

The EVANGEL

— The Apostles' Creed —





From the Editor

Welcome to this month's edition on The Apostles' Creed.

As humans, it is so easy to be distracted and gloss over the words we repeat during Sunday services. What are we even saying? It helps me to return to the meanings of the three articles, or parts, as a refresher of the rich truths wrapped up in the simple statements.

For example, this new year started out a bit rough for our family. What kept me grounded was the promise of God's provision, shown in the meaning of the first article: "He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life."¹ Wow – what peace these words bring: God *daily* provides for *all* my needs.

Another example from the third article of the Creed: a dear family member of mine, during a time of doubt over her salvation, found peace in the meaning of the third article: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith."² What sweet relief this brings: my salvation is sure because of *God's* work, not mine.

Another great reminder comes in the statement that follows: *This is most certainly true*. For the anxious heart, this is the best conclusion; all doubt can go away, because these truths are based on God's unchanging Word.

So if you need a refresher on what these words mean, read through the articles on these pages, then dust off your catechism. God has surrounded us with awesome reminders of all He has done, is doing, and will do for us – be at peace!

Learning and growing with you,

Gretchen Baker

Gretchen Baker
The Editor

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 16.

² *Ibid*, 17.

- 3** Presiding Pastor
- 4** Creed: First Article
- 6** Creed: Second Article
- 8** Creed: Third Article
- 10** Creed: Order in Catechism
- 11** WOL: Women's Retreat
- 12** Congregational Feature
- 13** Clergy Feature
- 14** ALTS: Adds D.Min. Degree
- 15** ALTS: Administrator Role
- 16** Supplies for Hurricane Relief
- 17** McNally Installation
- 17-18** Prayer Bookmark
- 18** Valley Lutheran School Grows

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Is the Apostles' Creed Relevant for Me?

By Rev. Dr. Cary Larson

Years ago, I had an interesting discussion with a friend who describes himself as an Evangelical Christian. During the conversation, he mentioned that he did not believe the Apostles' Creed was a necessity, and to support his claim, he pointed out that the Creed (as a whole) was not in the Bible. Some Christians indeed argue that the Apostles' Creed is not important because it does not provide a comprehensive summary of Christian teaching, leaving out key concepts like the nature of God, election, salvation, and other essential theological aspects, making it potentially inadequate for fully understanding Christianity. Additionally, they say, its historical origins are unclear, and it is not considered a definitive biblical text, leading some to question its authority.

That said, we believe the Apostles' Creed is essential to understanding the Christian faith. In fact, Luther saw this ancient Creed as a clear and straightforward way to express the fundamental truths of the Christian faith.

Luther thought the Apostles' Creed was particularly valuable because it accounts for what God has done for us and continues to do in our lives. He recognized that the Creed is divided into three parts or articles, focusing on God the Father as Creator, God the Son, namely, Jesus Christ as Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier.

The first part reminds us that God created everything and still cares for the world, including the individual Christian. In explaining the First Article, Luther encourages us to approach Almighty God as a caring Father who lovingly provides for His children. The second (most extensive) part tells us about Christ Jesus, who as God in the flesh came to save people from their sins. In his explanation of the Second Article, Luther presents Christ Jesus very personally with the words "that I might be His own." The third part explains how the Holy Spirit brings people to faith and keeps them in the Christian church. In his explanation of the Third Article, Luther gives God all the credit,

including that we cannot even believe in Christ Jesus without the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

For Luther, the Creed was not just a list of things to believe. He saw it as a personal statement of faith—words to live and die upon. That is why, in explaining each part, he begins with "I believe." When Luther explains this, he shows how these beliefs matter in daily life.

The Apostles' Creed continues to play an important role in The American Association of Lutheran Churches. It is regularly used in Sunday worship services, where the whole congregation speaks it together. This shared speaking of the Creed helps unite the church in its common faith. The Creed is also an important tool in teaching new members and young people about the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

Lutheran confirmation classes still use Luther's explanations of the Creed to help students understand their faith. These explanations help young people see how ancient Christian beliefs connect to their lives. The Creed helps them answer important questions like "Who is God?" "What has God done for me?" and "How is God continually involved in my life?"

Many Lutherans use the Creed in their personal prayers and devotions. Luther encouraged this practice daily because the Creed helps Christians remember God's promises and actions. When life gets complicated or even difficult, the Creed reminds the Christian of the Father's power as Creator, Jesus's work as Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit's ongoing presence as the one who keeps and strengthens the Christian's faith.

Just as Luther found the Creed valuable for teaching and expressing faith, we confessional Lutherans continue to use it as a foundation for understanding and living out our most holy faith. This is most certainly true.†

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



The Apostles' Creed

“I Believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth”

by Rev. Michael Main

I pass along this valuable tidbit from *The Book of Concord*: “The entire Creed is a response to the First Commandment. Since God is the maker of heaven and earth, we realize that all we are, all we will ever become, and all we possess depends entirely upon our Creator”¹ (emphasis added).

Even when the end of the world “seemed to” be threatened in the days of the Flood, God underlined His promise to sustain us and this world by a promise accompanied by a sign: the rainbow.



Luther's Small and Large Catechisms help us to “connect the dots” with regard to our relationship with God: (our faith-inspired response) to fear, love, and trust in Him above anything else. This is what John declares in Revelation, chapters 4 and 5, as he contemplates that Christ Jesus is our “Creator” (ch. 4) and “Redeemer” (ch. 5); and therefore, “He is worthy!” to open the scrolls and is worthy of our worship, our whole-hearted love and trust and obedience.

Truly, the Law (Ten Commandments) tells us what to do, but there is no desire or power naturally within our fallen nature to do it. In this spiritual condition, we are also ignorant of His ongoing care of us and the world in which we are living.

And so, God speaks to us *through His Word* to reveal for us the light of His truth, which overcomes the darkness of our soul's ignorance and denial and rebellion. He declares, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). What joy and peace this brings to those anxious souls who think that this world is spinning around by chance, or that life on this planet could end abruptly by an errant asteroid accidentally colliding with the earth. But God is in control. He is the ruler yet!

Therefore, having heard *God's Word of truth*, you and I are inspired by this God to declare:

I believe that God has created me and all that exists. He has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their powers. He provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work, and all I need from day to day. God also protects me in time of danger, and guards me from every evil. All this He does out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, though I do not deserve it. Therefore, I surely ought to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.²

In this statement, we are professing *what we know by faith* to be God's never-failing promise to us: He *will* continue to be

our faithful Creator God. In this capacity, He *will* supply all that we need for this body and life, delivering it to us at the proper time. We have His Word on it. “The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand; You satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Ps 145:15–16).

Even when the end of the world “seemed to” be threatened in the days of the Flood, God underlined His promise to sustain us and this world by a promise accompanied by a sign: the rainbow. “I have set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, *I will remember my covenant...* and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Gen 9:13–15, emphasis added).

You and I are meant to see a pattern in this promise. God is our Creator. He is a Father Who loves us; and in this love, He will faithfully care for us and will do so for as long as we live in this world that He has created. However, this is just the beginning of the Creed's good news about His Fatherly love. For He is not merely our faithful and loving Creator; He is also our merciful Redeemer and powerful Sanctifier. For His love is everlasting, and so is His entire plan to care for us. This is most certainly true!

“This is my Father's world, Oh let me not forget

That, though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the ruler yet.

This is my Father's world; Why should my
heart be sad?

The Lord is king, let the heavens ring;
God reigns, let the earth be glad!³ †

The Rev. Michael Main has served congregations in Duluth, MN, and Casa Grande, AZ, as well as being a Regional Pastor, Chair of the Clergy Commission, and designated AALC Prayer Intercessor.

¹ Paul Timothy McCain, Concordia: *The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 398–9.

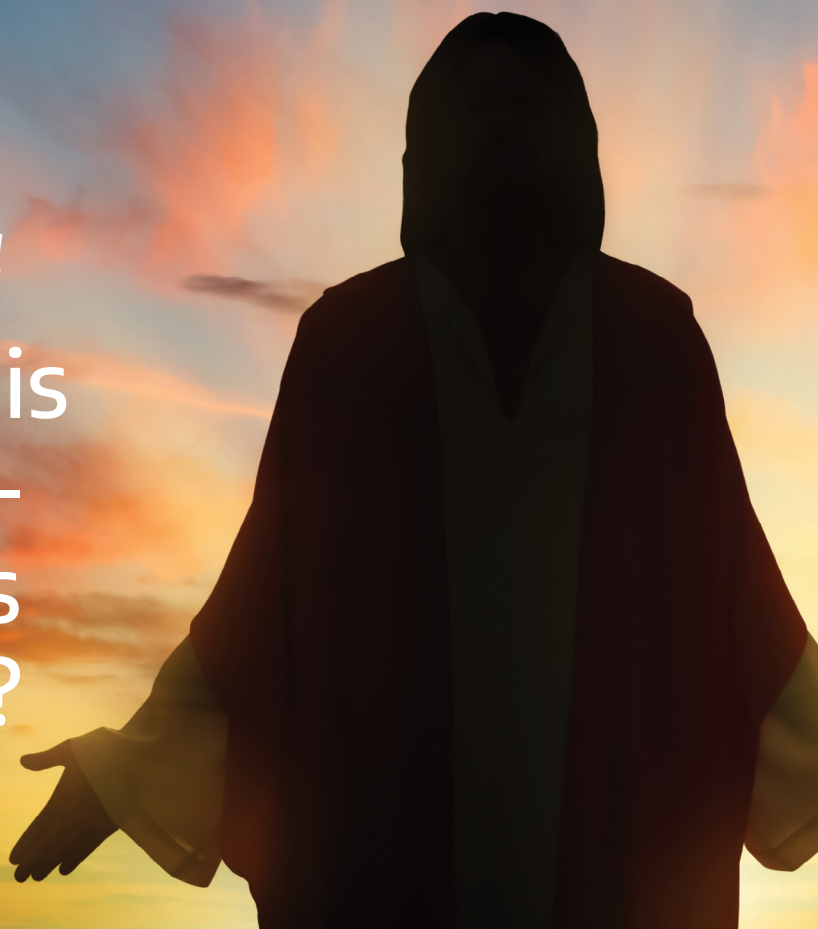
² Ibid, p x.

³ Maltbie D. Babcock, “This is My Father's World,” accessed January 4, 2025, via www.hymnary.org.



The Apostles' Creed

Jesus Christ is “My Lord”– What Does This Mean?



By Rev. Benjamin Baker

The familiar opening words of the Second Article of The Apostles' Creed says, “And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord...” Familiar words, but do we often consider what this actually means? What are we confessing when we say these words, “And [I believe] in Jesus Christ, His only Son, *our Lord*?” We often hear words to this effect: “Jesus is my Lord and Savior,” “Is Jesus both your Savior and Lord,” “Make Jesus Lord of your life,” “Jesus can’t be your Savior unless He is also your Lord,” etc. Perhaps you have said some of these words yourselves. What do we mean by such statements? Do we really intend to say that there is a difference between Jesus as *Savior* and Jesus as *Lord*? If so, what is the difference?

Of course, there are likely to be different answers to those questions, but it seems to me—both from books I have read and from my own experience and observation in the church—that it is quite common to understand the language of Jesus as *Lord* as a statement of *law*. In this understanding, Jesus as *Lord* always has to do with obedience to the Law. And sadly, this often becomes *the* defining characteristic of the Christian. The “true” Christian is the one who submits to the “Lordship” of Christ and obeys Him. And thus, Christ is, for all intents and purposes, simply a lawgiver, and not in any real sense a *Savior* or *Redeemer*. Of

course, those who use such language would not deny that Jesus is indeed Savior and Redeemer, but it is most often the case that where the emphasis lies, so people believe and are shaped in their belief.

To understand Jesus as Lord in this way is really to miss the point altogether, I believe. In the conception of Jesus as Lord mentioned above, when you really think about it, just about all the emphasis is on *me*. This is what I am doing or what *I* am not doing in my obedience to the Lord Jesus. We seem to miss the fact that the word *Lord* is a title/name for Jesus, and as such it says quite a lot about *Him*. This “little word”¹ —as Dr. Luther calls it—says so very much about who Jesus is *for me*, *for us*, and what God has done to us and for us in our Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Luther writes in the *Large Catechism*: “This article is very rich and far-reaching, but in order to treat it briefly and simply, we shall take up one phrase which contains the substance of the article; from it we shall learn how we are redeemed. We shall concentrate on these words, ‘in Jesus Christ, our Lord.’”² Notice the difference in emphasis. This title/name of *Lord* teaches us “to know the second person of the Godhead”³ and “how we are redeemed.”

Dr. Luther comes to his conclusions, at least in part, because, being a good student of the Scriptures, he recognized that this word *Lord* is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint), as well as in the New Testament to translate the personal, saving, redeeming Name of God Himself: Yahweh.⁴ Thus, for Jesus to have the Name Lord/Yahweh is for Jesus to be *Redeemer and Savior*, for this Name of God in the Old Testament is intimately tied to God's salvation of sinners in Jesus Christ.

Dr. Luther continues his explanation: "What is it to 'become a Lord'? It means that he has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all evil. Before this I had no Lord and King but was captive under the power of the devil. I was condemned to death and entangled in sin and blindness."⁵ For Jesus to be our Lord means that He has freed us from the power of sin, death, and the devil. And not only that, He has also forgiven our sins, raised us to new life, made us new creations in Him, etc. Dr. Luther sums up in this way:

Let this be the summary of this article, that the little word "Lord" simply means the same as Redeemer, that is, he who has brought us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and now keeps us safe there. The remaining parts of this article simply serve to clarify and express how and by what means this redemption was accomplished—that is, how much it cost Christ and what he paid and risked in order to win us and bring us under his dominion. That is to say, he became man, conceived and born without sin, of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin, that he might become Lord over sin; moreover, he suffered, died, and was buried that he might make satisfaction for me and pay what I owed, not with silver and gold but with his own precious blood. All this in order to become my Lord. For he did none of these things for himself, nor had he any need of them. Afterward he rose again from the dead, swallowed up and devoured death, and finally ascended into heaven and assumed dominion at the right hand of the Father. The devil and all powers, therefore, must be subject to him and lie beneath his feet until finally, at the last day, he will completely divide and separate us from the wicked world, the devil, death, sin, etc.⁶

Rather than being a crushing burden of Law, the fact that Jesus is my *Lord* should be a cause of great rejoicing and comfort for the Christian. What a terrific blessing to have such a Lord! Rather than focusing on me and telling me what *I* must do for Jesus in order to be a good and true Christian, "Jesus is Lord" focuses on *Christ* and tells me what *He* has done *to and for me*, and tells me *who* Jesus is *for me*. So then, to have Jesus as Savior is to have Him as Lord as well. The two cannot be separated for they speak of the same reality.

And I cannot *make Jesus Lord of my life*. This language also, I believe, portrays a misunderstanding of the Christian life and



the Christian in relation to his or her Lord Jesus Christ. Again, the theology seems to be "Jesus has saved you. Great! Now go be obedient and prove that He's *really* your Savior." To speak of Jesus as *Lord* in this way is to speak of Him as Sovereign and Master. And He is both of these. But He is both of these to all people. Jesus isn't simply Sovereign and Master of Christians, of those who have "*made Him Lord of their lives*." Every person, whether believer or not, is accountable to the Sovereign Lord Jesus who is Ruler, Master, and King of all His creation.

The church does well to learn also from the liturgy she has received and long treasured. In the *Kyrie* (which comes from the Greek word for *Lord*), we sing this prayer, "*Lord, have mercy*." Which of us would come to our Lord for mercy if His lordship chiefly means "lawgiver," and my relationship to my Lord is defined chiefly by my obedience to Him? Who of us would want to come before such a Lord with our sins and failures and disobedience? We would only dare to come before such a Lord if *Lord* in fact entails a merciful and gracious and forgiving God who promises such forgiveness and grace if we would but acknowledge what is true: that we are sinful and in need of grace. We sinners can come before such a gracious and merciful Lord because we have His promise of forgiveness and pardon. Indeed, we can rightly beseech such a One in this way: "Lord, have mercy."

What we are confessing here in this Second Article of the Creed, is not my obedience to Jesus. What we are confessing is who Jesus is *for us*. Thus, as pointed out above, we are not confessing in the Second Article that Jesus is *Sovereign and Master* over us, but that He is *Lord*, that is, *Yahweh*, God Himself. And again, what does this mean? This means that Jesus as Lord is our Redeemer, our Rescuer, the Forgiver of our sins, the Giver of eternal life and resurrection. He is the One who has saved us, rescued us, from the tyranny and slavery of sin, death, and the devil. Thanks be to God! Amen. †

The Rev. Benjamin Baker serves the congregations of St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church, Traer, IA, and St. Paul Lutheran Congregation, Tripoli, IA.

1 Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press, 1959), 414.

2 Ibid., 413–414.

3 Ibid., 413.

4 Gr. *kyrios* (κύριος). Though this word can have a different meaning or sense depending on the context in which it is used, when it is used as a title or name for God/Jesus it is translating the divine Name *Yahweh* (this Name is present when you see the word *LORD* as opposed to *Lord* in English translations of the O.T.).

5 Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press, 1959), 414.

6 Ibid., 414.



The Apostles' Creed

Building Trust through the Forgiveness of Sins

By Karen Holst

Our five-year old grandson is experientially assimilating how trust forms the base of dependability in all kinds of relationships. Whether with the people he encounters or in his interactions with the variety of animals on our property, he is continually evaluating and categorizing an astronomical amount of relational information that will serve as his foundational resources of trust for the future.

Recently, he was astounded to learn that even his youngest brother is also absorbing a deep connection of trustful security with his mother as she nurses and cares for him. Initial indignation, then puzzlement as to why it is perfectly acceptable that when babies loudly cry they receive what they need, but when a five-year-old cries out angrily for what he wants, there ensues a discussion about unacceptable behavior.



A corresponding brief from *Luther's Small Catechism* sufficiently corrects his thought-processes at this tender age and serves to remind all of us to trust in God's divine authority and of His forgiveness of our many daily sins. Such correction being part of our Christian vocation: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10, KJV).

We modern doers of good works (which flow from a true and living faith in Christ) are blessed with a rich array of resources to aid Christians in our daily struggles against the sideways kingdom of the left, almost to distraction. Children and new believers in the one, true faith can face overwhelming confusion and discouragement with the many choices and options for Bible-based literature and self-guided studies now available to us.

Dr. Martin Luther was well-founded in creating succinctly catechetical tools to counteract the deplorable state of Christian education he witnessed within the populations he served. In making the Apostle's Creed accessible to the common man, woman, and child, Luther proactively fought against a pervasive ignorance that had been starving the people of his time.

Luther encouraged all believers, but especially men as heads of families and of the spiritual welfare of the young, to utilize the treasures in the *Small Catechism* – as summary of God's Word – in restoring true "fear, love, and trust in God." "He [the Holy Spirit] teaches us to understand this deed of Christ which has

been manifested to us, helps us to receive and preserve it, use it to our advantage and impart it to others, increase and extend it."¹

The Holy Spirit enlightens and strengthens our understanding and *continuous* learning of God's Ten Commandments and the Gospel of Jesus Christ as taught in Scripture, while the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed gives Lutherans our precise position in our relationship with our God and with our spiritual brothers and sisters: "In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers."²

As God's precious children, He forms our souls to singularly thrive with thoughtful, genuine, and daily forgiveness of sins between one another. In forgiving sins through the terrible awe-fulness of Jesus' death and resurrection, our Creator forms bonds of trust that transcend all ages of all peoples: "For this is our assurance if we feel this witness of the Spirit in our hearts, that God wishes to be our Father, forgive our sin, and bestow everlasting life on us."³

Baptized into Christ and made a part of the community of believers where we are truly blessed to be given the acknowledgement, understanding, and acceptance of our daily failures, yet treasure the eternal paradise waiting for us when all of our work during our short life here is thoroughly accomplished, is one of the greatest comforts we could possibly have and this is our Lutheran confession of faith.✚

Karen Holst is a member of St. Luke the Evangelist Lutheran Church in Jurupa Valley, CA.

¹ Dr. Martin Luther, 2, vol.37, Word and Sacrament III, ed. Robert H. Fischer, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 366.

² *An Explanation of the Small Catechism*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 18.

³ Dr. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol.37, Word and Sacrament III, ed. Robert H. Fischer, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 366.



The Apostles' Creed



Why the 10 Commandments, then the Apostles Creed?

By Rev. Steve Klawonn

As Lutherans, we recognize that the magnum opus, the pinnacle, of all the copious writings of Martin Luther, is without a doubt the *Small Catechism*. It is within this publication that we find a basic guide or handbook of the Christian faith and how we are to live our lives.

Luther understood that we are “eternal pupils” and that we are to be constantly in the Word of God as it teaches us and guides us through this life. This teaching should be straight forward and easily understood. We are in constant need of being reminded how to receive from God (by faith) and how to give of ourselves out of Christian love as we serve God by serving our neighbor. It is through the *Catechism* that this instruction can be most effective for us.

Luther read the Scriptures with the understanding that there is the declaration of God’s Law that is given to us to guide us and to show us our sin, and the Gospel, what God has done for us to restore us into a right relationship with Him.¹ It is with this in mind that we see in the *Catechism* first the giving of the Law – the Ten Commandments.

Taking each commandment in turn (according to the Lutheran numbering scheme), Luther explains not only what is forbidden, but also the corresponding positive obligations that are implied (and taught elsewhere in Scripture). In this way, Luther gives a simple explanation of the Moral Law – God’s pattern for how we should order our lives.

By showing us how we *ought* to live, the Ten Commandments inevitably accuse us, demonstrating as they do how far short, we fall of God’s standards. And, as James wrote, “whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (Jas 2:10). The Law thus shows us our sinful, fallen state before a just and holy God. It demonstrates that we are deserving of His eternal condemnation.

When our sin is revealed by the Law, we realize that we are unable in any way by our actions to earn or merit God’s favor. Apart from Christ, we are “by nature children of [God’s] wrath” (Eph 2:3). We begin to understand that we need Someone Who will take away our sins, Someone, Whose perfect obedience will be counted as ours, so that we can stand without fear of condemnation before Almighty God. The sternness of the Law, then, makes us ready to hear the Good News of the Savior Whom God Himself has in His love, grace, and mercy provided for us: Jesus, His only begotten Son.

It is therefore no accident that Luther in his *Small Catechism* places the Apostles’ Creed immediately after the Ten Commandments. The second article of the Creed presents to us the answer to the Law’s demands: the life, death and resurrection of Jesus *for us*.²

Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, Jesus lived the life of perfect obedience to the Moral Law that we could not (Gal 4:4–5). Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate and was crucified, bearing in our place the punishment for our sinful failure to keep the commands of our Creator God. Jesus died and was buried. On the third day, He rose from the dead, that those who are trusting in Him and His righteousness alone might be declared righteous before God.

It is within the words of the Apostles’ Creed that we receive instruction about the faith we have in the Trinitarian God who saves us from our sins. The Creed shows us that God loves us and has done everything completely to save us from sin through Jesus Christ our Lord.³ The Apostles’ Creed and the explanation of the three articles are a valuable primer to help every Christian confess their faith to those whom God has placed in their lives. †

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

1. Herman G Stuempfle, Jr., *Preaching Law and Gospel* (Fortress Press, 1991), 17.

2. “Suffered Under Pontius Pilate, Was Crucified.” *Good News*, The Apostles’ Creed, no. 31, May 2008.

3. Peter C. Bender, *Lutheran Catechesis: A guide to catechesis for the Lutheran catechumen and family*. (Sussex, WI: Concordia Catechetical Academy, 1999), 32–33.



A few pictures from the 4th annual Elim Women's Retreat. Once again, these fine ladies met at Fabulous Seaview Manor in Seaview, Washington. The theme was "My Journey with Eve" and the weekend held a lot of good times and new discoveries about our amazing God. Next year's retreat has already been scheduled for October 10-12, 2025. Ladies, mark your calendars. Submitted photos.

Elim Lutheran Church Women Host Retreat

The Gospels tell us Jesus retreated daily to be by Himself to pray and commune with the Father. When the disciples told Jesus about John's beheading, He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31). Indeed, the idea of a Christian retreat—breaking away from life's many distractions, even traumatic events—dates all the way back to Jesus Himself.

On October 20-22, 2024, Elim Lutheran Church, Brush Prairie, WA, Women's Group hosted their annual beach retreat in Seaview, WA. The ladies broke away from their many to-dos at home and arrived at Seaview Manor late afternoon Friday. Bags in hand, they hustled to their assigned rooms, in anticipation of the evening meal and the many activities that would follow over the weekend.

After dinner, they gathered in the huge fireside living room, welcomed by Sandy, who had worked diligently, as she does each year, to organize the event, which this year was themed, "Something Beautiful." She started off with a warm welcome. "We are here at this very moment for a reason. God brought us to Seaview to be together and learn more about who He is and who we are because of Him. Unplug and relax. Kick off your shoes, soak in the hot tub, and take a leisurely walk on the beach. Our time here should leave us ready to face the challenges before us, love others just a little bit deeper, and look in the mirror and see the strikingly beautiful woman that God created us to be." And so it began.

Saturday was filled with Bible studies, prayer, lunch and shopping in town, crafts, and refreshing walks on the beach. After dinner, there was a lively and exuberant gathering with songs and stories, followed by quiet games for some and a therapeutic and relaxing soak in the hot tub for others. As for Katie, our expectant mom, she kicked off her shoes and flopped on the couch to ease her swollen legs. To her delight, she found herself immediately pampered with soothing foot massages and lots of motherly advice.

Sunday after breakfast, everyone gathered in the living room for singing, morning prayer, and fellowship. Then something extraordinary happened. In the final moments before heading home, seated in a closing prayer circle, unspoken concerns, kept silent and borne alone, suddenly poured out. Sequestered there in this safe place, each found hope and comfort and a realization that they are not alone.

They returned home: Refreshed. Encouraged. At peace. A little closer to God.

In Luke 10, Jesus teaches Martha that though she was worried and upset about many things, the most important thing in life is to seek His presence. Truly, we need to have a close and intimate relationship with Him.†



Congregation Feature



Submitted photo

Community Lutheran Church

By Rev. Paul Hueter

Community Lutheran Church of Wausaukee (McAllister), WI, is a year shy of 100 years of serving the community. Before this country church existed, the people gathered in another church, when it wasn't being used for their worship. One Sunday, when they arrived to worship, the doors were chained shut. This group of worshipers determined that they would build a church of their own... one that would serve the community (hence the name Community). We, the church, continue to see serving the community as vital. Other than paying for some of the material, the labor was provided by the community and the new church was paid off fairly quickly.

The church was not in the original TAALC founding congregations, although the serving pastor, Rev. Dick Hueter, was actively involved in those early meetings. The church joined shortly after The AALC was formed. Rev. Paul Hueter is the current pastor, serving this congregation since early 2003. We have become an older congregation, but continue to seek how we might better reach those we have been called to shepherd.

Like many congregations, we found our attendance drop during COVID-19, although we only shut the doors for a short time. We have seen some new faces join us in the last few years. In the winter months, we have quite a few couples that go to Arizona (and Florida) for much of the winter.

Even though our Sunday School is small, they have been active. They lead the worship with a Christmas program in December and also lead us in worship at the end of a weeklong Vacation Bible School in August.

The Community Lutheran Church Women have been the backbone of many activities at church. Along with monthly meetings and

Bible Studies, they send out cards to the sick, sympathy cards for those grieving, and encouragement to those shut in. They also give to various ministries, and try to do something special for those who are over 80. We sing Christmas carols for this over 80 group, as we are able.

A men's group meets once a month for breakfast and a Bible study. There is also a community Men's study that many of our men are active in. These men don't just study together, but have helped people in the community with various needs, for example, building a ramp for someone who is wheelchair bound.

A small prayer group gathers weekly to lift up the church and community in prayer. It is wonderful to see how the hand of God moves among us.

One of the traditions that both the church and community enjoy is the luminaries that are set out for our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. We make them from gallon milk and water jugs (with labels removed). An access panel is cut in the jug, the bottom is covered with sand, a long burning votive candle is inserted and lit on Christmas Eve. The church is on a county highway, and we line the highway with these luminaries every 15 feet. We average between 160 to 280 luminaries, which light the way to worship.

Since COVID-19, we have been taping our services and posting them on our Facebook page (search for "Comm Luth Church") and sending a link to emails as requested. Rev. Hueter also writes a "Pondering" every day about things that are on his mind. The Facebook page went from about 50 "friends" to around 10,000. We praise God for modern technology to be able to proclaim God's Word. To God be the glory.†



Clergy Feature



Submitted photo

Rev. Neil Cadle

I thank God that I was reared in a Christian home where my parents took faith and worship seriously. Thus, the things of God became a part of life since I was born. Growing up in a small town in West Virginia, one would most likely be Methodist or Baptist. The church I attended was Baptist, but with a German Brethren background—which though not sacramental, confessed a theology that was reverent and kept Jesus at the center. So while I wasn’t ordained until I was 42, I believe God was preparing me to accept the call into ministry since childhood. I was a member of St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Charleston, WV, when I did accept the call and begin seminary at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, OH, in 2007.

I am currently serving as sole pastor at Bethel Lutheran Church in Rowland, PA, which joined The AALC in the early 1990s. It is a beautiful country church in the Pocono Mountains, yet it is less than three hours to Manhattan (which I have taken advantage of several times in the almost 4 years I’ve been here!).

What I would most like my congregation to know is that their faithfulness to the Word of God and the pure Gospel of Jesus has not returned empty. Since I have been here, I have learned some amazing things about Bethel’s history: how they met in members’ homes for almost 12 years before they purchased this building in 1924; how they didn’t have a full-time called pastor for almost 60 years; how they were told they’d be closed in 6 months after leaving the ELCA. It is obvious that God has a purpose and mission for Bethel and has blessed them with spiritual and physical health despite some significant challenges over the years.

For me, one of the biggest joys as a pastor is when I see Christians putting faith into practice: making the precepts of the faith part of daily life. This could be something as simple as engaging in daily devotions to something as big as organizing a relief project for people in need to something as deep as preparing for death

with complete confidence and hope in God’s promises (and I’ve witnessed all of these in my time here).

I was ordained in 2011, and my entire senior year of seminary seemed to focus on “the church in crisis” (remembering that I attended an ELCA seminary). It seemed that they were preparing us to serve in congregations that were rapidly declining in membership, finances, and influence in the community. This was surprising because, just 4 years earlier, none of this was on the radar. So my first several years of pastoral ministry were unexpectedly stressful since we had been trained to operate in perpetual “survival mode.” While this is to an extent true, it needn’t define the Church, and it was another surprise—albeit a breath of fresh air—when I colloquized into The AALC, and we weren’t focusing on that. Instead, we were focusing on the original mission of the Church: proclamation of the Gospel and the teaching of the Faith.

One of the biggest challenges for Christians that I see these days is related to the issues mentioned above. Of course, we know that Jesus told us that Christians would be ridiculed and persecuted for the faith, but I think that this is something relatively new in America and society. It does seem that the world is looking for any opportunity to give the Church a black eye when she doesn’t condone the world’s values and actions. I think we have work to do to prepare ourselves to stand firm in the face of such adversity.

While I have seen God working everywhere—in the lives of parishioners who hold fast to God’s promises during life’s challenges, in my colleagues and the leadership of The AALC—I see His hand in the worship life of the community all the time. I truly sense that worship in The AALC isn’t just something we do, it is part of who we are as children of God. At Bethel we have the Divine Service each Sunday, but also monthly Evening Prayer and weekly Bible study. I’ve grown as much as anyone through these opportunities to worship and study.✚



American Lutheran
Theological Seminary



ALTS Adds Doctor of Ministry Degree

Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins

Lifelong Learner

The Lutheran pastor is a lifelong teacher. For that reason, most Lutheran pastors choose to be lifelong learners. The Lutheran pastor spends many hours of study and preparation for his teaching and preaching. He teaches catechism classes, new member classes, and adult Sunday school classes. He preaches Sunday sermons, Advent and Lenten sermons, wedding and funeral sermons. The pastor's life includes the continuous discipline of spiritual devotion and theological study.

The Lutheran pastor has had many years of theological education. After completion of a baccalaureate degree, the required degree for the Lutheran pastor is a Master of Divinity degree. Its requirements include approximately 120 credit hours, with fieldwork and vicarage. The Master of Divinity degree is the equivalent of approximately 3 Master's degrees.

Once ordained and installed in a congregation, the pastor is the resident theologian and the spiritual shepherd of God's sheep in that location. He is accountable for the souls in his keeping. He is held to a stricter judgment for his teaching. He must follow the example of Jesus as the one who provides the care and cure of souls.

Another Degree

After all of that schooling is completed, why would a Lutheran pastor consider more education and another degree? There are at least three reasons that I can suggest. First, personal growth: God gives the pastor a longing to know Christ more! Second, dynamic presentation: God gives the pastor a desire to be both creative and engaging in his teaching and preaching. And third, faithful application: God instills in the pastor a hunger for more of God's truth in order that it may be effectively applied in the lives of God's people.

It is for these reasons, and I suspect many more, that Lutheran pastors choose to continue their theological and practical pastoral studies, even after they have finished their initial seminary education.

For those who are so inclined, American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS) now offers a Doctor of Ministry degree. Of course, one might ask why a pastor would choose to come to

ALTS and not some other school. What is distinctive about the D.Min. degree at the seminary of The AALC? Here are some points to consider:

1. ALTS is personal in its care of students and person-centered in its training of pastors. A primary purpose of our seminary is to train the Seelsorger, the soul care-giver. This D.Min. degree provides pastors with exceptional training, ability, and experience in the biblical responsibility of the care and cure of souls.
2. ALTS is determined to provide the highest level of confessional, Lutheran, theological education. Our professors are scholarly academics, most of whom have served as pastors and shepherds of God's people.
3. ALTS has developed an online seminary that enables men to receive theological and practical pastoral education while continuing their service as Word and Sacrament ministers.
4. ALTS provides cost-effective theological education at approximately 1/2 to 1/3 the cost of equivalent confessional Lutheran institutions. Also, financial scholarships are available.
5. ALTS offers a D.Min. degree that can be completed in approximately 3 years, while simultaneously serving as a parish pastor.
6. The ALTS Doctor of Ministry degree enables each student to focus on a specific field of study (exegetical, doctrinal, historical, or practical) and demonstrate how this area of pastoral study has direct application in the pastoral care and cure of souls.
7. ALTS will begin its first cohort of D.Min. students in the Spring Quarter of 2025, beginning on the week of March 24, 2025. Registration is on a first come, first served basis. For more information about the D.Min. degree at ALTS, please visit <https://www.alts.edu/> and look for "Academic Programs" under the heading "Admissions." †

The Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins serves as president of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary.



Role of Seminary Administrator

by Rev. Jon Holst

Greetings from American Lutheran Theological Seminary (ALTS)! It is my great joy to share some updates with you about the growth of ALTS and the ways in which God has been blessing our work together. As we move further into the 24–25 academic year, I find myself exceedingly grateful to God for all that has happened and the opportunities that lie ahead for us. Many thanks to each of you as well for your prayers and for your support of our mission of forming faithful, committed servants for Christ's Church!

As I reflect on the past year, I find myself filled with thankfulness for the growth we have witnessed at ALTS – keeping in mind, of course, that “neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth (1 Cor 3:7). Christ's Church needs faithful pastors to preach and teach God's Word in its purity, and to administer the Sacraments in accord with Christ's institution. And we need faithful church workers who play vital supportive roles in the parish. It is a testament to God's faithfulness that more men and women are choosing to pursue their theological education through our seminary – Thanks be to God!

In the 21–22 academic year, ALTS received \$38,250 in tuition. In the 22–23 academic year, our total tuition came to just over \$54,000, which reflects a significant increase in enrollment and the expanding impact of our programs. In the 23–24 academic year, total tuition received came to around \$59,500, showing the seminary's steady growth and our ongoing efforts to provide excellent theological education grounded in Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

On the surface, these are just numbers, but, more than that, they represent lives being shaped by the Word of God, and I couldn't be more thankful for the ways ALTS is preparing future pastors and church workers to serve in the Kingdom of God. Our students are being prepared to answer God's call to serve in ways that will impact the Church for years to come. Our faculty and staff are committed to providing a thorough, faithful, and supportive learning environment for all students, and we are excited to see how the Triune God is working in their lives.

Every month, we have been receiving six to eight requests for information about the seminary and our programs – some from as far away as Belgium and Denmark – and I have the joy of personally making contact with each of these individuals. Yes, there is a lot to be done – student handbook updates, accreditation tasks, merit and need-based scholarship

development, scheduling classes, lining up professors, and such – but these personal contacts are, perhaps, my greatest joy in my role at ALTS. I get the chance to connect with prospective students who earnestly desire to study Confessional Lutheran theology and help them in the process of prayerfully discerning the best academic path for them.

This personal aspect is so very important. I believe it is vital to establish a relationship with each person from the start. I try to take time to listen to their story, understand their background and motivations, and help them explore how ALTS might best serve their educational needs. Some are just beginning to discern whether seminary is the right path, while others are chomping at the bit to begin their first class. No matter where they are in their discernment process, I try to take the time to connect with them and prayerfully help guide them as they take their next steps in their theological education.

It is my prayer that this personal connection helps in building a sense of brotherly community and camaraderie even before students start classes – a sense of community and camaraderie that the faculty, staff, and students continue to nurture (and which is evident among our students as we have seen at our national events). And it is a reminder that in addition to being a place for academic learning and spiritual growth, ALTS is also a place of support, encouragement, and brotherhood in the Gospel. Every inquiry, every phone call, every email, every text message is an opportunity to walk alongside someone as they explore the path that God has set before them. It is a great privilege and blessing to be a part of that process.✚

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.



Church News



Left to Right Greg Scigliano and Guy Henderson next to the truck carrying supplies to North Carolina for hurricane relief efforts. Submitted photo. Many lent a hand in packaging and organizing items for the trip. Pictured left to right: Greg Scigliano, Debbie Szymd, Skip Anderson, Rev. Neil Cadle, Gail Anderson, Laurie Scigliano, and Guy Henderson. A view of the impressive operation at St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Conover, NC. Submitted photos.

Bethel Lutheran Church Delivers Supplies for Hurricane Relief

By Guy Henderson

In the days after Hurricane Helene brought widespread destruction across the Southeastern part of our country (September 2024), it was apparent that many people were in need and experiencing significant trials. Some sustained damage to their homes, and others were left only with the clothes on their backs. Many lives had been lost, and some families faced the hardship of loved ones who were missing. Many lived in areas that have not experienced hurricane or flood damage of this kind in many generations, and so were not prepared for the severity of this storm.

Meanwhile in Pennsylvania, talk began among the members of Bethel Lutheran Church, Rowland, PA, about the possibility of bringing much-needed relief to North Carolina, where there was substantial need. This talk began with the planning of one of our parishioners and church councilmen, Greg Scigliano, who was especially moved to help after having seen some of the storm firsthand while he was on the road as a truckdriver. When he stated his plan to rent a small truck, the rest of the congregation quickly rose to the occasion, and so what began as Greg's personal desire to help, soon provoked the entire church to this good work (Rom 10:24). Both parishioners and locals from the surrounding towns donated food, blankets, medical supplies, clothing, and funds.

During this time, we were able to contact our sister AALC congregations in North Carolina, and Lutheran Disaster Relief, who informed us that St. Peter's Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Conover, NC, was their chief distribution center for donations.

By two weeks' time, the donations for the effort filled a large room at another parishioner's workplace, as there were too many items to fit in our church, and several parishioners helped organize, package, and label everything and load it into an 18' box truck. On October 21, after the truck was loaded, Greg, his wife Laurie, and I left for NC. A seamstress from Southeastern PA, overheard that we were going to NC (how precisely we do not know) and met with us to give us hand-sewn blankets to take there. When we arrived at St. Peter's in Conover, NC, the next day, we were greeted by a team of 30 or so people who quickly unpacked the truck, and then commenced organizing and distributing the items.

The operation at St. Peter's was quite remarkable. They had converted their gymnasium into a storage and staging area for donations, which were arriving from churches across the country. On one side of the building volunteers were busy assembling cleaning kits and hygiene kits in 5-gallon buckets, 11,000 of which

continued on page 17



March 2025 PRAYER BOOKMARK

Bethel from page 16

had been assembled as of our arrival. Throughout the rest of the building items were organized and then packed into trucks and vans which were bound for the severely affected surrounding area. During the afternoon our party joined the people there in organizing and moving boxes of food, blankets, and cleaning supplies.

St. Peter's also hosted several work crews who were travelling the countryside, cleaning out flood-damaged homes, and even clearing and repairing roadways to restore access to areas that were rendered impassable by flood damage.

The Lord granted us safe travels there and back, and stirred the hearts of many people to joyfully give of what they had received from the Lord. Soli Deo Gloria. †

McNally Installed at Christ Lutheran Church



The Rev. Dr. Cary Larson installs Rev. McNally during the Sunday morning worship service at Christ Lutheran Church, Ellis, KS. Photo by Connie Larson.

The Rev. Alexander McNally was installed at Christ Lutheran Church of Ellis, KS, on November 10, 2024. AALC Presiding Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Cary Larson officiated the installation during the regular worship of Christ Lutheran Church.

Founded in 1907 and originally named Ellis Lutheran Church, Christ Lutheran Church has been the gathering place for God's people for His Word and Sacrament for over 117 years. In 2006, Christ Lutheran Church left the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and voted to join The American Association of Lutheran Churches (TAALC).

We give God the glory for Rev. Alexander McNally and the congregation of Christ Lutheran Church of Ellis, KS. †

1. Greater Heartland Region TAALC
2. Rev. Edwin Mendivelso
3. Ascension Lutheran Church, Ames, IA
4. That all would believe God created everything
5. Rev. Michael Badenhop
6. Board of Appeals & Adjudications
7. That all would believe Christ has redeemed all
8. Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ellis, KS
9. Rev. Benjamin Baker
10. Clergy Commission
11. That all would believe the Holy Spirit has sanctified us
12. Rev. Scott Bieker
13. Ascension Lutheran Church, Waterloo, IA
14. All struggling with health issues
15. Rev. Ryan Dexter
16. Faith Lutheran Church, Holstein, IA
17. Christian Martyrs
18. For ailing pastors
19. Grace Lutheran Church, Nunda, SD
20. Rev. Matthew Fenn
21. For all Seminary Students
22. Commission for Doctrine & Church Relations
23. Hope Lutheran Church, Brighton, IA
24. Rev. Phillip Hofinga
25. For doctors and nurses
26. For God to raise up church leaders
27. Lake Madison Lutheran Church, Rutland, SD
28. Rev. Steven Klawonn
29. For law enforcement officers
30. Rev. Alexander McNally
31. Mighty Fortress Evangelical Lutheran Church, Seward, NE



April 2025

PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. Mountain View Lutheran Church, Thornton, CO
2. Rev. Rusty Phillips
3. Our nation's leaders
4. Commission for Higher Education
5. Pilot Knob Lutheran Church, Forest City, IA
6. Rev. Bruce Ritter
7. For our schools
8. For paramedics and firefighters
9. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Evansdale, IA
10. Rev. Antonio Romano
11. For our veterans
12. Regional Home Mission Developers
13. Redeemer Lutheran Church, West Union, IA
14. Rev. Robert Salge
15. For prospective seminary students
16. St. John's Lutheran Church, Pocahontas, MO
17. Rev. Robert Snitzer
18. For those who are homebound or in nursing facilities
19. Rev. Dave Spotts
20. St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, Traer, IA
21. Rev. David Swarthout
22. Future needs of ALTS
23. International Lutheran Council
24. St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, Otis, CO
25. Rev. Roger Twito
26. National & Local Governments
27. Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, ALTS President
28. Rev. Steven Wadle
29. St. Paul Lutheran Congregation, Tripoli, IA
30. Rev. Wayne Wilken

Valley Lutheran School Celebrates Growth

A Partnership Made In Heaven... No, Iowa!



Assistant Athletic Director and Physical Education Teacher Canyon Kuhlman holds class in the remodeled gymnasium at Valley Lutheran School. Valley is supported by 8 area Lutheran churches, including two AALC: Ascension Lutheran Church, Waterloo, IA, and Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Evansdale, IA. Submitted photo.

Did you know that there is a thriving Kindergarten through 12th grade Lutheran school in Cedar Falls, IA, which is the result of a decades-long partnership between The American Association of Lutheran Churches (TAALC) and The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS)? Well, if you didn't, you know now.

Valley Lutheran School has a Pastor Member of the TAALC and the LCMS serving on its Board of Directors. In addition, the school has eight supporting Iowa Lutheran congregations (2 TAALC and 6 LCMS) that support their ministry of being "More Than A School" (mission) with the purpose of being a Lutheran school "grounded in His truth and grace" that "prepares, trains, and teaches... students and families to serve and live for Christ." (vision).

The basis for their mission and vision comes from 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."

The TAALC congregations that support Valley Lutheran School are Ascension Lutheran Church, Waterloo, IA, and Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Evansdale, IA.

Valley started 21 years ago as a high school with 15 students but has expanded to include Kindergarten through Grade 12 with a current enrollment of 176 students and growing! When the school was erected, it was built with the vision and the space to expand within the footprint of its structure. This vision is currently

continued on page 19



Staff, students, and parents greeted visitors and gave tours at Valley Lutheran School's Open House, held in November 2024. Valley has experienced growth in recent years and has begun a campaign to complete the building and expand classroom space. Submitted photo.

being fulfilled as the school just last fall created three additional classrooms and plans to create four additional classrooms next summer (2025). In addition, the gymnasium was renovated as well as the front entrance and Central Office to enhance building security and to better serve their students and families.

Executive Director, Rev. Henry Pahlkotter, shares, "God is doing amazing things at Valley Lutheran School. Between May 2023 and August 2023, Valley grew in enrollment by 56 students and started the 2024-2025 school year by enrolling 47 new students. We thank God for His goodness and blessing upon our efforts to provide quality Christ-centered Lutheran education. We strive to equip His children with the truth as revealed in His Word, to train our students to live out their faith and be strong witnesses for Christ in the world, all while teaching with high academic excellence to see God's unique calling fulfilled in the lives of our students."

He further points out that Valley is unique in that they have Called Commissioned teachers representing both the TAALC and the LCMS church bodies as well as additional staff and Chaplains from each. Pahlkotter states, "Valley is a partnership of both church bodies who are in fellowship with each other and who are working together to provide Lutheran Christian education to the Cedar Valley. It is our goal to offer the truth of God's inspired and inherent Word across our curriculum as we strive to be 'More Than A School,' teaching academics as well as nurturing faith in Jesus Christ."

Pahlkotter continues, "We thank God for both the TAALC and the LCMS, for their support and willingness to work together. Because of the strong tradition of faith these two Lutheran church bodies have, Valley has the opportunity to be a school that teaches so much more than the academic basics. We have the privilege of building God's Kingdom and equipping our students to live out their faith in whatever vocation they are led to pursue."

The title of the school's capital campaign, "Growing Generations," is based upon David's Psalm 145 verse 4, "One generation shall commend Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts." The school has been sharing God's truths since its inception and is working, growing, and renovating to do so for many more years to come. The estimated cost of the completed renovation by the end of next summer will be \$4.2 million, and these funds will all be raised from God's faithful people. †



Top: The K-12 student body at Valley Lutheran School held its Wednesday chapel service in the newly remodeled gymnasium. The school is remodeling and completing the building to accommodate its growing numbers.

Bottom: The school's capital campaign is titled, "Growing Generations," which was unveiled during an event in November 2024. On stage is one of the school's founding members, AALC's Pastor Emeritus, Rev. Dr. Duane Lindberg. Submitted photos.

The American Association of Lutheran Churches

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UPCOMING EDITIONS...

Overarching theme: Chief Parts of Luther's Small Catechism

Please be in prayer for these upcoming editions:

May/June: The Lord's Prayer (*deadline Mar. 1*)

Jul/Aug: Baptism (*deadline May 1*)

Sept/Oct: Confession & Lord's Supper (*deadline July 1*)

Nov/Dec: Table of Duties (*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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