Blessing of the Bikes in Pocahontas, Missouri

by Pastor David Spotts

God cares for his people in community — on foot, two wheels, four wheels, you name it. Sunday, May 17 marked an observance of Ascension Day as well as a blessing of the bikes at St. John's Lutheran Church in Pocahontas, Missouri. Pastor Bruce Ritter was joined by Pastor Dave Spotts from Wittenberg Door



Campus Ministry for celebration of the Divine Service with communion. After worship, the pastors asked God's blessing over eight beautiful motorcycles and their riders, asking that the Lord would guide and guard them into places of kindness, care, and service to Him. The blessing was followed by a dinner and a raffle in the church fellowship hall. Thanks be to God for a good start to a new tradition in Pocahontas! More pictures are at facebook.com/WittenbergCoMo.

Cleanup of Highway 2

by Pastor John Anderson

A group of eager community service people at Poplar Lake Lutheran in Fosston, Minnesota heading out to clean up two miles of U.S. Highway 2 on May 2, 2015. Dave Gilbertson, James & Brett Frederick, Mike Olson, Kathy Johnson, Brandon Johnson, Chelsie Murphy, Rylie Elton, Caden Murphy, Sienna Friezen, Sharyl Hornbuckle, Pastor John & Joan Anderson.



To Tell The Truth: A 25-Year History of The American Association of Lutheran Churches (TAALC) 1987-2012

by The Rev. Dr. Duane R. Lindberg, Presiding Pastor (Retired)

As I state in the Foreword, I was honored to have been asked by the 2012 General Convention to write this history. Since I was directly involved in the founding and leading of The AALC for the first years of its life, it seems appropriate that I share with you those parameters which guided me in recording the story of our Church Body.

First, as a historian, I operate with the assumption that the story of The AALC is HIS STORY. Therefore, I was led to document the evidence of God's presence in and through Word and Sacrament in The AALC story. Also, I was desirous of writing this story out of a commitment to THE TRUTH of GOD'S WORD—The BIBLE, but with less than a prevailing concern for that which may be termed "political correctness." Thus, each chapter follows a Biblical theme which is suggested by an opening Scripture passage.

It is also my conviction that the history of a church body may be told from a "kronos" perspective as well as from a "kairos" point of view. Therefore, I have written the first part of this history from a "kronos" vantage point, namely, following the calendar of events in a chronological fashion, from the preparation years (1950s through the 1980s), through the founding in 1986 and '87. Then, I continue with the story during the successive administrations of our three Presiding Pastors: 1987-1999, 1999-2007, 2007-2012.

Part II of the history is referred to as the "kairos" (from the Greek word for "time" as measured by meaningful events) section where I have attempted to give the background to specific events which are critical for the understanding of The AALC. To do this I have shared a selection of articles, sermons, and documents which give perspective and interpretation to key events in our TAALC story.

Also, it has been my intention to tell TAALC history as "story." Therefore, I included accounts which I thought would be of "human interest" to the reader. Furthermore, this account was written in order to document the unique aspects of The AALC story, as compared with other Lutheran Bodies (Synods) in the USA. In this connection, I have attempted to document the diversity of The AALC with respect to its being a patch-work of many different Lutheran and ethnic backgrounds.

I utilized primary as well as secondary sources in the writing of this history; hence, the reader will find extensive footnotes at the end of each chapter giving the documentation for the sources of the information which I have used.

The historian's challenge comes especially in the question of what to include and what to leave out of the story. I have attempted to be candid with kindness, but was not afraid to refer to aspects of our Church's story which may be problematic for some. Thus, I have been concerned to deal with both The AALC's successes and its failures. However, I have as a matter of principle, attempted to avoid naming or blaming individuals involved in the particular scenarios.

I have attempted to write this account of our Church Body's history with a particular reader in mind, namely, one who is a lay or clergy member of The AALC or someone who is considering joining and serving his Lord through this Church.

It was a humbling experience to record the story of God's working through the great variety of people who have been drawn to the banner of The AALC. This effort has confirmed for me that the history of our Church Body is indeed HIS-STORY. It is evident to me that only by God's gracious presence through

(Continued on Page 9)

(Continued from Page 8)

Word and Sacrament could men and women, who are “simul iustus et peccator,” be drawn together to accomplish “Kingdom work” through a fledgling Church Body. As I have recorded this “Story,” it has been my privilege to see the Lord’s hand in the warp and woof of our Church’s life. I have been reminded again and again of the TRUTH of Ephesians 3:20-21:

“Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to of far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen!”

Eastern Region Conference

April 6th to 8th, Watseka, IL

by The Rev. Irvin Stapf

Thirty delegates from five of our thirteen Region congregations gathered in Watseka at the invitation of Faith Lutheran Church. Along with the delegates, Dr. Leins, Pastor Shields and Pastor Stoner were able to attend and share the news of our national body. The people of Faith were gracious hosts with a very warm welcome.



There is always a certain amount of Region business to attend to, but we try to keep it to a minimum. The main item this year was a change in leadership. Pastor Stapf had served for eight years and Pastor Ray Lorthoir was elected as our new Regional Pastor. Beyond

this, receiving the Secretary’s and Treasurer’s reports and filling out Commission position pretty well wrapped up the necessary business. The remainder of our



time was spent in worship, study, fellowship, and sharing some fine meals.

Each day was begun with devotions, and the Tuesday evening service of Word and Sacrament is always a great blessing. Time was allotted for Pastor Shields to share two study sessions on Law and Gospel. Luther is said to have remarked that one who has learned to rightly divide law and gospel deserves to receive their

doctorate. This study is always an important review, and new insights are gained each time.

Pastor Jordan Cooper had two sessions on Equipping the Saints to live in the two kinds of righteousness. We are declared righteous by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ. That is our passive righteousness. But then we are called to

live actively righteous lives in the world. The study sessions were very helpful in strengthening the foundational truths of our Lutheran faith.

Fellowship is always an important part of all our AALC gatherings. We renew friendship and deepen our ties even though we are separated by many miles.

It is also a blessing for the members of a host church in getting to know brothers and sisters in Christ from across the Region. Table fellowship and breaking bread together is a joy,



even if an extra pound or two is gained. On Tuesday evening an elegant dinner was served by the Faith Lutheran youth. This was very special and they did a fine job.

We wish to thank the congregation of Faith Lutheran Church, Watseka, IL, and Pastor Jordan and Lisa Cooper, for opening their arms to host our Eastern Region Conference.

Kongsvinger Valentine's Banquet

by Don Mathsen

Playing on the idiosyncrasies of Upper Midwest culture, “Mylo Hatzenbuhler” kept attendees of the annual Kongsvinger Lutheran Valentine’s banquet ‘in stitches’ throughout his one-hour monologue and musical performance on Saturday, February 21, 2015. Mylo is a very sincere, very earnest, and very dumb North Dakota farmboy who thinks he is the next Elvis Presley. “Mylo” juggles two careers, operating the family farm when not “on the road” wowing his fans with his latest rock & roll songs. But his rock and roll is based on what he knows best—cows and chickens, tractors and wheat. Therefore, he serenades his fans with songs like “We Couldn’t Start the Tractor,” “Hens with Low Faces,” a song about the day the rooster died, and “Return to Slender” (a song about weight loss). Working his homespun humor into popular melodies, Mylo relates to anyone who ever grew up on a farm.



The Annual Valentine’s banquet has also become a Kongsvinger fundraising event for a local charity. This year’s recipient was the Red River Children’s Advocacy Center (RRCAC). The RRCAC facilitates the coordination of community response to the assessment of physical and sexual abuse for victims and their families through a team approach to investigation, treatment and prosecution in a safe and child centered environment. All proceeds from the free-will offering went to the RRCAC.



In addition to the raucous Mylo, Clyde Bauman of Bismarck, North Dakota, the creator and portrayer of “Mylo Hatzenbuhler” delighted the audience with two sacred numbers. Mr. Bauman is a veteran and accomplished singer in operatic, classical, Gospel, and inspirational music venues and earlier in the week was granted a North Dakota Music “Lifetime Achievement Award.”

Mr. Bauman also provided special music selections at the following Sunday morning Worship Service.

Kongsvinger Lutheran church of rural Oslo, MN, has been affiliated with TAALC since 1989 and is served by Pastor Chris Rosebrough. The sermons and Bible studies from Kongsvinger can be heard at <http://kongsvingerchurch.org/media.html>



The Ministry of Highway 135

by The Rev. Dean Stoner

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once observed, “The church is the church only when it exists for others.” Bonhoeffer understood that the church must move beyond “programs and self-preoccupation,”¹ (something I believe the North American church has been caught up in for some time), and engage the world where they are. In today’s vernacular, it’s taking a “missional” perspective, venturing out in the streets and meeting the needs of others rather than ourselves. It means loving and caring for those in need beyond the church walls for the sake of Christ! It means answering the call as to why the church exists, to make disciples (Matthew 28:19-20)!

So often congregations struggle to meet their own expectations, such as a higher worship attendance, or a greater financial stability, or even additional pastoral care, believing that such things determine what a successful ministry looks like. Falling into this trap, the church usually then only competes with itself, looking for more and more ways to draw people to Sunday morning services, all the while (at best) just taking sheep from other congregations. But as important as it is to have the “unchurched” hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, holding to the thinking that “amenities,” such as coffee in the sanctuary, a praise band, a nursery, etc., (in and of themselves are not necessarily bad things!) will bring the lost to church on Sunday is a false assumption.

What if we threw out such old metrics that we believe define success in ministry and introduced a different approach or paradigm to view our effectiveness as the Body of Christ? Rather than focusing on how to get people of our communities (the local mission field) into our sanctuaries, what if we brought “church” (i.e. the gospel of Christ) to the community?

We have a particular community of faith within The AALC that is doing just that. Lutherville Lutheran church (not their real name, obviously) of East Everywhere, North America is a congregation of just four people! Yet each of these amazing individuals sees themselves as missionaries to their surrounding community. They are not concerned about bringing new members into their congregation (although that would be nice!) They are not concerned about their financial issues, or if they can compete with the other churches in the area. No, they are focused on “making disciples.” In fact, they see this as their mission, their ministry.

East Everywhere is not a big place (just over 100 folks), and has a Catholic church, another Lutheran (ELCA) church, and even a non-denominational church in town. So in a community so small, where is there opportunity for ministry? It’s called Highway 135.

East Everywhere is located in the northern part of the state, and thousands of travelers visit the area each year to fish, hunt, and even snow mobile. “Highway 135,” (again, not the real highway number) which runs north and south through town, is the main artery that brings these sportsmen into the area. Lutherville Lutheran has identified a need in that fisherman usually will stop and take a break in between morning and evening fishing and eat. But the community East Everywhere and the surrounding area does not offer much in that regard. So this congregation saw an opportunity ... an opportunity to serve the fisherman for the sake of Christ!

Just across the street from the church is a State park, with a refreshing canopy of shade trees and assorted picnic tables. It is here that these four faithful disciples of Christ have decided to set up camp, “Fish Camp”, and provide a afternoon meal for anyone who wants to stop by and have a bite to eat. By putting road signs up and down “highway 135” announcing Fish Camp and inviting all, fisherman or anyone else who is hungry, to stop in, these four members of Lutherville Lutheran have the opportunity to make friends, new friends, as the Lord sees fit, and care for them.

But this is more than just passing out sandwiches on a summer afternoon; it’s about intentional relationship development. Prayer will be offered to any in need or who desire it, and friendships will be made. Perhaps e-mail addresses will be shared. These missionaries are open to any and all possibilities as God, the Holy Spirit, leads.

This kind of ministry makes an imprint in the community. Can’t you hear it now: “Oh, you’re the folks that feed the fisherman!” This ministry creates an identity for Lutherville Lutheran that is beyond anything East Everywhere, North America has ever experienced before. It is a perfect example of bringing church to the community. It is doing ministry, and existing for others, on highway 135.

Bonhoeffer would be proud.

1. McNeal, Reggie. *Missional Renaissance*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 5.

Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church Vacation Bible School

by The Rev. David Huskamp

It is that time again, as churches across the country are preparing for Vacation Bible School (VBS)! Our congregation, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran of Sidney, MT, has been doing the work of planning and praying for this year's event for some time now. We are not a large congregation, as average Sunday morning attendance is around 75 persons. Yet, our VBS Program attendance reaches over 200 children! With the help of over 60 volunteers, truly God has blessed this outreached ministry greatly!



Last year's 2014 VBS Program was titled "Son Treasure Island," which was coordinated as a Mission Project for our congregation as well. Those who signed up for VBS were challenged to collect money to help the Syrian Fund, in association with Samaritan's Purse Ministries. Of the 3 million people that have fled Syria over the past three years, over half of them were children. During our week of VBS, \$4,625 was collected by our kids, and on the Sunday, the last day of VBS, one of the members of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran matched the giving, bringing the total to over \$9000! This offering will provide funding for "safe places" for playgrounds and soccer fields for Syrian children.

It is our prayer that God will continue to bless our VBS Program, this continuing outreach ministry, and the children of Syria.

The American Lutheran Theological Journal

The second edition of the American Lutheran Theological Journal (ALTJ) is now available! This publication is the second 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.

Open the Doors Festival

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Napoleon Township



On May 3rd, St. Paul's Lutheran Church held their 7th Annual Open the Doors Festival. A worship service was held at 10:00



followed by food, fellowship and fun for all ages. The doors were open to all—whether they be members, their families and friends or anyone else in the community.

Luncheon and ice cream stand items were available during the festival along with a nice selection of bake sale goodies. A Silent Auction was set up, accepting bids for 60 donated items. All proceeds from the freewill donations for the food and silent auction will be shared equally between St. Paul's Radio Ministry and St. Paul's Youth Ministry programs.

Another focus of the festival was to make it a “fun day” for the kids. A bounce house was available along with other games for their participation. Train rides were moving through the grounds on a regular basis, the cars being filled with children enjoying the trip. A balloon launch was held with word received by the following Sunday that one had been found in Oregon, OH located



(Continued on Page 14)

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.

September:

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. Those who are grieving
8. Protection for our military
9. Rev. Twito, Assistant Presiding Pastor
10. Rev. Shields, seminary president
11. The Commission for Higher Education
12. Protection for the unborn
13. Pastors and church workers
14. The Wittenberg Door Ministry
15. Your local AALC church
16. Rev. Irvin Stapf, Secretary
17. Our seminarians
18. Commission on Doctrine & Church Relations
19. Your local community
20. Our nation's leaders
21. The persecuted church
22. Your local AALC church
23. Rev. Dean Stoner, Mission Developer
24. Christian Martyrs
25. The families of Christian martyrs
26. Unity in the Church
27. Pastors and church workers
28. The persecuted church
29. Your local AALC church
30. Regional Mission Developers

October

Please pray for:

1. For all of the saints who have gone before us
2. Those who are grieving
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. Protection for our military
10. Pastors and church workers
11. The persecuted church
12. Your local AALC church
13. The online ministries associated with the AALC
14. Our seminarians
15. The Clergy Commission
16. Unity in the Church
17. Pastors and church workers
18. The persecuted church
19. Our nation's leaders
20. Pr. Gary Benson, Administrator
21. Your local community
22. The Commission for Commissioned Church Workers
23. Protection for the unborn
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. Expecting mothers

(Continued from Page 13)

approximately 45 miles from St. Paul's. Some other activities were a pudding-eating contest, straw maze, and small animals for the children to enjoy. A Safety House from the Napoleon Fire Department was brought in to provide an educational tool for those attending.

In conjunction with the Open the Doors Festival, St. Paul's Super Saints Relay for Life team sponsored a 5K Run/Walk which started at 11:30 AM. Proceeds will benefit The American Cancer Society Relay for Life. Beautiful

weather was such a blessing for all the outdoor activities!

The Women of LIFE were also involved in the festival. Handmade crafts were available for sale, being created by a group of ladies in the church that volunteer their time to put together the items. The Women of LIFE also sponsored a flower sale, which featured many beautiful plants brought in by a local supplier.

The Men of God put together an Antique Car and Tractor Show for people to visit and enjoy.



Thanks go out to Thrivent! Their financial support through the Action Team program helped with many of the incurred expenses.

The festival was successful in many different ways, and plans are being made to continue the tradition again in 2016!

(Continued from Page 6)

rest also will be fearful of sinning. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin. (1 Timothy 5:17-22 NAS)

Note, then, that Churchmanship is not taking charge as if you are the only one who knows what to do. It means that sometimes when the system is broken, the pastor identifies areas that need fixing, but not going on a vendetta against someone. In cases of difficult discipline, the pastor is a churchman who takes the avenue that is appropriate and consistent with the sin involved.

Churchmanship may also involve leading the congregation, the area group, or the entire church body in a way that will be difficult, challenging, frustrating but ultimately good for the body. This means that a churchman will listen to advice, seek consensus of possible, and move with deliberate yet responsible steps to achieve the goal.

Sadly, over the past four decades in church service, I have seen many examples of poor Churchmanship. When I quoted Peter above, it was a continuation of a previous thought. Now look at it in context:

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord

and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:17-18 NAS)

But sometimes, silently I have observed Churchmanship demonstrated that was outstanding, but was seldom, if ever, recognized as Churchmanship. I have had the pleasure of knowing churchmen who upheld the highest integrity and concern for the church at large. One of my professors (now deceased) in seminary was not the flashiest, but I refer to him with the accolade: "a gentleman scholar." My hope is that in the seminary, the other professors and I can follow that path.

Note: In the previous ALTS report, I inadvertently omitted the name of Laurie Dapelo, who is also a member of the CHE. Sorry for the omission and apologies to Laurie.

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.



The American Association of Lutheran Churches

921 East Dupont Road, #920

Fort Wayne, IN 46825-1551

Address Service Requested



AALC

The Evangel — Issue 175

Summer 2015

The American Association of Lutheran Churches

Main Office Located at:

6600 N. Clinton St.

Augustine Hall

Fort Wayne IN 46825

Phone: (260) 452-3213

Fax: (260) 452-3215

Email: theaalc@TheAALC.org



Visit Us On The Web
www.TheAALC.org

The Evangel

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

Mail your check and this form to:

The AALC

921 East Dupont Rd #920

Fort Wayne IN 46825-1551

_____ New Subscription _____ Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

Congregation _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Subscription \$ _____

Additional donation for The AALC \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____