

The EVANGEL

Lutheran Worship





From the Editor

Well, friends, we're halfway through our year of Lutheran study; how are we doing? What have you learned? Gained a greater appreciation for? Been refreshed by?

Besides the articles in each issue, I've been working through a rather long Lutheran reading list (my fifth year attempting, but we won't talk about that).

Two of my favorites so far have been:

- *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- *Confessing Jesus: The Heart of Being a Lutheran* by Molly Lackey

Bonhoeffer writes about (you guessed it) our "Life Together" as believers, and wow, it has opened my eyes to some things. Fellowship time at church is about so much more than just donuts and coffee and small talk about the weather and local headlines. There's something special that happens when believers talk with each other, and well, Rev. Bonhoeffer explains it all much better than I ever could, so I'll just say: read the book and you'll understand.

And Molly Lackey, well, she amazed me. She breaks big topics down into simple terms that even someone like myself could understand; a highlight for me was the chapter on the Lord's Supper and the effect on us as individuals and as the congregation.

I highly recommend these books to help you learn and appreciate why we do what we do as Lutherans. Both are small/medium-sized paperbacks, not hardcover commentaries, if you are intimidated by those types. Also, Mrs. Lackey's book is now required reading for my teenager this summer.

This month's *Evangel* takes a look at Lutheran Worship. I am always blessed by glimpses into the various pieces of our service, and the articles in these pages provide looks at: the purpose of worship, the function, the origins, the music, and much more.

I pray you are blessed by these articles and refreshed in your participation in weekly worship.

God's peace be with you,

Gretchen Baker

Gretchen Baker
The Editor

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Lutheran Worship Reflects What We Believe

By Rev. Dr. Cary G. Larson

The Lutheran Confessions teach that worship, even in the postmodern and secular world, remains a powerful tool that shapes and is shaped by our confession of faith. With its adherence to Holy Scripture, Lutheran worship continues to reflect and reinforce our understanding of God and His grace. In a world where individuals may not always align with their professed beliefs, the authentic connection between confession and worship becomes even more significant.

The Lutheran Confessions emphasize the importance of the Triune God in worship. The Holy Trinity is not just a concept to be known but is fully known through Holy Scripture and in the active, creative work of God the Father, the redeeming work of God the Son, and the faith creating work of God the Holy Spirit. Therefore, true worship is directed towards the Triune God; any deviation from this is considered false worship and idolatry.

It is crucial to grasp that justification by grace through faith in Christ Jesus is not just a theological theory but the very heart of Lutheran worship. The Church is seen as the sanctuary of forgiveness for troubled consciences, where everything in worship is geared towards the transformative power of God's inerrant and infallible Word and Sacrament. This forgiveness is not just a future hope, but a present reality received through faith, a gift of the Holy Spirit working through the divinely ordained means of grace, offering a beacon of hope and transformation in a troubled world.

The Lutheran Confessions also address the role of ceremonies and traditions in worship. While acknowledging that human traditions can vary within Christian freedom, the Confessions emphasize the importance of ceremonies that proclaim the Gospel and center on Christ Jesus crucified for the forgiveness of sins. Ceremonies serve a catechetical purpose, teaching all about Christ Jesus, and the Faith. However, ceremonies should not be considered necessary for salvation or a means to merit grace.

Lutheran worship is not a static practice but a dynamic balance between preserving the faithful doctrines and rich traditions of the Apostolic Church and applying them to present needs. It seeks to maintain the good that the Holy Spirit has woven into Christian worship practices while cutting off any abnormal

branches that have been wrongly added or which distract from the Gospel. This dynamic balance ensures that our worship remains relevant and meaningful, connecting us to our past and guiding us into the future, fostering a sense of engagement and connection within the Church.

We believe worship is primarily about God serving us through His Word and promises rather than us serving and honoring God through our praise. While praise is an integral part of Lutheran worship, it is a response to the forgiveness freely given to us by grace. Therefore, Lutheran worship consists of two parts: God's Word to us and Christ Jesus' service to us through that Word *and* our response of gratitude and praise to God. These two parts always go together. Just as there is no true confession of sin without Holy Absolution and no true absolution without confession of sin, there is no true and proper praise without the Gospel to inspire it. The Word of God in the order of service should lead to a response of praise.

Although these two aspects of worship are always intertwined, they should be clearly distinguished. The emphasis should be on God's actions – His forgiving and cleansing Word in songs, Holy Absolution, the reading of the Scriptures, sermon, and Sacrament. Our response of praise should be seen as less significant.

This balanced approach to worship may be the key contribution of Confessional Lutheran worship. It acknowledges the interaction between God and His people in worship while placing the emphasis on where it truly belongs. It helps us focus on Christ Jesus and His work for us rather than on ourselves or our actions.

Lutheran worship is meant for sinners who acknowledge their need for forgiveness. It is worship not intended to cater to emotions, but to address a specific need: the forgiveness of sins through the inerrant and infallible Word of God and deliver the goods won for us by Christ Jesus in the Sacraments.

In the holy name of Jesus. †

The Rev. Dr. Cary G. Larson serves The AALC as Presiding Pastor.



Lutheran Worship



Worship at the Time of Jesus

By Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins

How did Jewish people worship at the time of Jesus? What were the worship practices of Jesus and His disciples? In this brief article, we will look at ancient worship in the Jewish synagogue, temple, and home. Can we see how the worship practices of Jesus shaped our Lutheran worship service today?

Worship in the Jewish Synagogue

The Greek word *synagoge* is the root of our English word, synagogue. It comes from the verb *ago* meaning “to lead or bring,” plus the preposition *syn* meaning “together.” The two words combine to make the word *synagogue*. It means, “to bring together.” Initially, synagogue did not refer to a building, but to people who were brought together. Only later did the word apply to the location where God’s people met.

At the time of Jesus, a synagogue was typically a large, rectangular room with benches around two or three walls. A platform stood in the center, where a raised desk was placed for the reading of Hebrew Scripture. After the reading, an interpretation or teaching was given (see Luke 4:14–27).

The synagogue services included several components: singing of Psalms and hymns, reading or chanting of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible); reading or chanting from the *haftara* (books of the prophets in the Bible), interpretation or teaching on the reading, and a series of prayers and benedictions. Sabbath services took place on Friday nights, Saturday mornings, and Saturday afternoons.

The local synagogue was not only a house of worship, it was a house of study where Hebrew Scripture, history, language, and ethics were taught. Also, the synagogue was a house for the community, a gathering place for fellowship, and a shelter for the sick and destitute.

Worship in the Jerusalem Temple

The primary purpose of the temple was to make offerings or sacrifices to God. There were a number of different kinds of offerings that were prescribed by Scripture: burnt offerings, Lev. 1:3–17; grain or gift offerings, Lev. 2:1–16; peace or fellowship offerings, Lev. 3:1–17; sin offerings, Lev. 4 and 5; and trespass offerings, Lev. 6:1–17.

Jews were required to make three pilgrimages to the temple each year: Pesach in the spring (Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread); Shavuot in the spring or summer (Pentecost or Feast of Weeks); and Sukkot in the fall (Tabernacles or Feast of Booths).

The number of persons who attended these festivals is astounding. The population of Jerusalem during Passover at the time of Jesus is variously estimated from 1 million to 2.5 or even 3 million people! A correspondingly incredible number of animals had to be assembled, confined, inspected, certified, and priced, in order to be ready for the sacrifices that were to be offered. Josephus records that over 250,000 lambs were sacrificed at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. It has been suggested that one million animals may have been slaughtered on that Passover, including

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the Passover lambs and all of the other animals that were offered. Some accounts indicate that the priests who conducted the sacrifices were literally knee-deep in blood!

The priests who served at the temple were required to wear specific clothing. The High Priest wore garments that were the most distinctive of all: Linen Coat, Lev. 8:7; Girdle, Lev. 8:7; Robe of Ephod, Lev. 8:7; Ephod, Lev. 8:7; Girdle of Ephod, Lev. 8:7; Breastplate of Judgment, Lev. 8:8; and Turban and Holy Crown, Lev. 8:9.

Worship in the Jewish Home

The Jewish home was a place for food, fellowship, recreation, rest, study, discussion, and faith. Everyday activities and conversations also were seen as religious and spiritual events. The Jew prayed three times daily and said the *shema* in both morning and evening prayers.

Sabbath began on Friday evening and concluded on Saturday evening. This is because when God created, Genesis declares: “There was evening and there was morning, one day.” No work was done on the Sabbath; it was a day of rest. The whole house had to be cleared and cleaned before Sabbath began. When Sabbath came, the family sat together as mother lighted the two candles, reminding them of the two commandments: 1) remember the sabbath and 2) keep it holy. The challah (bread) reminded them of the food God gave them in the desert after the Passover deliverance from slavery. During the Sabbath, when the family was not in synagogue, they were at home together. They studied, read Scripture, played games, relaxed, and rested.

The Passover was a highpoint of the year. God had fought the battle with Pharaoh for them, and the angel of death had passed over their homes. The Passover celebration was commanded by God. They must remember how God delivered them out of slavery in Egypt, through the Red Sea, and into the Promised Land. The seder meal was served at home. It included specific foods and cups of wine in order to retell the story of their miraculous exodus.

Our Worship Today

In summary, many aspects of ancient Jewish worship in the synagogue, temple, and home are still present in our Lutheran Divine Service today. The ancient synagogal liturgy can be seen in the Lutheran Sunday morning liturgy. Our Sunday service has two main parts: the Service of the Word, and the Service of the

Sacrament. The Service of the Word is based upon the order of worship of the Jewish synagogue. Lutherans today use synagogal components in our Divine Service: singing Psalms and hymns, reading Scripture, preaching the sermon, and offering prayers. It is interesting to note that the word *synagogue* first referred to a group of Jewish people, before it referred to a place of worship. Similarly, the word *church* (the prefix *ek* [out], and the Greek *kaleo* [to call], together form *ekklesia*: the “called out ones.”) first referred to a group of Christian people, before it referred to their place of worship.

The primary focus of temple worship was sacrificial atonement for personal, familial, and corporate sin. In the Old Testament, God prescribed that animal sacrifice and the shedding of blood were required for forgiveness. In the New Testament, God made a new way for atonement. Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross was the culmination and completion of the temple sacrificial system! The all-sufficient sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, gave complete forgiveness of sins to all who believe in Him. At the beginning of our worship service, God gives forgiveness of our sins through Confession and Absolution. Through the Word of God in the pastor’s mouth, God declares His mercy and forgiveness. But God knows that our sin persists and our need for His forgiveness continues throughout our lives. For that reason, in addition to Confession and Absolution, God gives us the Service of the Sacrament, the second portion of the Divine Service. Holy Communion is a tangible means of grace for the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life.

The Jewish home was designed to be a place of peace and rest. Following the example of the Lord and His disciples, many Lutheran homes are places of Scripture reading, prayer, family time, and rest. However, Christians do not celebrate Passover in their homes as the Jews did. Instead, the new Passover has been incorporated into the worship life of the congregational family. The new Passover that Our Lord Jesus gave to us is the celebration of Holy Communion, the Sacrament of His divine body and blood that is celebrated in our Divine Liturgy.

So, we see that Jewish worship at the time of Jesus, in the synagogue, temple, and home, contributed significantly to our worship on the Lord’s Day in each of our local Lutheran congregations.†

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Lutheran Worship



The Gift that Keeps On Giving: The Function of the Worship Service

By Rev. Dan Dapelo

Old and dingy. The same ol', same ol'. Stale, monotonous, boring. I don't feel anything – and no, I'm not talking about reasons for people not to care about the Oscars, the Kentucky Derby, or the Hot Dog Eating Contest. These types of responses are given generally by people who struggle with the Church – and more specifically, the worship service. It's too "Stand up, sit down, stand up, sit down – pray, pray, pray" – or maybe we have even thought: "I keep seeing several churches that look like they're having more fun than we are – WHY CAN'T WE BE LIKE THAT?!"

These questions and feelings aren't new by any means and have certainly been felt by the Church all around the world. In a day and age where we want our fast food faster, our packages from Amazon sent quicker, and our phone always next to us – it isn't any wonder that we struggle with what might seem like a lifeless set of words said by many for hundreds of years. However, I am reminded of words a beloved brother in the ministry said, "The moment we forget our Lord's gracious acts of love, is the moment we need to be refreshed of it again." Amid a world trying to redefine what the Church should be about, perhaps it's time to be refreshed by our Lord's acts of love once more. Seeing what He continues to do for us by His Word and Sacraments. It's always a benefit for God's people to be reminded and refreshed about what the worship service is about, who it is for, and if it is still relevant today.

So first – what is the service all about? People many times think that the worship service is about what we do for, or toward God. Especially when we see the glitz and glamour of worship spaces around us – it almost looks like it's about the amount or style of our praise. But, the reality of worship, and the worship service is quite different! When we look at the core of the word *worship*, or *weorthscipe*, – it means "the expression of reverence and adoration for a deity; show reverence or adoration for; honor with religious rites." Also, when we look at the Greek language, the word *proskuneo* means to fall before, or to bow down before; it's where we get the term to prostrate – or to fall before.

But why do we fall or bow down? We fall before the throne of the Almighty, Perfect, Holy God to express the gratitude and

thankfulness we have in response to what He has done for us. This is the key to worship: All we do in worship is shaped and molded out of this simple truth of what God has done for us. **He acts, and we respond to what He has done.** Throughout our entire worship service, we see it! He initiates; we follow and give thanks and praise.

Our past Presiding Pastor, Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, wrote something on the ebb and flow of the worship service, and I believe it sets the course for us still today:

Why is the Christian liturgy shaped as it is? It is a "dialogue" between God and humanity. The action of worship is primarily from heaven to earth; the flow is from God to us. That is to say, it is primarily about God giving us His Word (Scripture and Preaching) and God giving us Holy Communion. These primary actions of worship belong to God and focus primarily on His greatest gift, Jesus Christ. Only after God acts can we give Him our response... The shape of biblical worship keeps the focus on Jesus as grace flows from God to us.¹

As humans, we like to do things. We like to have our hand in things, we like to help in some fashion – maybe because it shows we care or we're interested, maybe it's because we struggle to sit still and feel like we have to. This is exactly why worship seems so different to us because of what we are called to do in worship. The work we do in worship is to receive! We receive the gift of God's grace, love, and mercy in the person, work, and merit of Jesus Christ, *and then* with thanksgiving, we respond. This is why some churches describe the worship service as the Divine Service, namely because it finds its source and origin in the Triune God. "For Lutherans, worship is to realize that God initiates a holy conversation with His people. He speaks first, and then His people respond. This is the way God always has worked from the very beginning of creation."² If we were to look at all the times that Moses and the Israelites built an altar, they did so to remember what the Lord had done for them!

I grew up in the era of Blockbusters, Hollywood Videos, and many other ways to physically get movies. I love movies, but I can attest – I didn’t have to go to Blockbuster or other movie rentals. Our family had our own Blockbuster – AKA Gramma Jackie! She would record what seemed like every movie, and we could borrow them at any point! I believe that’s where my love for a good movie comes from. Sure, cinematography and special effects are enjoyable, but more than anything – I love a good storyline! When we are captivated by a good movie or story, we get hooked not by the beauty of the actors – but by the story, the way the words are written, the twists and turns, and the ending! The Divine Service is the story of God’s work of salvation – the essence of His Word, His love story to you. As we enter into the Divine Service, this story becomes our story.

- Invocation (*God gathers us in His Name. His holiness shows us our sin.*)
 - We don’t come to God on our own merits, we come because he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies us the Church.
 - The activity of a congregation, members of which have been joined to the Lord by the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism.
- Confession (*We respond with a confession of our sins.*)
 - Summary of Rom. 7:14–8:14.
- Absolution (*God gives us His forgiveness.*)
 - Not the pastor’s forgiveness – it is the Lord’s!
- Kyrie (*Joins us to those lepers, blind, and all those who call upon the Lord for mercy.*)
- Gloria (*We respond with praise for God’s merciful goodness; Christmas announcement.*)
- Scripture (*God gives us His Word.*)
- Creed (*We respond with a Statement of Faith.*)
- Sermon (*God applies His Word to us.*)
- Offering/Prayer (*We respond with offerings and prayers.*)
- Agnus Dei (*Lamb of God, have mercy again on us.*)
- Holy Communion (*God gives us His Presence, the Body and Blood of Jesus.*)
- Nunc dimittis (*We respond with hearts filled with peace; brings worshippers full circle to where it all began and makes us Simeons, who have held the Lord in our hands and have seen His promise fulfilled.*)
- Benediction (*God sends us with His blessing, we are ready to go in peace.*)³

When we break down the entire service at large, it boils down to these two aspects: God’s gifts, then our response. Christ’s giving; our receiving. His Word, His forgiveness, His love in Christ, and as a result – our response in prayer, in praise, and thankfulness! And what a gift it truly is for you and me! As a loving father cares for his children, as a good host provides for all their guests’ needs, and as a gracious king welcomes the peasants into his kingdom, so our Lord comes down from Heaven and brings to us His Divine Service. Who is this service for? It’s for the proud, the humble, the broken, the tired, the weary. It’s for the haughty, the busy, the downtrodden, the princes, the paupers, the CEOs, and the teachers – all who sin and fall short of the glory of God! Thus, it is for you and me. We are the recipients of the good and gracious blessings of the Triune God, who has promised to be with us always! This is what we see in worship: God putting these gifts into action for His people.

Lastly, is it still relevant? Does it still matter today? Well, first let me ask – are we still in need of forgiveness today? You better believe it! The great Martin Luther spoke about the need for this, with his first Thesis: “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘**Repent,**’ He intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.” The whole Christian life is repentance!⁴ It is a continual turning away from sin and by faith, trusting in the good news that Jesus saves sinners. It reminds us that worship isn’t merely a one-time thing – but it is to be our continual posture! The worship service shows us this exact reality, becoming the vehicle for which God gives His people the gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation through Jesus Christ!

History has no doubt shaped Christian worship, but if we were to look at the service – we see a unique connection! As Rev. Dr. Leins concludes:

For almost 2,000 years, the Christian liturgy has formed the shape of Christian worship. The liturgy is composed of purposefully chosen portions of Scripture, for example: Kyrie (Lord, have mercy, Mat. 15:22); Gloria in Excelsis (Glory to God in the highest, Luke 2:14); and Agnus Dei (Lamb of God, John 1:29). In addition, the historic liturgy includes spoken portions: Confession and Forgiveness, Scripture Readings and Sermon, Creed, Lord’s Prayer, and Holy Communion.⁵

When we worship together, the shape and the liturgy and everything done in worship finds its purpose in this light – we see that God wants us to worship Him, pray to Him, sing, read the Scriptures, as well as to confess our sins and receive His forgiveness. We have certainty that these things are pleasing to God because they flow from Him, and are given to us, His people by Him. Worship is centralized in one central fact: “The shape of biblical worship keeps the focus on Jesus as grace flows from God to us.”⁶ – Amen! †

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1 Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, “No Confession and No Communion,” Jan. 18, 2014, accessed May 8, 2024, <https://www.taalc.org/blog/post/no-confession-and-no-communion>.

2 Scot A. Kinnaman, Charles P. Arand, and Laura L. Lane, *Lutheranism 101*, (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 206.

3 Ibid, *Lutheranism 101*, 212–218.

4 *Martin Luther’s 95 Theses*, ed. Kurt Aland, (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 1.

5 Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, “No Confession and No Communion,” Jan. 18, 2014, accessed May 8, 2024, <https://www.taalc.org/blog/post/no-confession-and-no-communion>.

6 Ibid, Leins.

Rest & Green Pastures: Benefits of Lutheran Worship

By Rev. Dave Spotts

The first of Luther's 95 Theses says, "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said *Poenitentiam agite*, willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance."¹ The life of the Christian is one of repentance, no doubt. Yet that life of repentance hardly ever happens in isolation. It is not plain repentance, but a *life* of repentance. The repentance permeates all our daily affairs, and particularly our worship. The worship life of the Church, as part of that life of repentance, shapes us. It provides the context for our other acts. Something so important must be taken seriously. Every single thing we do in worship is significant.

My wife and I, both adult converts to Christ, after a good deal of searching and trying different church traditions, had settled into a really good, solid, broadly Evangelical congregation. There we found likeminded Christians who took the Scripture seriously. I eventually found myself as an elder, and as the elder who had a lot of input into the construction of our worship services. We loved the depth of the music, which was varied and Christ-centered, celebrating the character of God in Christ. We particularly avoided the kind of music which carried a lot of sentimental, emotive baggage. You know the kind; I usually call it "Me and Jesus" music. We rejoiced in the readings from Scripture, which were much more substantial than in many other broadly Evangelical congregations. The pastor (lead elder) and the other elders focused teaching and preaching on Christ crucified for sinners and how His victory over death, hell, and the grave fixed our identity in Him and guided us through the difficult process of life in a sinful world. We received the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis. Along with the preached Word of God, this was the second of the two big parts of our worship. It was a very good church.

As time passed, I became interested in historic Lutheran teaching. Here I found doctrine which took all the Bible seriously. After decades of having some passages of Scripture to which I needed to respond, "Yes, but..." now I found I could simply respond, "Yes." My wife and I wondered, though: "Are Lutheran churches serious about their theology? What happens when the rubber meets the road?"

Fully expecting to meet the right fist of disfellowship, I brought a plan up to my fellow elders. We had decided we would like to visit a Lutheran church during the Wednesday evenings in Advent. I'll never forget the response of my now-sainted fellow elder. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "There are a lot of smart and godly Lutherans out there. Myself, I'm a Calvinist, but I'll stand behind you. Go find out what you need to find out, and if it's wrong, y'all come on back."

What would we find? We were so glad to have found Christ-centered worship and preaching, along with a congregation that fervently welcomed weekly communion. Were we wandering into a wasteland?

When we went to the Lutheran church service, we immediately realized that there were differences in the way the Divine Service was conducted. While we were used to having a lot of Scripture read, here there was intense and meaningful congregational participation. The liturgist made a statement, and the congregation responded. And it was almost ALL from the Bible! The prayers were better thought out and very purposefully emphasized the Scripture of the day. The congregation and pastor were having a real-time conversation about eternal things! All the elements we had valued in our former church were present. Once we had explained our convictions about Christ's real bodily presence in communion and been examined in detail by the pastor, we were welcomed to share in weekly communion. The worship was all focused on Christ's work for us. Every bit of it maintained that focus.

The solidity of the Lutheran liturgy protects the Christ-centered character of Christian worship which I had worked so hard to retain and improve in a non-liturgical setting. The liturgy does it naturally. That's what it's designed to do.

The life of the Christian is a life of repentance, yes. And the joy of the Lutheran liturgy is that it not only calls us to repentance, but it assures us that our Lord wants to deliver all the riches of His kingdom to us. And it does it every single week.

We went back to our former church from time to time. Some precious friends were there. We were welcomed and invited to share in some of the milestones of the congregation as long as we lived in the area. But our Lord had taken us on a great journey. We were not wandering into a wasteland. We were instead finding green pastures, resting beside still waters, and enjoying the loving care of Jesus the good shepherd. Truly we can say with the Psalmist, "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance" (Pss. 16:6, NKJV).†

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¹ *Martin Luther's 95 Theses*, ed. Kurt Aland, (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 1.



Lutheran Worship



The Centrality of Divine Worship

By Rev. John Linch

In 1530, one of the accusations before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at Augsburg was that the theologians of the Lutheran Reformation had abolished the Mass, the divine worship of the historical church. The Lutherans countered that none of what was holy and necessary for the education and edification of the congregation had been set aside but only those aspects that had been corrupted.

This corruption primarily took the form of private masses said for the sake of extracting money from the people to enrich the institutional church. And if that wickedness were not enough, a false belief crept into divine worship that encouraged the proliferation of private masses, namely that Christ had instituted the Mass as a daily opportunity for the priest to offer a propitiatory sacrifice to God for the sins of the individual. The sinner could simply appear with the right offering (i.e., the body and blood of Christ) and receive forgiveness from God by simply doing the required act of participating in the mass. The sinner's personal faith in God's promises was no longer emphasized—it was nice if you had it, but it was really beside the point.

In their abolition of the false centerpiece of the Mass—the re-sacrifice of Christ—the Lutheran reformers were accused of abolishing the entirety of the Mass. Of course, the Confessors had done no such thing; their assertion was that they had preserved everything necessary and had restored all that was kept to its rightful emphasis within the Divine Service. The importance of the ceremonies of public worship was never in question, for even if they served no other purpose this one alone was vital, “that the uneducated be taught what they need to know about Christ.”¹ Of course “the uneducated” are made up of every single soul, whether paupers, professors, or popes, none of whom can ever be reminded enough of the truth “that we are justified before God, through faith in Christ, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake.”²

The communication of this central truth (really, *the* central truth), cannot reach its maximum efficacy in the life of a believer through individual experience or study, it must be experienced within the gathered fellowship, the Body of Christ. The author of Hebrews says, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for

He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb. 10:23–25 NASB95). If one solely approaches God as an individual, the proverbial and colloquial “me and Jesus,” one cannot expect to mature in faith. Sanctification, spiritually growing into Christlike love and good deeds, *requires* Christian brothers and sisters to regularly gather and “bump off of” each other.

Confessional Lutherans have continuously held that the Divine Service is the place where salvation and sanctification come together. This meeting of realities is not simply because the Word of God is spoken and love is expressed through words and actions with fellow believers but because Christ is truly present in the midst of the congregation when Holy Communion is shared. When Christ says, “Do this in remembrance of me,” He doesn't just call the believer to an intellectual acknowledgment of the Gospel, but He stands in front of the believer offering His very hands and side to the believer's senses as a testimony of all that He has done. The Divine Service “was instituted so that those who use the Sacrament should remember, in faith, the benefits they receive through Christ and how their anxious consciences are cheered and comforted. To remember Christ is to remember His benefits. It means to realize that they are truly offered to us.”³

The Divine Service takes the form that God gives it through the practices developed by believers throughout more than two millennia. Languages change, songs change, and local customs are found in a variety of expressions, but the Divine Service where God is truly worshiped is the one where Word *and* Sacrament are found. There is no Divine Service outside of the Church, and the Church cannot exist without the Divine Service. The Divine Service and its non-negotiable elements of Word and Sacrament brings “great consolation to anxious consciences...[and] true devotion toward God”⁴ and, in doing so, is itself a non-negotiable element of Confessional Lutheranism. †

The Rev. John Linch was ordained and installed on March 17, 2024, as Assistant Pastor at Ascension Lutheran Church, Ames, IA.

¹ AC, XXIV, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed., ed. Paul Timothy McCain (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 3.

² *Ibid*, 28.

³ *Ibid*, 30–31.

⁴ *Ibid*, 7–9



HYMNS AS TEACHER AND DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

Rev. Jon Holst

The hymns of the Lutheran Reformation had (and continue to have) an astounding influence on Christian faith and life. In fact, it could be argued that the success of the Reformation depended on them!

Christopher Brown (Associate Professor of Church History at Boston University) noted that “even if only surviving editions are considered ... there were more than two million hymnals, songsheets, and other hymn-related materials circulating in sixteenth century Germany.”¹ This pervasiveness wasn’t limited to use in church. Brown goes on to note that “Nearly a century after the beginning of the Reformation, the Carmelite monk Thomas á Jesu marveled at how securely Luther’s hymns had planted Lutheranism in Germany, pouring forth from Wittenberg to fill the German houses, workplaces, markets, streets, and fields.”²

So, why were doctrinally sound and theologically rich hymns so important to the Reformation? The reasons were the same then as they are now!

First, Luther viewed hymns as an important way to proclaim the Gospel. This cuts to the heart of the theological reasons that drove the reformers to encourage and spread the use of hymns that expressed the eternal truths of Holy Scripture with clarity. The particular importance of this to the reformers lies in the truth that God's Word isn't just a means to instruct so that a person might improve his or her knowledge of God but, more importantly, is an objective means through which the Holy Spirit works faith in the heart of the hearer.

Since what is truly needed to create faith in the hearts of the people is the Word of God, sixteenth century Lutherans worked diligently to see that this Word was presented in sung form so that the Holy Spirit could work such faith through it. Hymns were "a prominent feature of Lutheran churches, schools, and homes [and] served ... as a means of public instruction ... corporate worship ... private pedagogy and devotion of individuals and households"³ – a very broad sphere indeed!

For example, Lutheran hymn writers (including Luther) wrote hymns that paraphrased the main canticles of the Divine Service so that the teachings of those central texts might be firmly implanted in the hearts and minds of those who sang them: "Kyrie, God Father" (*Kyrie*), "All Glory Be to God on High" (*Gloria in excelsis*), "We All Believe in One True God" (*Credo*), "Isaiah Mighty Seer" (*Sanctus*), and "Lamb of God Pure and Holy" (*Agnus Dei*). Additionally, "there were also congregational hymns sung before or after the sermon, for which schedules according to the Sundays and festivals of the church year began to be published beginning in the 1540s."⁴

While the spread of solidly Lutheran hymns also took place publicly in schools, the private use of Lutheran hymns was even more widespread. The hymnals that were produced at this time were clearly intended for use in the home since they included many hymns that were not suitable for use in church such as hymns before going to bed and hymns for rising in the morning. They contained hymns based on the readings for Sundays, as well as hymns to be used as prayers for morning, evening, and at table.

It is interesting to note that Luther published the first hymnal in Wittenberg for general use and his Small Catechism in the same year. The two volumes were similar in format and were clearly intended to be a complementary set. In fact, Luther wrote hymns for five of the six Chief Parts of the Small Catechism: the only exception being the Sacrament of the Altar for which he used one written by the earlier reformer Jan Hus. We continue to be blessed by these hymns in our modern Lutheran hymnals five hundred years later!

In many locales, the Catechism itself was printed with these hymns included in them. We all know that it's generally easier to remember words we sing than to remember the words we speak so including these theologically dense hymns in the catechism made a whole lot of sense. In fact, Brown makes the important observation that "given the mnemonic properties of hymns it is probable that ... the lasting impression that German youth took away from catechetical training owed more to Luther's hymns than to the pastor's catechism sermons."⁵

In fact, when we look at these hymns, it's easy to see that the primary teachings of Holy Scripture (as summarized by the Small Catechism) were expressed in these hymns in such a way that the central teachings of the Christian faith were proclaimed in fewer than fifty verses!

In the Small Catechism, Luther had restructured catechesis to show us our sinfulness (10 Commandments), proclaim God's mercy and salvation (Creed), and teach us about Christian faith and life (Lord's Prayer). Luther then articulates this same theology in the catechetical hymns. "These Are The Holy Ten Commands" proclaims our sinfulness and need for a Savior. "We All Believe in One True God" provides a metrical paraphrase of the Creed: especially proclaiming our salvation through the person and work of Christ in its second verse. The third part of the Small Catechism teaches the Lord's Prayer as does the hymn "Our Father Who in Heaven Above." The ninth verse of this hymn, for example, teaches the Scriptural truth that Christians may themselves pray to Almighty God as to their loving Father (a teaching that had been clouded over in the years leading up to the Reformation).

Yet other hymns addressed important Scriptural teachings and helped to defend the faith. The radical reformers, for example, were openly denying the sacramental efficacy of Baptism. Luther reinforces the Scriptural teaching on Baptism as articulated in the catechism and refutes the radical reformers' denial of Baptismal regeneration in the hymn "To Jordan Came the Christ our Lord." Related to the doctrine of Confession and Absolution from the fifth part of the Catechism, Luther wrote the hymn "From Depths of Woe I Cry To You" in which God's mercy and forgiveness toward sinful people – in and through Christ – is clearly proclaimed. And for the final catechetical hymn, "Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior," Luther borrowed from the earlier reformer Jan Hus to articulate the Scriptural understanding of the Lord's Supper as taught in the sixth part of the Small Catechism. For example, in the second verse, the Scriptural belief that the very Body and Blood of Christ are present in the sacrament is proclaimed: "As His pledge of love undying, / He, this precious food supplying, / Gives His body with the bread, / And with the wine the blood He shed."⁶

What we learn from this is that the primary doctrines of the Reformation – indeed, of Holy Scripture – were set to hymns in order to sing the Gospel into the hearts of the people and to defend the chief doctrines of the Bible against false teaching. The wide-spread use of these and other doctrinally sound hymns in churches, homes, and schools served as an exceedingly important vehicle for proclaiming the life-giving Gospel of salvation in Christ to countless people as well as deepening their knowledge and understanding of God's Holy Word.

May we, as 21st century confessional Lutherans, learn from this and continue to hold fast to the use of theologically rich hymnody for the sake of the Gospel! †

The Rev. Jon Holst serves as pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Lutheran Church, Jurupa Valley, CA, and as the Administrator of American Lutheran Theological Seminary.

1 Christopher Brown, *Singing the Gospel: Lutheran Hymns and the Success of the Reformation*, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2005), 5.

2 Ibid, 1.

3 Ibid, 8.

4 Ibid, 10.

5 Ibid, 11.

6 Martin Luther, "Jesus Christ, Our Blessed Savior," accessed May 9, 2024, via www.hymnary.org.



Lutheran Worship



To Sing Or Not To Sing

By Rev. Joe Christina

Music is a crucial part of the Lutheran Church throughout its history. Martin Luther, himself quite the musician, referred to music as one of God's greatest gifts to His creation. We even observe the immensely talented Johann Sebastian Bach on our saint calendar in Lutheranism (July 28). That's right, folks: Bach's one of us. And in Lutheran worship, music is a staple for God's people to praise Him for the gifts He gives to us. Like, could you imagine attending a Lutheran worship service where music was not a part of the service?

In many churches, music is employed in many parts of the liturgy. We sing the "Gloria in Excelsis," the "Sanctus," and the "Nunc Dimmitis," just to name a few. Also hymns are interspersed throughout the time of worship, and for many churches these are tried and true traditional hymns that have served the church well for generations. Some Lutheran churches opt for more contemporary music and use that style on a regular basis. But whether a contemporary approach, or a more traditional approach, music is always a part of Lutheran worship. God's redeemed people sing (Some of us more poorly than others, however). But is all Christian music appropriate for the worship setting?

I have been involved in the "underground" music scene for the better part of my life. I started out as a drummer. But as my boys grew older, I sold my kit before they wanted to "be like Daddy." I didn't want to experience what my parents did and have to invest heavily in ibuprofen (Sorry, Mom and Dad). Then I became a vocalist. I have written many songs throughout my life and have been on stage in several bands. Because of that, by far the most frequent response to my wife when she tells me something from across the room is "Ma'am?" Because of the style of music that I write and participate in I would never think

to incorporate it, Christian and confessionally Lutheran though it is, in corporate worship. It is more intended for outreach and is much more appropriate in clubs and bars.

In fact, there are even hymns that we would not consider appropriate for worship. Since my own church had invested in the latest version of Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) as its hymnal shortly before they came out of the ELCA, that is what we use for hymns to this day. And while there are perfectly appropriate hymns in that hymnal, there are a handful that we consciously avoid because they veer from confessional doctrine. Pastors whose congregations use contemporary music for worship are also tasked with evaluating the music to make sure that it does not contradict confessional Lutheran teaching and practice. In the event that a song comes up that does, it is within the scope of their call to avoid such selections. So to answer the original question, yes, there is music that is inappropriate for Lutheran worship. Sometimes for style purposes, and sometimes for doctrinal ones.

That said, music will always remain an integral part of Lutheran worship. And as those who enjoy the blessing of scriptural and confessional doctrine, we take what we sing to praise our Redeemer with very seriously. Not just "anything" will do. But nothing will ever compare to a nave full of saints of all ages joining voices in song to praise the one true God who gave His life as the Precious Payment for their sins.

Even if not every one of them would make it on American Idol. †

The Rev. Joe Christina serves Christus Victor Ev. Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, NC, and as National Home Mission Developer for The AALC.



Lutheran Worship



TAALC Hymnal in The Making

By Rev. Steve Klawonn

There has been much discussion and investigation in the past few years about the possibility and usefulness of creating a common hymnal for TAALC. There are so many different hymnals that are already being used in our various congregations, so why do we want to reinvent the wheel and take the time to develop such a hymnal? Is there real value in such an endeavor and how can we use this new tool for our worship experiences each week?

The decision of any church body or denomination to start down the long journey of the development of a new hymnal for its churches is never something that is taken lightly. It takes a significant amount of time and resources, as various people research, gather, investigate copyright issues, pray over and publish the various parts of a hymnal that will teach, unify and draw us closer to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as we gather to receive His good gifts in our Divine Service.

A new hymnal, or worship book, is a helpful collection of services, both traditional and contemporary, along with hymns from various regions of Lutheranism. It also includes prayers and other resources that helps to unify all of our congregations with a valuable resource that serves to catechize their members as we focus on doctrinal fidelity to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. A hymnal is a reflection of what the church believes, teaches and confesses. While it is not expected that every congregation will use such a resource exclusively and in its totality, it can still be used to help guide and shape the doctrine and practice of the churches within TAALC and bring unity to our association.

As this hymnal is being researched and developed, great care will be given as to the exact language that is being used within its pages for clarity and faithfulness that will give honor and glory to our heavenly Father and to our Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ, as we pray the Holy Spirit will work through the services to draw people to saving and sustaining faith. We are striving to gather treasures from our orthodox past, along with the riches of present-day contemporary worship, that will point us to our reliance on the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, who through the means of grace, Word and Sacrament ministry, gathers all the faithful to receive God's good gifts, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

As various parts of this project are developed, we will seek comment and encouragement from our Association pastors and congregations while we pursue common ground. We want to hear from you as to which of your favorite hymns you would like to see included in this hymnal both historical and traditional. Once we have our list of hymns, they will be examined for purity of the text, the value of the hymn within the liturgical worship, pastoral considerations, the adherence to theological integrity, and how musically practical the hymn is, or in other words, can you sing it easily? Each hymn will be treated individually as we strive to have a broad representation of hymns from various Lutheran backgrounds.

We realize that such an undertaking is a huge task and will take guidance from the Holy Spirit and a spirit of cooperation among all of us to produce a product for the edification of Christ's Church. We ask that you will pray for those who are involved in this project and we look forward to your participation when the time comes to help develop a hymnal that will bring us together to the glory of God.†

The Rev. Steve Klawonn serves Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Evansdale, IA, and as Administrative Assistant to the Presiding Pastor.



An Observation: COMES AS STANDARD EQUIPMENT

By Rev. Irvin Staf, Jr.

A few years ago, our middle daughter had the opportunity to buy a seven passenger Honda SUV. This was very helpful since she is a foster mom who now has five children between the ages of 3 and 9. Two of the older ones take the third row. The middle row accommodates the child car seat and the booster. Everyone is safe and belted in. The front passenger seat accommodated her purse and whatever other items are necessary at the time... Stay with me—all this does have an important point!

There is a fold down video screen for entertainment, and various books and games for longer journeys. All very convenient and should be sufficiently useful for any journey, short or long. The one difficulty is the children's tendency not to keep their hands to themselves. Whether initially accidental or intentional matters little. What is heard is "She hit me." Which of course requires a response of equal or greater magnitude. But that was intentional and cannot be ignored. The back and forth continues to greater or lesser degree until there is some intervention.

All of this sounds familiar to every parent in one degree or another. It may be in the form of expressions, "That isn't fair." "She did it to me first." "But you gave him..." "I want..." "But I'm old enough..." "Billy's mom lets him..."; or just the very standard and oft used, "Why?" You see, what is happening in the back seats of a Honda SUV is the display of what people in our

Lutheran Church worship service confess every Sunday morning: "We confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean."

Other Christian denominations acknowledge the same truth in one form or another. Our fallen human nature is part of our standard equipment ever since our first rebellion from the will of our God in the garden. There must also be the acknowledgment that the solution is not within ourselves. It is not just a matter of trying harder.

Bear with me further, and consider the words in our Lutheran service:

Pastor: In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

People: We confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment.



Church News

Rev. John Linch Ordained

An Observation continued...

For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Pastor: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore declare unto you the entire forgiveness of all your sins in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen. Thanks be to God.

One might ask why we feel is necessary to continue to do this each week when the Pastor has declared our forgiveness in Jesus Christ our Lord? I believe we find that answer in the back seat of a Honda SUV! It is also on the front page of every newspaper and evening newscast, headlined in every national response of one nation to another's aggressive affront. Of course, there are many more complex factors involved but it still comes down to standard equipment displayed in those sitting in the third row of a Honda SUV.

Dear friends, don't make light of that word "sin." Don't treat the account of Creation and Fall recorded in Genesis chapters one, two, and three as myths. It is what explains so much of what we see in our world and in ourselves every day.

The standard for what is good is God Himself, the perfection in which He created us and desired for us. But our first parents yielded to the devil's temptation to want more, breaking the clear command of our God. Ever since, we have inherited the standard equipment of sin within our human nature. As our Lutheran liturgy declares it is not a problem we are able to fix. All the expressions we like to use have no place. "It's really not so bad." "Everybody does it." "We can work it out." Or even the fear of each country having enough bombs to destroy the world.

The solution is not within us. The Solution is only in the promise of Genesis 3:15, the promised Redeemer Who will ultimately crush the head of the Serpent, the devil, the fallen angel Lucifer. It is He, the Lord Jesus Christ, crucified, died, and raised again from the dead, Who lives forevermore. It is He Whom we have just celebrated in this Easter Season. It is He, alone, Who is able to change our nature, giving us life, hope, and peace.

We will still have to deal from time to time with those sitting in the back seats of the Honda, but they too can learn. They too can grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus, beginning to make some better choices about how to respond to a wayward hand, intentional or not. We are redeemed in Jesus and can mature in the only life that truly has meaning and brings us into God's peace.

May you learn this a bit more each day, dear friend. †

The Rev. Irv Staf is on the The AALC Pastors Emeriti roster.



The Rev. John Linch was ordained and installed as Assistant Pastor at Ascension Lutheran Church, Ames, IA, on Sunday, March 17, 2024. Present for the ordination service were: (front row) Rev. David Splett (LC-MS), Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, Rev. John Linch, AALC Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, and Rev. Dave Spotts; (second row) Rev. Lyle Hanson (LC-MS), Rev. Steve Klawonn, Rev. Roger Twito, and Rev. Dean Stoner; (third row) Rev. Len Brokenshire and Rev. Eric Ishimaru. Photo by Scott Strosahl.



Flame of Hope Benefit

Pictured at the benefit: Rev. Alex Amiot (AFLC) and son Hudson, FLAME, Kongsvinger Lutheran Church members Marilyn and Don Mathsen. Submitted photo.

“Rhythm And Poetry” (RAP) was front and center on May 3, 2024, at Kongsvinger Lutheran Church of rural Oslo, MN. The Annual Spring Benefit program was highlighted by a presentation from the internationally-acclaimed Christian hip-hop artist, FLAME.

Having begun as a congregational Valentine/Sweetheart program in the mid-1990’s, the annual event has become an evening of fellowship with a focus on raising funds for non-profit organizations that serve local and regional needs consistent with the mission of the congregation.

The 2024 beneficiary of the May 3 benefit was the Lifecare Center of Thief River Falls, MN. The Lifecare Center provides resources, referrals, and lay counseling to women and families with young children. Lifecare clients receive accurate information about pregnancy, fetal development, lifestyle issues and related concerns.

Since March of 2020, Lifecare has lost funding sources from a combination of state-imposed COVID-19 regulations and, more recently, the redirection of state funds away from pregnancy centers to “pro-choice” organizations. In addition, a major water event resulted in the loss of supplies and equipment and forced the Center to relocate to a less desirable location. The result of this series of events was a major constraint on the Center’s resource base.

Marcus Tyrone Gray, stage name FLAME, is a GRAMMY® nominated and Stellar Award-winning hip-hop artist. He is a well-versed leader in the Christian hip-hop scene with a growing list of accolades, including a GRAMMY® nomination, multiple Billboard chart toppers, and several Dove and Stellar Award nomination.

In his presentation, FLAME described how, as a young Christian, he discovered ways to use “rap music” in a responsible way by incorporating messages of faith and scripture to both educate and entertain. FLAME described how, in his early years as a Christian, he was in an environment where the emphasis was on showing God one’s sincerity by doing good works. Later, he moved into a Christian environment where it was taught that God only came for some individuals who were predestined to be saved. This resulted in his questioning if he was one of “the elect.”

At a point of insecurity about his faith, he was directed to attend Concordia Seminary (St. Louis, LC-MS) where he was introduced to the distinction of Law and Gospel within Scripture and the difference between the “theology of glory” and the “theology of the Cross.” He came to realize that God has done all the work of salvation on the Cross and that we receive the gift of salvation through the hearing of the Word and attachment of that Word to the physical means of the Sacraments.

Much of FLAME’s rap music consists of integrating these truths into the hip-hop style of music bringing the Gospel to both a Christian and secular audience in an “edu-tainment” format. Musical numbers by FLAME such as “Extra Nos”, “Christ For You”, and “Word and Water” are hip-hop summaries of the Word and Sacraments.

A full video of the May 3 event along with information on the work of the Lifecare Center and the link to support the Center can be found at <https://flameofhopebenefit.com/>. Examples of FLAME’s music are found at <https://tinyurl.com/4tymkexn>.

Article submitted by Kongsvinger Lutheran Church, Oslo, MN.

In Memoriam

Rev. Steve Lundblom

August 8, 1966 – May 4, 2024

The Rev. Steve Lundblom, 57, entered the Church Triumphant on Saturday, May 4, 2024. A Memorial Service was held on May 17 at Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Williston, ND.



Steve, the youngest of three children was born on August 8, 1966, in Wheatridge, CO to Norm and Mary Lundblom. He grew up in a loving, godly home where he excelled in music and sports, especially tennis, and grew in the love and grace of the Lord Jesus. He spent his formative years in Mesa, AZ, graduating from Mountain View High School. He then ventured to CA where he received a solid biblical foundation and served as a musical ambassador on the singing team Shaliach at Lutheran Bible Institute. Here he made many strong and lifelong friendships. Steve continued his education at Pacific Christian College and graduated with a bachelor's degree in business and biblical studies in 1991.

One of his early jobs, which he held down while in college, included working as Junior High Youth Director and coach at Trinity Lutheran Church in Norwalk, CA. It was there where he met the love of his life, Celeste Triebwasser. They were married on January 18, 1992, and moved to Elk Grove, CA where Steve was the Youth Director for St. Peter's Lutheran Church for 10 years.

In 1993, son Kyle was born, and three years later son Craig arrived. He loved his boys and felt honored to be their father. Steve felt a calling to the pastoral ministry in that same year and began seminary at Fuller Theological Seminary. In 2001, Steve moved the family to Washington to further his training at Fuller while also serving as Youth Director at First Lutheran Church in Bothell, WA.

In 2004, he was called back to St. Peter's Lutheran Church and obtained his Master of Divinity from ALTS Seminary and was ordained and installed on June 12, 2005, as Associate Pastor. In the summer of 2014, Steve prayerfully accepted the call to Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church in Williston, ND, where he served as Senior Pastor up until his death. He was also serving as Assistant Regional Pastor for the North Plains Region.

Steve's love for people started at a noticeably young age, as did his quick wit and humor. He was a subtle jokester, exceptional guitarist, avid Mark Knopfler, Larry Norman, and Louis L'Amour fan, hot sauce fanatic, and was a seeker of everything that would contribute to advancing God's kingdom. He was also proud of the fact that he was nearly 100% Scandinavian, 88% of that being Swedish.

His love for his family and friends ran deep. He felt fortunate to have cherished friends and family worldwide, and his influence on those he met lives on. In 2018, he had the honor of officiating the wedding ceremony for his son, Kyle, and daughter-in-law Katarina.

He is survived by his mother Mary Lundblom, his wife Celeste Lundblom, sons Kyle (Katarina) Lundblom, and Craig Lundblom, sisters in law Dina Lundblom and Selena Corwin, granddaughter Louise Lundblom, niece Rachel (Blake) Hilles, nephews Wade Corwin and Brian Lundblom and many dear aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. Steve was preceded in death by his father Norm, brother Craig, sister Linda, and niece Somer.

As Steve's body became weaker, inwardly his spirit was renewed, and his faith and thankfulness grew stronger with each passing moment. He was looking forward to meeting Jesus, the Author and Perfector of his faith. †

July 2024
PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. North Plains Region of TAALC
2. For the family of Rev. Steve Lundblom
3. Rev. Joseph Adama
4. College & University Campus Chaplains
5. For all to know Scripture is breathed out by God
6. Rev. Clyde Awtrey
7. For doctors and nurses
8. For God to raise up church leaders
9. Ascension Lutheran Church, Ames, IA
10. Board of Appeals & Adjudication
11. For paramedics and firefighters
12. Rev. Kevin Beard
13. For peace and comfort that only God can give
14. Rev. Carl Bengston
15. For Christians to study Holy Scriptures
16. Rev. Scott Bieker
17. Local AALC church
18. Ascension Lutheran Church, Waterloo, IA
19. Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
20. Rev. Arne Bjelland
21. Clergy Commission
22. Lutherans For Life
23. Bethel Lutheran Church, Rowland, PA
24. For Christians to not to be led astray
25. Rev. Carl Groh
26. Commission for American Missions
27. Rev. Dr. Fred Hall
28. Pastors' Wives
29. Rev. John Hallock
30. To remember our pastors are given as a gift to the church
31. Bible Lutheran Church, Dodge Center, MN



August 2024

PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. Calvary Ev. Lutheran Church, St. Paul, MN
2. Rev. Paul Hansen
3. For God to raise up men as leaders in families and churches
4. Evangelism Commission
5. Rev. Joseph Christina
6. That God would raise up Church Workers
7. For new college students moving away from home
8. Rev. Clark Brown
9. Christ Lutheran Church, Chippewa Falls, WI
10. To give our worries to God
11. Rev. Orlando Hash
12. For God to raise up Youth Workers
13. Rev. Daniel Dapelo
14. Bonnie Ohlrich, Office Manager & ALTS Registrar
15. Unity in the Church
16. Rev. Jon Holst
17. Christ Lutheran Church, Duluth, MN
18. For all Seminary Students
19. To study what it means to be a Lutheran
20. Rev. Tim Cartwright
21. Women of L.I.F.E. Committees
22. Youth Groups
23. Rev. Dr. Christopher Caughey
24. Karen Young, *Evangel* Layout Designer
25. Youth not to be ashamed of their faith
26. Elim Lutheran Church, Brush Prairie, WA
27. Martha Stone, Commissioned Church Worker
28. Radio Ministries
29. For those who need food and/or shelter
30. For those who are grieving
31. Rev. Joseph Dapelo

First English Church Hosts Ladies Tea



The ladies ministry at First English Lutheran Church, Gibsonburg, OH, at their high tea event. Submitted photos.

On Sunday, March 10, 2024, the ladies ministry of First English Lutheran Church in Gibsonburg, OH, hosted a Lenten tea.

There were hats galore as the 46 ladies enjoyed an English high tea. The men of the church served and cleaned up.

“Tea Cups, Tea Pots and Tea Kettles” was a reading presented by Elaine Timmons, and Mary Rolf led everyone in singing and acting out “I’m a Little Teapot.” Karen Schwochow presented “My Talking Hats,” a program centered on forgiveness with a different “talking hat” for each day during Holy Week.

Dorothy Carr, who will be 100 in October, was a special guest of honor. It was a wonderful afternoon of fellowship. †

Rev. Balke Retires After 63 Years in Ministry

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church of Franklin, NC, celebrated their 20th anniversary and the retirement of founding pastor, Rev. Fred Balke, on April 21, 2024, with a worship service led by The AALC Presiding Pastor, Rev. Dr Cary Larson.

“It all began 88 years ago, in March 1936, when I was baptized in the Lutheran Church of Our Savior in Detroit, MI,” shares Pr. Balke. “God filled that tiny little heart and enrolled this tiny little new life in His heavenly kingdom as His beloved child.”

Pr. Balke graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO, in June 1961 with an M.A in Social Psychology. After a year of practical training called “vicarage” at St. John’s Lutheran Church, in New York City, NY, Pr. Balke began his ministry with his initial call to St. John’s Lutheran Church, in Audubon, IA, where he was ordained into the holy ministry.

Pr. Balke then moved to MI, where he taught at a Lutheran high school, served as Executive Director for the Detroit Lutheran Center, and as pastor to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Livonia, MI. He then worked as Executive Director for the Adult Christian Education Foundation in Madison, WI.

In 1980, Pr. Balke and his wife, Sue, moved from WI to Daytona Beach, FL, and started a brand-new church called Colony Community Church. In a short while, the young congregation grew from a home Bible Study to over a hundred members.

The Balkes then moved to Franklin, NC, where they started a Bible class in their living room with six people. After they

outgrew their living room, they rented a meeting room at a hotel and soon began holding services on Sunday mornings. When they outgrew the meeting room, they borrowed space at a local church. This worked out fine until they needed more permanent quarters. They found office space and got out their hammers and saws and revamped the space into a sanctuary for services and a fellowship hall. Thus was the beginnings of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church.

From 2008 to 2010, Pr. Balke took a leave of absence to take a call as Administrative Assistant to The AALC. He also served as Editor of The Evangel during that time. Pr. Balke and Sue moved to Fort Wayne, IN, where the National Office of The AALC was located.

Pr. Balke then received a Letter of Call to Peace Lutheran Church, Defiance, OH, where he served for four years. In 2015, he returned to Franklin, NC, to, once again, serve the congregation of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church.

Pr. Balke reflected on his time in ministry: “With God’s blessings and His divine guidance, I am ready to take His hand in mine and follow Him wherever He wills to take me. May my life continue always to reflect His glory.” †



Left: Present for Rev. Fred Balke’s retirement after 63 years in ministry were: Rev. Dean Stoner, Rev. Joe Christina, AALC Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, Rev. Fred Balke with wife Sue, Rev. Tom Jahr, and Deacon Mike Zaske.

Right: Rev. Fred Balke was presented with a cross of olive wood from the Holy Land, highlighted with blue resin. During the retirement and church anniversary service, the Brasstown Bell Ringers provided additional worship music. A wonderful fellowship meal followed and was enjoyed by everyone, topped off with Pastor’s favorite... ice cream cake! Submitted photos.

The American Association of Lutheran Churches

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2024 Overarching theme: What Does It Mean To Be a Lutheran in The 21st Century?

Sept/Oct: Convention Edition (*deadline July 1*)

Nov/Dec: The Lutheran Home (*deadline Sept. 1*)

Church News:

The Evangel welcomes submissions of what's happening in your congregation. To submit content, **email the editor** Gretchen Baker: theevangel@taalc.org

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