

The EVANGEL

Issue No. 176—Winter 2016

A Publication of The American Association of Lutheran Churches



UNITE

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Editor: Lisa Cooper

Layout & Design by Lynette Badenhop

Letter From the Editor

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! I am so pleased to have so many church submissions for this edition of The Evangel! It is such an encouragement to see how all of our churches are working hard to minister to their communities.

You will notice that unity is a prevalent theme in this edition of The Evangel, and will continue to be throughout this year. While reading, keep in mind that: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:12-13, ESV). We all have different vocational callings in the church. Like Paul writes, we have unity in our confession, in our baptism, in our partaking of the Lord’s Supper, and ultimately in our faith. These things are foundational. We believe, teach, and confess these same truths, and therefore we can use those different callings to care for the specific needs of our church and in our communities. What a marvelous thing God has done in equipping His people to minister to those around them! The school teacher, the farmer, those in business, the stay-at-home mother, the retired— God has equipped all of us with the Gospel message, that Jesus Christ has died for our sins and rose for our justification, and He has equipped all of us with the means to share that message through our various vocations.

Hopefully, these events written about in this issue would be a help to all of us in giving us ideas for what might work in our own communities. There are so many different ways we can love and serve our neighbors with the ultimate aim of sharing the truth of the Gospel with them.

In Christ,

Lisa Cooper

Diversity in Unity

A Sermon by TAALC Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins

Text: Romans 15: 4-6

Grace be unto you and peace from God Our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Introduction: Conflict in the Church

The Frances Schaeffer Institute and the Fuller Institute have determined that, "The occupation of PASTOR is perhaps the single most stressful and frustrating profession."

90% are frequently fatigued: on a weekly or even daily basis

89% have considered leaving ministry at some time

77% by their own admission, do not have a good marriage

72% only study the Bible for professional preparation

70% are so burned out that they regularly consider leaving ministry

1500 pastors leave ministry each month because of contention in their churches, burn out, or moral failure.

80% feel unqualified

70% are constantly fighting depression

70% do not have a close personal friend

78% were forced to resign from a church at least once

63% were fired at least twice

50% of pastor's marriages will end in divorce

50% are so discouraged that they would leave their current Call if they could.

What is the #1 Problem facing Pastors today?

Top Answer: 52% said Control Issues: a conflict regarding who will lead and manage the congregation. Will it be the pastor, an elder, or another lay person?

24%: Existing Conflict: there was already such a degree congregational strife that the new pastor could not resolve it.

14%: Resistance to Pastoral Leadership: the congregation or congregational leaders were not open to the pastor's leadership, vision, teaching, or change.

90% of all problems in the church are the result of conflict in the congregation, in one form or another.

This evening, we are going to take a closer look at Paul's letter to the church at Rome, specifically chapter 15, verses 4-6. It is helpful to note that Paul has been making an appeal for unity throughout all of Chapter 14. Now, in Chapter 15, he continues that appeal with a statement about how the unity of the church is established.

v. 4: For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Through the Holy Scriptures, God gives perseverance and encouragement. The Greek word for perseverance is *hupo-mones* (patience or remaining under). The Greek word for encouragement is *para-kleseō* from which we get the word *paraclete* (encouragement or comfort). It is the Holy Word of God that gives perseverance and encouragement to His people.

v. 5: Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus

The Greek word for same mind is *phroneō* (to harmonize). God desires and is able to give to us harmony with one another, according to Christ Jesus. Notice, our harmony will not be on the basis of personal desires, customs, traditions, or personal opinions. Our harmony with one another will be according to Christ Jesus.

v. 6: so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One accord is the Greek word *homo-thymadon* (one passion). With one passion and with one voice we will give glory to God the Father.

I. The Gift of Unity

One of the most important words that we can use to describe God is Trinity. Why? Because it expresses something incredible about Our God. God is diversity in unity. He is Three Persons, but One God. Each of the Three Persons is unique, and yet they exist in perfect unity. There are Three different *Personae* (Persons), but One Divine *Substantia* (Essence).

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You may be familiar with a term that Gregory of Nazianzus used to speak about the inter-relationship of the Three Persons of the One God. The term is perichoresis. Gregory described the relationship of the Persons as giving preference to each other, as giving glory to each other, and having participation in each other. The Three Persons have such unity with one another that they actually interpenetrate one another. God is diversity in unity.

Furthermore, God joins Himself to humanity. He became flesh. In Christ Jesus, God is fully divine and now fully human. Again, we see God's amazing desire and ability to provide unity amidst diversity. He joins Humanity and Divinity together (2 Natures) in Himself, in the Person of Jesus Christ.

But, there is one more step that God has taken. Through faith in Jesus Christ, God has joined all of us to each other. All of our sin and suffering, shame and guilt, uniqueness and idiosyncrasies, all of us are joined together as the mystical body of Christ. This is the final impossibility: diversity in unity.

Our unity is the deep desire of Jesus. He prays in John 17: 21:

[T]hat they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me....(v.23) I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Here is the prayer and power of Jesus: not only that God is One, not only that in Christ divinity and humanity are one, but now that you and I and all Christians are one. We are united to Christ and therefore we are united to one another.

The basis of our unity is the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ. Through justifying faith, we have

become the body of Christ in the world. We are His unam, sanctam, catholicam, et apostolicam ecclesiam, (one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church) as the Creed declares.

In the Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 15, Paul tells us that God gives us the same mind according to Christ Jesus, so that we may with one accord and one voice give glory to God. This same mind is not our accomplishment. Our one accord and one voice are not the result of our efforts. Our unity is the work of God. We Lutherans understand that the unam sanctam (one church) exists in that place and among those people, where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the Sacraments rightly administered. "It is enough" ("satis est": AC VII) for the unity of the Church.

Look at what God has done! He has established our unity through His Word and His Sacraments. Our same mind gives us one accord and one voice, to the glory of the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. UNITY IS NOT UNIFORMITY

Let's return to the Trinity for a moment. There are Three Divine Persons. They are each unique, each fulfilling His own function, but each is united to the others in perfect oneness. In the same way, it is God's desire and design that though we are joined together, we each maintain our own uniqueness. Our unity with one another does NOT mean uniformity; it means Oneness. The will of the flesh wants to require exact same-ness: "If you are not exactly like me, we cannot stand together." On the other hand, the flesh desires to separate us, to brake our relationships, to establish irreconcilable differences, and opposing sides. But, Our Lord and Savior has established His Holy Church as a diverse body. The eye and ear, the hand and heart. There are many gifts, but the same Spirit. Though we are many members, we are the Body of Christ, joined to one another in Him. God has done this! Diversity in Unity!

It is NOT that all of us must enjoy the same songs or hymns; NOT that we must each offer the exact same prayer in the same fashion, NOT that we must be guilty of and confess the same sins, or even that we must desire the same style of public worship.

It IS that every member, everywhere, always confesses the same Gospel truth, based upon adherence to the same infallible and inerrant Word of God, the same reliance upon the all sufficient sacrifice of the same Lord, the same grace given to us by the same means of water, bread, cup, and absolution.

To use Paul's imagery, we all sing the same song. There is one accord, one voice. But, it is sung in multi-various harmony. There are lower voices, pedal points, bass lines, sung melody and harmony lines. And, there are upper voices, soaring and sonorous, with lilting and mellifluous descants. There are players of stings, long and smooth. There are players of brass, loud and staccato. There are deep drums and tinkling cymbals. All are part of the One Song, the One Accord, the One Voice in glorious, heaven-conceived harmony.

God gives us various figures of this mystery of diversity in unity. Marriage is a tupos, a type of what God is teaching. The husband and the wife are unique individuals, gloriously and separately fashioned, but one flesh. This is a type, a figure, of an even greater mystery: Christ and His Church. What difference there is between God and humanity. Yet, in the Church, the two are united, Head and body. Here is a third mystery: What differences there are among us. Yet by faith, God unites us to one another, diversity in unity. God has joined us to each other, the Una Sancta, His Holy Church. We human beings struggle to get along. Even in the Church, we are characterized by criticism and conflict. But, Christ Jesus has joined us to Himself and joined us to each other. Together, we are His Body, and individually members of it.

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Loss and Loneliness in the Church

By Rev. Richard P. Shields, President

Loss is part of life, in some cases a significant part of life. But how does the Church play into this life of loss?

I think a fair assumption is that most pastors and most Christians recognize when someone experiences loss; and they offer help. Death, unemployment, job transfers, family separations, divorce, etc. Many times our fellow Christians come to our side, walk with us in the stages of loss. But how long does that last?

This is where loneliness follows on the heels of loss, and may not even be recognized by the Church as an added burden. This kind of loneliness is subtle, creeping into a person's life slowly, silently.

Consider the death of a spouse. The shock and grief begin, usually mapped out in five stages. Of course, the stages can be mixed up and not in order. But the issue of loneliness is not even addressed in the stages of grief, often because no one thinks it's an issue.

Loneliness

After the visits, hot dishes for the family, after family leaves, then a loneliness settles in as an unexpected and uninvited guest. The room feels empty, the bed stark, the morning conversations are only an echo of past times. Sometimes the phone call is a distant memory.

Obviously no one else can fill that void left by someone. The shared knowing moments, the slight smile, the hand slowly caressing the hand, never to be no more. And loneliness becomes more real.

What can the Church do?

We in the church can recognize the loneliness. Take a moment to speak with the person who has experienced loss. Share some thoughts, that may only apply to you, but you want to share with someone. Expand the circle of friends.

Obviously there is so much that can be done. If this is all new to you, then take halting steps in one way to be with the lonely person. The more you know this person, the more you will be able to tell what is helpful and what is not. Even if you "make a mistake" you can still care for someone. A mistake is that, not the end, but a turning point as the other person experiences your willingness to each out.

And don't forget pastors. They, too, can be lonely, experiencing not only the the same losses as the rest of the congregation but their losses accumulate. They may not open up, but they need your love and support as well.

Pastors, you can lead the congregation in caring for the lonely. It is time consuming, but so worth the effort and time. Bring someone with you who has a tender heart. Let them see you care for those in loss and struggling with loneliness. These others will begin to sense how to do it, how to be there, how to extend the ministry. You might be surprised by how many of our members are suffering loss and battling loneliness.

Ultimately God is the one who cares for us, using us humans as his hands and hearts.

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7)

Building Relationships with National Churches

by Pastor Darrel Deuel
Director, The Sending Place

The Sending Place trains and sends short-term mission teams to many nations, going by invitation to many kinds of ministries. We do not go with our agenda. We go to serve our host ministry, showing the love of Jesus, preaching and teaching the Word of God, and building lasting relationships in the process.

Sometimes, we are invited by national church bodies to help them grow. Right now, we are responding to two different national churches. The first is in a small nation in Asia. It is primarily a Buddhist nation, does not like Christians, and so the church we serve does not technically exist! I will not even name the nation or the host church, for the sake of their safety.

The Lutheran Church of _____ is a fairly new, small church body, yet they serve in difficult places with great faith and courage. This past February, I led a team of three to this nation. Chad Tapp, Erik Kosney and myself, (all from St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Elk Grove, CA) led a four day conference with pastors and church leaders who came together from a variety of places around the country. They were very eager to learn what the Bible taught about many subjects. In addition to our teaching, we also spent quite a few hours answering their questions, many of which were quite unique to their situation. As always, we did not answer with our opinions, or with how we do things in our culture, but we take them straight to scripture, where the real answers are always found.

For example, one man was once a Buddhist monk, but surrendered to Jesus. In his excitement, he brought over 30 other people to Christ. Those people then said they needed to worship and start a church. He asked what they would do for a pastor, and the people said, I guess you are. That is how you become a pastor in many places. So this humble man took many notes, and asked many questions. He wants to be a good pastor, but has had little training so far. We were blessed to meet him and work with him.

Our hosts from The Lutheran Church of _____ were very good to us. They are finishing a new 3 story center, using funds they received from a couple in Australia, who took out a second mortgage

on their home, and gave the money to the church there! Our hosts fed us well, even though some of the foods were quite different from what we are used to. The big city is very crowded and busy, and travelling was quite different than what we are used to as well. But amidst our different cultures and life styles, Jesus is our common bond, and therefore we have much in common. Our relationships continue to grow. We pray for their work in a land where they are a tiny minority, surrounded by Buddhists, and many Buddhist temples. It is sad to see so many people worshipping the idols there. No wonder God said so often, "I am a living God."

This was the second team I have led to this country. So far, we are the only Americans who have ever responded to their call for help. They would love to have more of us come and help them. All of us in The AALC can be praying for them, and many could also be supporting them financially, for their financial resources are meager. What a joy to be part of growing relationships with them.

The second national church we are just starting to work with is The Lutheran Church of The Gambia, in western Africa. This nation is overwhelmingly a Muslim country, so Christians there are also in a tiny minority. They are desperate for help, and so far, no one from America has responded to them. The Bishop and other leaders have been pushing hard for The Sending Place to send a team, and we have recently agreed to do so. The earliest we can make that happen is next spring. We are forming a team to do a similar ministry like we did in The Lutheran Church of _____.

The Lutheran Church of The Gambia is only 15 years old, has only two pastors, and is in great need of having their leaders trained. We are excited about getting started and building relationships with this new church, too. All of us in The AALC can also be praying for them, and supporting them financially as well. It is a poor nation, and they lack funds for every aspect of ministry.

Can we in The AALC support and help these two tiny Lutheran Church bodies? Can we build lasting relationships with them? It will be a joy to do so.

New Church Signage Dedication Ceremony

Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN

by Sally Iverson



Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church in St. Paul, MN dedicated their new signage, which included the new AALC logo, on Sunday, May 10, 2015. It took many hours of planning but finally our plans became a reality and we have received many wonderful comments from our members and people who walk by our Church home.

Poplar Lake Lutheran Church



The Sunday School children at Poplar Lake Lutheran Church, Fosston, Minnesota, were part of the dedication of Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes at our November 15 service.

AALC Convention at Faith Lutheran Focuses on Global Issues

by Lori Leonard, Representative to the Commission for Publications
Faith Lutheran Church of Holstein

The convention of the Greater Heartland Region of The American Association of Lutheran Churches was held April 22-24 at Faith Lutheran Church in Holstein, located Northwest Iowa. Faith members opened our church, our homes and our arms to welcome our brothers and sisters throughout the region.

This year's convention focused on the theme of "What In the World Is Happening?" Discussions on Islam and a tour of Mission Central near Mapleton, Iowa, educated participants on what Christians can do to spread the Word of Jesus Christ around the world.

On the opening day of the convention, Faith members shared a presentation on how we formed our church in 2010 and the work we've done within their old Main Street storefront building and beyond to fulfill our mission: "Through faith in

the Triune God, we shall spread the Word of Jesus Christ and love our neighbors as ourselves." Faith was started in September 2010 after approximately 35 members left the local ELCA church. These founders shared an enduring belief that the Bible is the inerrant word

of God and a unifying desire to worship and study Scripture together.

After the opening session, supper was hosted by Faith members. Rev. Dr. Duane Lindberg of Waterloo, who was instrumental in the formation The AALC and served as its first presiding pastor, then gave a talk on "The Christian Response to Islam," which was open to the public and well-attended. He affirmed that, "The religion of Islam, on the basis of its Holy Book, the Quran, encourages a war-like, vengeful and hateful attitude among its adherents."

While Islam is a violent religion, all Muslims are not violent, Lindberg added, imploring Americans to educate themselves about the true differences and the true threats. "When we acknowledge the violent nature of Islam, we must also acknowledge that perhaps a majority of new Muslim immigrants to the United States have come here because they are fleeing from this violence and do not condone it," Lindberg continued.



"My encouragement is that we reach out to those Muslims whose faith in the Quran has been shaken by the terrorism of our times. We should show them the love and concern which Jesus the Christ has demonstrated. Our outreach must not be in the spirit of ignorance or in a dishonest, self-deceiving tolerance, but in the spirit of the compassion of Jesus the Christ who has enjoined us to show 'agape' love even to strangers and to our enemies (Matthew 5:43-44)."

The day's events were capped with Worship and Holy Communion.

On the second day of the convention, the group traveled by bus to Mission Central, the largest mission-supporting agency in the U.S. for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. The mission operates with a staff of 69 unpaid volunteers from a farmstead near Mapleton, which is about 30 miles southwest of Holstein.

"What a blessing to welcome all of our friends and co-workers for the Lord Jesus who are members of The AALC," said Gary Thies, director at Mission Central. "What a joy to have them come and see what God can do in the middle of a cornfield with an old set of farm buildings. The group had the opportunity to see the world famous Mission Museum and they then were able to see the Ministry Center, the chapel and a number enjoyed the Tractor Museum also.

It was such a great time of sharing the vision for the Lord's Great Commission of 'Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation' Mark 16:15. This was truly one of the finest groups that we have ever had visit Mission Central. I hope and pray that The AALC pastors and guests will come back again!"



That evening, the group again gathered for food and fellowship at Faith, followed by a pastors' meeting and Worship service.

The final day of the convention featured business sessions to elect officers and provide an update on The AALC. The following individuals now serve within our region and as representatives to the national association:



Regional Officers:

Regional Pastor: Rev. Clyde Awtrey, Thornton, CO
 Assistant Regional Pastor: Rev. Len Brokenshire, Waterloo, IA
 Regional Chairman: Ken Burrington, Waterloo, IA
 Regional Secretary: Debra Parker, Holstein, IA
 Regional Treasurer: Marie Easter, Waterloo, IA

Regional Mediation Board (3 pastors, 2 lay persons):

Pastor: Rev. Michael Bedenhop, Ellis, KS
 Pastor: Rev. Dave Spotts, Columbia, MO
 Lay Person: Mark Borchers, Holstein, IA
 Pastor: Rev. Duane Lindberg, Waterloo, IA
 Lay Person: Dr. Dan Kruger, Ames, IA

Representatives to National Church Offices:

Clergy Rep. Assn. Council: Rev. Joe Dapelo, Evansdale, IA
 Board of Trustees: Rev. Dan Schroeder, Seward, NE
 Evangelism: Marnie Stewart, Waterloo, IA
 Publications: Lori Leonard, Holstein, IA
 Women of Life Regional Rep.: Kathy Gleason, Waterloo, IA
 World Missions: Gordon Licht, Waterloo, IA

Representatives for National Church Offices:

Lay Rep. to Assoc. Council: Deaconess Brigitte Gassman, Ames, IA
 Board of Trustees: Mark Leonard, Holstein, IA
 American Missions: Rev. Dave Spotts, Columbia, MO
 Nominating Committee: Rev. Duane Lindberg, Waterloo, IA
 Parish Education: Lana Conover, Holstein, IA
 Pensions: Roger Gamble, Seward, NE
 Worship & Music: Susan Patten, Ames, IA
 Youth Commission: Nikki Hegdahl, Lake Madison, SD

Other Positions:

National Men's Standing Committee: David Lehman, Tripoli, IA
 Regional Home Mission Developer: Rev. Bob Snitzer, Forest City, IA

Pastor Awtrey, new regional pastor, led the group in prayer before closing the meeting. The group then gathered for a meal before the convention ended.



Standing Together as One

by Rev. Dr. Daniel K. Schroeder



On July 26, 2015, The Rev. Richard Snow was installed as the new President of the Nebraska District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at St. John Lutheran Church of Battle Creek, NE. Also installed were Vice-Presidents Rev. Scott Porath, Rev. Karl Ziegler, Rev. Craig Niemeier, and Rev. David Kuhfal; and the Executive Assistant to the President for Education and Youth, Mr. Robert Ziegler.

In this Lutheran version of “Where’s Waldo,” can you spot the lone TAALC pastor amongst this group of LCMS clergy? (Hint: It’s not the gentlemen in the suit and tie.) Does any one Pastor stand out as being different from the others?

If you couldn’t tell the difference, that’s the whole idea. It’s a good thing! Although we are all unique individual human beings, we stand united together in faith, hope, and doctrine. We stand together on the infallibility and inerrancy of Holy Scripture. We stand together on the Book of Concord of 1580 (the Lutheran Confessions) because it accurately presents the teachings of Holy Scripture. We stand together on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

It’s because of this unity in doctrine (or teaching) and practice that make photographs like this one possible. In Amos 3:3 we find the question, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” The Apostle Paul answers this in 1 Corinthians 1:10, “I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions amongst you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.” He also writes in Ephesians 4:3 that we are to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Church fellowship is something that we neither make nor create. We merely recognize and affirm what already exists. This unity between The American Association of Lutheran Churches and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was affirmed and celebrated in 2007, and it has continued to increase and grow stronger ever since. We are partners in ministry with each other, and we have certainly been blessed by it, as individuals, as congregations, and together as a synod.

On the national level, the TAALC operates our seminary program (ALTS) in cooperation with Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. Our synodical offices are also located there. Our 2014 Pastors’ Conference was held at Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis, who will also be hosting our 2015 conference. And a variety of very astute LCMS theologians have been speakers at our Pastors’ Conferences over the years, sharing with us a priceless wealth of Biblical knowledge and truth.

The blessings of this fellowship are very evident on the home front too. Our congregation in Seward, Nebraska is the only TAALC congregation in the entire state. Our nearest TAALC congregations are 186 miles to the northeast, 222 miles to the east, 385 miles to the west, 267 miles to the north, and 276 miles to the south. Our nearest LCMS congregation and Concordia University Nebraska are just 12 blocks away. And 8 blocks away is the Nebraska District Headquarters of the LCMS; one of our members even works there.

Within the Nebraska District of the LCMS, I have had the privilege of participating in the installation of six Pastors and one Deaconess. And as the picture above shows, I had

the honor of being part of the clergy assembly at the installation of District President Snow, which also included the installation of four Vice-Presidents and the Executive Assistant to the President for Education and Youth.

Along with the 10 LCMS congregations in the Seward Circuit, we are a de facto part of this circuit. As pastors, we meet together every month, rotating amongst the churches in the circuit, including ours. Together we eat, worship, pray, commune, study, discuss various issues, share our sorrows and joys, and otherwise enjoy fellowship with one another, both fraternally and collegially. The two circuit visitors I have known have worked with me on a personal level, helped me with various issues, encouraged me in the work of the ministry, and they faithfully pray for me and our congregation. Together, we work to maintain a united front.

As individual congregations, we have pulpit rotation for special services during Lent and Advent, we attend special functions and celebrations together, and we actively seek ways to partner in ministry with each other in order to bring the Gospel of Christ to an unbelieving world. Anybody with a traditional LCMS background would feel quite at home worshipping with us; and since we use the 1941 Lutheran Hymnal, many have commented that they have found an old friend at Mighty Fortress. Our congregation also partners with Concordia University where we minister to students as we can. I am also privileged to regularly preach for their chapel services.

Quite recently, I had a kidney stone attack late one Saturday afternoon, preventing me from conducting Sunday worship. All I had to do was pick up the phone and call a

neighboring LCMS pastor, who was then able to come after his service was over, and conduct worship in my absence with only a minor schedule adjustment on his part. And considering the number of available LCMS Pastors in the vicinity, it generally isn't too difficult to find someone for pulpit supply if I plan to be gone over a Sunday.

I cannot even begin to recount all of the ways that our fellowship with the LCMS has blest both our congregation and me personally. When Dr. Curtis Leins came to Seward in 2014 for our congregation's 10th anniversary and building dedication, he made some positive observations and remarked to me, "These men aren't just your colleagues; these men are your friends." I couldn't have stated it any better than that.

One of the chief blessings of church fellowship is the ability to stand together as one in faith and one in doctrine. Congregations and synods have different ethnic backgrounds, different traditions, and different personalities. But there is no one better than the other. We are defined by what we call "The Marks of the Church," which is a faithful Word and Sacrament ministry. And there is absolutely no place in our relationship for any type of pharisaical "synodical snobbery" from anybody at any time for whatever reason. We are members of only one family, brothers and sisters knit together in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Therefore, we can echo the words of King David in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity!"

P. S. Who is the AALC pastor in the first photo? Yes, it's me, and I'm standing to the right of Robert Ziegler, the gentleman in the suit and tie.



10th Anniversary and Building Dedication of Mighty Fortress Evangelical Lutheran Church of Seward, NE on May 4, 2014

Pictured (L to R): Rev. David Palomaki (former Seward Circuit Visitor, LCMS), Rev. Russell Sommerfeld (former Nebraska District President, LCMS), Rev. Dr. Curtis A. Leins (Presiding Pastor, TAALC), Rev. Dr. Daniel K. Schroeder (Pastor, Mighty Fortress TAALC), Rev. George Clausen (Pastor Emeritus, Hull, IA, LCMS)

Kongsvinger Lutheran Church Women Beet Piler Event

by Gloria Fagerlund

Like most organizations, we have had annual activities to reimburse our treasury. One of ours has been to provide hot, balanced meals for the many hungry workers at the Alvarado beet piler. Agriculture is a major industry in the Red River Valley. During harvest many of our routine activities are put on hold (including eating balanced meals).

The women from Kongsvinger Church have been providing hot meals to the various workers at the Alvarado beet piler since 2001. We have been told every year that our efforts are greatly appreciated. Proceeds from our project have been allotted to various organizations within our region.

Each year we chose organizations to receive a portion of the profits. These organizations were listed on the front window so they can be easily seen when ordering. The organizations that will be receiving this year's profits include: Alvarado Fire and Rescue, Oslo Fire and Rescue, East Grand Forks Food Shelf, Warren Food Shelf, and The Pregnancy Center.

Kongsvinger is a small country church in the northwest corner of MN. For this project we have had a pool of 10-12 volunteers. Most women worked shifts in the food cart while others were last minute runners or emergency cooks.

This year, however, we decided to make some changes. The changes focused on the Bible verse PS 37:3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

Changes included:

- (1) Initially, we served only brats and Bar-B-Qs. The 2015 menu was expanded to include beef roast, chicken wraps, hamburgers, cheese burgers, and brats. Also included are cole slaw, lettuce, potato and pasta salads. A variety of sodas, bars and chips are provided. We have a choice of 2 meats and 2 salads/day.
- (2) In past years we have purchased food and miscellaneous supplies using funds from our KLCW treasury. This year, we applied for monetary grants from Trivent Financial and our AALC Synod. We were blessed to receive money from both sources!! This allowed us to purchase the meat and other supplies without taking money out of our own treasury! God does provide!
- (3) Other years we have had a set price to charge our customers. This year, however, the cost was NO CHARGE! The truck drivers and other harvest employees expressed amazement and gratefulness for the free food! (We did have a jar for any donations).
- (4) Many farmers provide meals for their employees as part of their pay. In previous years we would mail the total bill



Volunteers from the left: Gloria Fagerlund, Barb Rosebrough, Robin Mathsen, Marilyn Mathsen

to each farmer but Not This Year! Not only were we able to provide food to our customers at No Charge, but also to our farmers (the land owners)!

(5) Because of the money from Trivent and our Synod, 100% of the profits were distributed to the listed organizations. We are forever grateful!!

Results:

- (1) I won't/can't tell you that our profits increased 10 fold because they didn't. The actual money taken in was about the same as it was it had been in the past. The proceeds came from different sources—a little bit here and there! It all added up to be our answered prayers!
- (2) The actual donation we were able to send to each organization INCREASED! This is primarily because we did not have any expenses to subtract from what was taken in!
- (3) All members felt the results were God sent and we plan to implement them once again next year. Besides the money, there seemed to be less stress in how the process evolved. Our biggest mistake was putting the roast on hot dog buns rather than hamburger buns. UFFDA!
- (4) There weren't any fatal accidents (both inside and out of our food cart!)

Our Lord has promised to provide for us when we put our trust in Him. We challenge You to put God in charge of your projects! We'd like to hear your results! Kongsvinger Church Women 15950 470 Ave NW Oslo, MN 56744.

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!

Our Savior Lutheran Church

Piqua, OH

By Ann Sloan

“**A** family of believers trusting in God’s Spirit to create believing families” is the mission statement for Our Savior Lutheran Church. Twenty-two years ago 34 baptized Christians signed a formal charter which stated: “We covenant together in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to make clear testimony of our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as revealed in the Holy Bible. We dedicate ourselves to joyfully proclaim the Gospel of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

The members of Our Savior take seriously the calling to joyfully proclaim the Gospel of Jesus and God has blessed our congregation with a heart for children.

Every year since our congregation was formed there has always been a summer Vacation Bible School. Even though the Sunday School has averaged around five children in the 22 years, VBS has averaged around 20 because of neighborhood children attending. Since many of the children did not attend church, we saw a need to continue a program throughout the year. Thus, was born: Bible Buddies.

Bible Buddies, formatted like VBS, is held one Saturday in each month during the school year. Many of the VBS children attend. Some yearly themes have been “The Full Armor of God,” “Heroes of the Bible,”

(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.

February:

Please pray for:

1. For ailing pastors and church workers
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. Rev. Jordan Cooper, ALTS professor
12. Your local AALC church
13. The online ministries associated with the AALC
14. Our seminarians
15. The Clergy Commission
16. Dr. Timothy Puls, ALTS professor
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

March

Please pray for:

1. Your local AALC church
2. Rev. Leins, Presiding Pastor
3. To bring seminarians to ALTS
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. Dr. Adam Francisco, ALTS professor
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
31. The Commission for Evangelism

(Continued from Page 13)

“Christians in Other Countries,” and “God’s Helpers.” Children have participated in mission projects.

The Women of L.I.F.E. meet monthly. In addition to studying God’s Word, we have made health kits, given to Bethany Center (our local food pantry), and to families in need.

Community Outreach: Our Savior is represented at the annual Church Fair held at the mall. Our church is also on the Board of Piqua Compassion Network and donates infant and adult diapers for clients.

We have enjoyed many fun times, too. Christmas caroling, Bunco Night, progressive dinners, and Hot Dog Roasts. Each year on the Sunday after VBS, children and their parents are invited to join our congregation for worship at “Sunday in the Park.”

Though the original members have grown older, and some are now in Heaven, and others have moved away or felt called to other congregations, God in His goodness has always sent other Christians to join our fellowship.

To submit future articles to *The Evangel*:

For snail-mail, 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, along with photo and article credit.

For electronic submissions, please send articles/pictures to theevangel@taalc.org. Please attach using Word, plain text, or RTF formats (I cannot work with PDFs). All article submissions must include an indication of who wrote the article, and all pictures submissions must include picture credit. Thank you!

(Continued from Page 6)

Our diversity in unity is a miracle, for the Glory of God.

CONCLUSION: DIVERSITY IN UNITY

For 27 years, there has been an American Association of Lutheran Churches. We are a Church Body of Norwegians and Swedes, Danes and Fins, people from Germany and Iceland. Our heritage includes High Church liturgy and Low Church Haugian pietism, strong quia subscription and “open questions,” structured ecclesiastical polity and congregational autonomy, pipe organs and electric guitars.

In short, there is diversity in unity, exactly as Our Lord and God desired. We are each unique (every person, pastor, and congregation) and we are all joined together, “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God and Father of us all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

By God’s grace, *satis est*, it is enough for the unity of the Church that the Word be preached in its purity and the Sacraments be rightly administered. We are The AALC, different but One, not uniform but united in Christ Jesus Our Lord. He has established us, having the same mind according to Christ so that in one accord and with one voice we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

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 176

Winter 2016

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.

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