

The

EVANGEL

Lutheran Distinction





From the Editor

Years ago, in conversation about an upcoming women's event, someone commented that the speaker was "not Lutheran." At the time in all my youthful "wisdom," I rolled my eyes, thinking, "Why does it matter?"

What I grew to learn over the years is that the Lutheran emphasis of Scripture is, well, different from others. I came away from that women's retreat—and many more like it—burdened to try harder to be a better Christian. Does that sound familiar to anyone?

In contrast, the Lutheran understanding of Scripture has a clear focus: Jesus. He lived for you, He died for you, He rose again. He then gives you His forgiveness and life through tangible ways: the waters of baptism, the bread and wine of Holy Communion, the words of Scripture you read or hear from your pastor's mouth each Sunday.

That focus on Jesus is what the writers in this *Evangel* edition highlight: What is the Lutheran distinction? Where does my assurance of salvation come from? How does Jesus actually get salvation to me personally? What's the difference in a Lutheran understanding of communion? Plus several personal accounts of those who have become Lutherans as adults.

Thanks for joining us for this installment of our year's look at the Lutheran life! We pray it encourages you, "looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:2).

In HIS peace,

Gretchen Baker

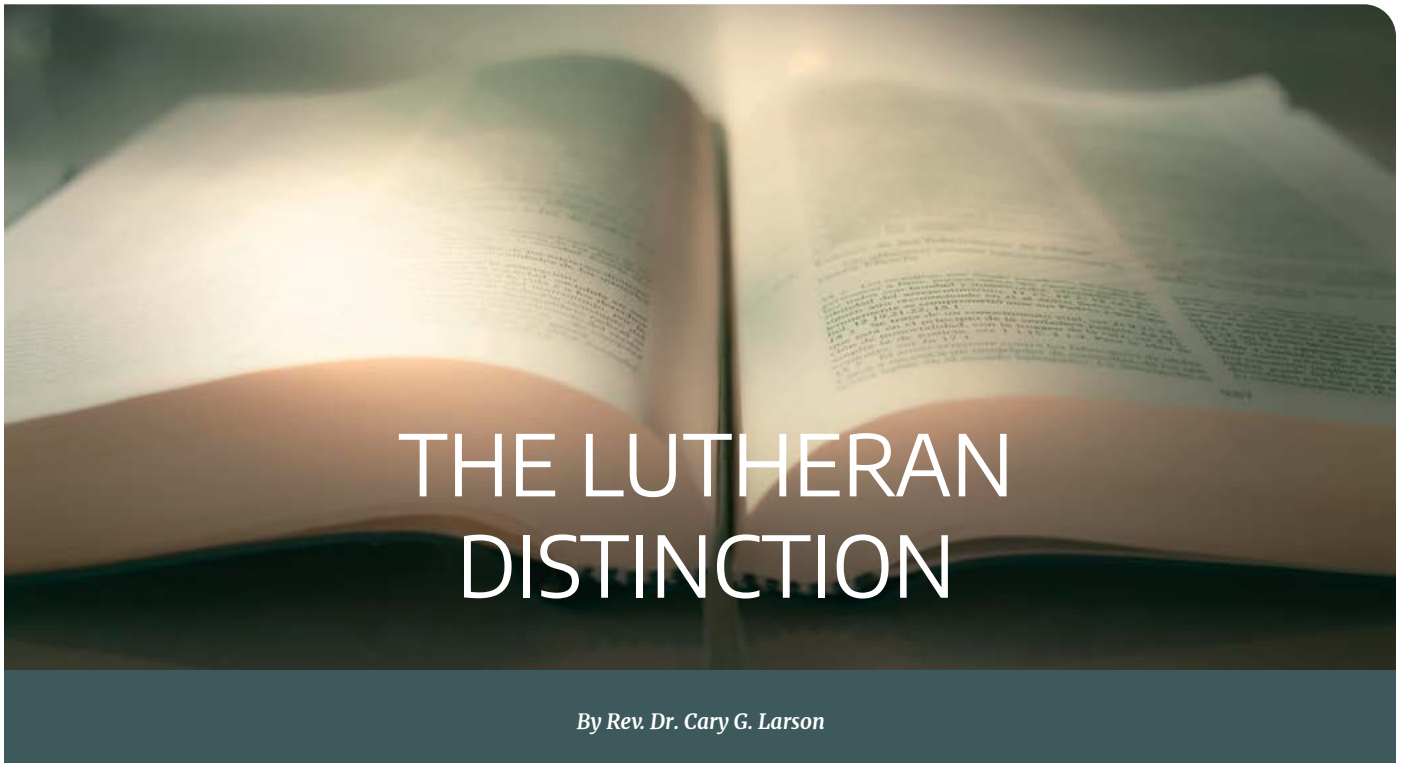
Gretchen Baker
The Editor

- 2 From the Editor
- 3 Lutheran Distinction
- 4 Faith Alone in a World of Works
- 6 Delivery Mechanisms of Salvation
- 8 Old Communion Kit
- 9 The Lord be with Y'all
- 10 Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar
- 12-13 AALC News
Doug Taylor New Chairman
Rev. Beighley Anniversary
Women of L.I.F.E
- 13-14 Prayer Bookmark
- 14 Pastors' Wives Gatherings
- 15 110th Anniversary

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Editor: Gretchen Baker
Layout & Design: Karen Young

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THE LUTHERAN DISTINCTION

By Rev. Dr. Cary G. Larson

The conscience, when burdened by guilt and a sense of separation from God, can become a source of intense torment. This spiritual struggle is far from uncommon, and it begs the question, “How might I find peace with God amidst such internal turmoil?” The Holy Scriptures provide two solutions in order to stand faultlessly before God Almighty. The first is perfect obedience to His commandments. Christ Jesus provided that answer to an expert in the Law (Luke 10:25-37). Regrettably, no one can do this. The other solution is faith in Christ Jesus alone (John 3:16-17). Lutheran theology offers a profound and distinctive approach to addressing the tormented conscience, centered on the transformative power of Christ Jesus’ vicarious sacrificial death on Calvary’s cross, His glorious resurrection, and His unwavering promise of forgiveness.

Confessional Lutheranism is set apart by its proper distinction between God’s Law and His Gospel. As expressed in God’s commandments, the Law serves a crucial purpose. It is a relentless mirror, revealing the depths of our sinfulness that separate us from a holy God. The Law uncovers our transgressions, leaving us with an overwhelming sense of guilt, shame, and fear – the tell tale signs of a tormented conscience. In this state of spiritual distress, we are tempted to find relief through our own efforts, attempting to correct our wrongs and earn our way back into God’s good favor. However, this attempt at self-righteousness is ultimately futile.

Within this bleak landscape, the Gospel bursts forth as a shining beacon of hope, offering the sweet Good News of the message of unmerited grace and redemption. It proclaims that, despite our profound unworthiness, God sent His Son, Christ Jesus, to live a perfectly righteous life in our stead and to die a sacrificial death on the cross. Through this act, Christ Jesus atoned for the sins of

all humanity – past, present, and future. The Gospel assures us that forgiveness is a free gift, offered not because of any merit on our part but solely through the love and mercy of God.

Here, the Lutheran distinction of emphasizing “*sola fide*” – faith alone – plays an essential role. Faith is not merely an intellectual exercise but a trust, a deep conviction that Christ Jesus’ sacrifice is totally sufficient for our salvation. When we place our faith in Christ Jesus and the promises of the Gospel, we are justified before God. Our broken relationship with Him is restored, and the weight of guilt that burdened our conscience is lifted. The tormented conscience finds solace not in self-justification but in the completed work of Christ Jesus alone (Rom 3 & 4)¹.

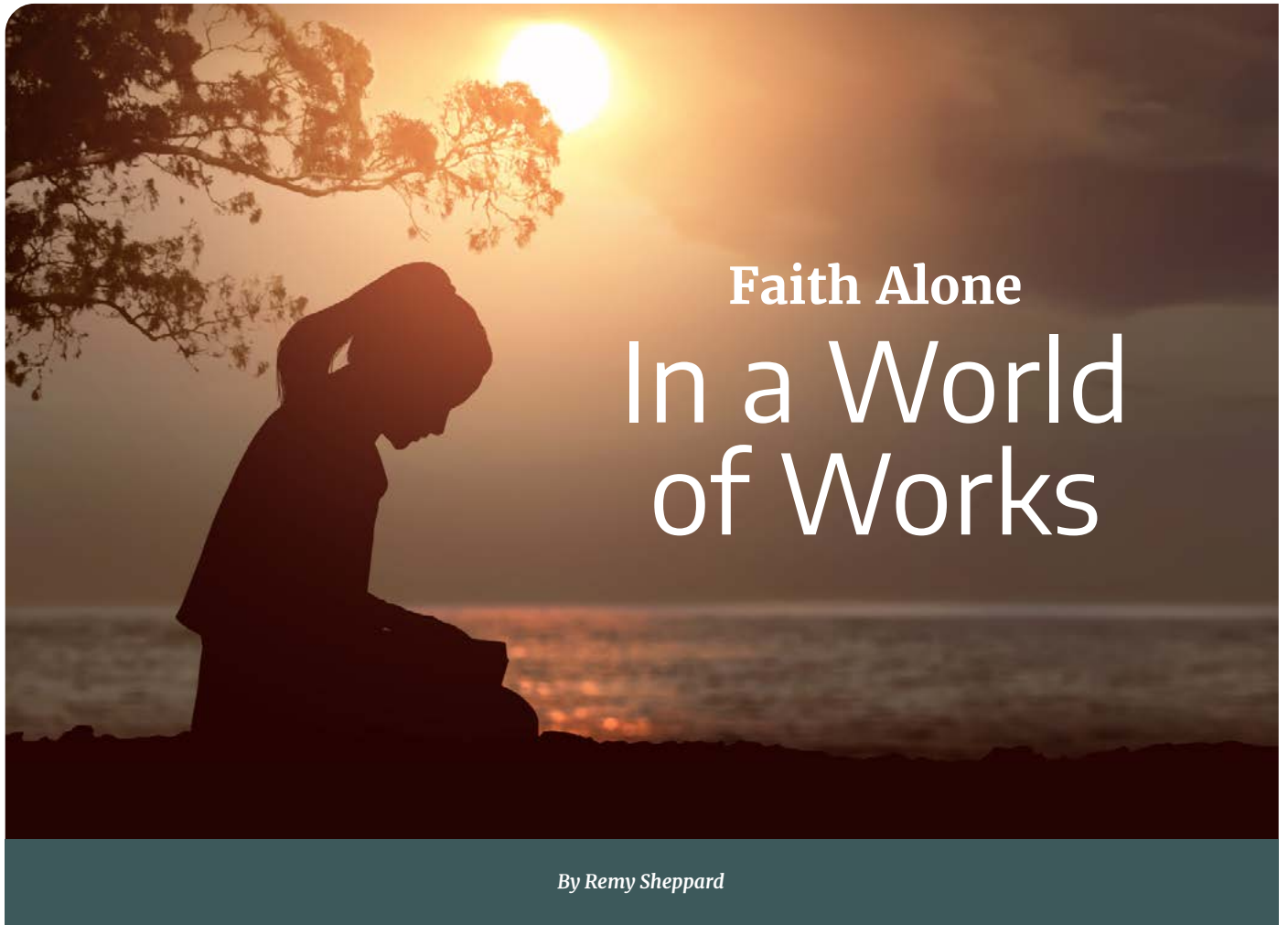
Nowhere in the Lutheran Confessions will you find that Christians will suddenly become sinless individuals after accepting Christ Jesus. The struggle against sin and the world’s temptation is a lifelong process. However, Lutherans believe that the Gospel provides an unwavering anchor in this ongoing battle with its constant message of grace and forgiveness. When we stumble and fail to uphold God’s Law, the tormented conscience need not resurface. Instead, faith in Christ Jesus’ redemption reminds us that God continuously forgives and loves us.

The Lutheran distinction is this: we believe that the tormented conscience can find lasting peace and rest in God’s unconditional love and grace through Christ Jesus. That is, faith in Christ Jesus alone is the only source of peace for the terrified conscience². In the holy name of Christ Jesus. Amen! †

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

1 Paul Timothy McCain, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 99-100.

2 *Ibid*, 159.



Faith Alone In a World of Works

By Remy Sheppard

The Gospel is clearly and succinctly summarized in the Augsburg Confession in Art. IV “On Justification,” [...] Men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins.”¹ Oh what a great comfort this simple articulation of the faith truly is for us today, and how often we take it for granted!

I grew up in the Pentecostal Holiness church. As the name would suggest, it was a very charismatic church (Pentecostal), with a focus on righteous living (holiness). The denomination itself is heavily influenced by the Holiness Movement, a 19th Century protestant movement brought about by John Wesley’s teachings on *Christian Perfection* or *Entire Sanctification*.

The Christian Perfection view purported by Wesley suggested that, in this life, we as Christians should be able – through the power of the Holy Ghost – to cease sinning entirely! We could become *entirely sanctified*. This view of sanctification and the Christian life should immediately stand in contrast in your mind to the Lutheran view of *Simul Justus et Peccator* – the idea that we as Christians are both sinner and saint, simultaneously.

In the late 1800s there was a bit of a ruffling of feathers within the Methodist church and various holiness groups were formed.

In 1911, in the town of Falcon, North Carolina (a short 30 minutes from my current address), the *Pentecostal Holiness Church*² was founded. It combined aspects of the Wesleyan Holiness theology with a revival of the ancient Montanist³ heresy to form a deceptively powerful perversion of the Christian faith in the American South. This faith, on the surface, subscribes to *Sola Fide*⁴, that great reformation idea that man is saved to God by *faith alone*, and not by any of his own works. Yet, in practice, this form of Christianity is not *Sola Fide*, but rather *Solum Opus* – by works alone.

It is often common in Pentecostal circles for people to pray for all manner of worldly things (physical healing, wealth, job promotions, etc.) in the name of living a godly life. I was taught growing up that if you had faith and prayed earnestly God would answer your prayers for any temporal thing. What I did not realize at the time, and what many adherents do not realize today, is that this is just new age *Law of Attraction* dogma that has been warmed over, wrapped in Christian-looking cellophane, and mass marketed to those with itching ears.

Do you want to see a financial blessing from God? Then you must *give* a financial blessing to God (Read: your pastor) and don’t you know it, Brother Sheppard, you will reap 20-fold, 50-fold, 100-fold! This obvious twisting of Genesis 26, which turns a *descriptive* text into a *prescriptive* text⁵, is one of many tactics that you see employed in these churches to enslave people.

*Blessed be the name of the Lord!
He has preserved for us the
historic Christian faith!*



Sure, you are *saved* by faith in Jesus alone, but salvation is only half the battle! Now that you are saved, you have to do stuff! I was consistently taught and constantly reminded growing up that if I wanted all that God had for me, there were certain qualifications that I had to meet to please Him.

And when circumstances did not shake out the way I wanted them to, and things went sideways on me? God was not pleased with me. I obviously did not have enough faith, or I did not pray hard enough, or I had some hidden sin that was being punished! Remember, the formula is that you have *earnest enough faith and earnest enough prayer*.

And before you think this is an exaggeration, I have seen someone publicly pray for the healing of a terminal illness of a loved one, only for them to be told at the funeral that they had “hidden sin” that kept them from having enough faith to heal their relative. How absolutely disgusting!

Yet this is the common practice in those circles when speaking with someone about an “unanswered” prayer. “Well,” they reason, “If you have *enough* faith and pray *hard enough*, then God does what you want. And He did not, so your faith or your prayers must not have been *enough*.” I’m sure you can see, Dear Christian, the crisis of faith that you are being brought to by this kind of thinking!

If my faith and prayers were not *enough* to do something as simple as get me a promotion or help me have enough money to pay my power bill this month, then how on earth am I supposed to have *enough faith* to be saved!?

Blessed be the name of the Lord! He has preserved for us the historic Christian faith! Championed by Luther, and faithfully passed on to us, this Christianity is one that relies solely on the Lord – great and powerful – to do the work that we ourselves are unable to do!

I thank the Lord every day that he brought me to the comfort of Lutheran theology. Here I find a place where I live by *faith alone*.

Whereas before I was told that the Gospel is for the unbeliever, and the law was for the believer, here I am told every Sunday that where the Law condemns me, the Gospel redeems me!

Here, when I am worried about some unknown *hidden* sin keeping me from God, I am reminded that God went to the cross for me, and that He graciously forgives me all my sins, known and unknown.

My first few months attending a Lutheran congregation were spent in fear and loathing. I constantly worried that I was not good enough for God. I constantly feared that I was not doing enough to be saved, that I was too sinful to love. I would text my pastor multiple times a day during those months, and he would always tell me to look at the cross⁶. Oh, how sweet it was when the balm of the Gospel finally worked its way into my thick skull!


I am overcome with joy in Christ, now. I know that God answers all of my prayers, even if that answer is no. And I know that His answers are always for my benefit, as Saint Paul tells us in Romans 8. I know that in Christ I have every good gift God has for me (Jas 1:17). Even if that good gift does not look like a winning Power Ball ticket, I can still thank the Lord because – rich or poor, sick or healthy – He has ultimately solved my biggest problem: Sin.

And I never have to fear that the problem of sin keeps me from Him, because my every sin was nailed to a cross 2,000 years ago and buried in a tomb in Jerusalem. And while my Life Everlasting rose out of that tomb, my sin stayed behind.

A lot of protestants will say that they believe in *Faith Alone*, but Dear Christian, we Lutherans truly *have it!* And what a wonderful gift it is. Amen.†

Mr. Remy Sheppard is a seminarian at ALTS and host of the podcast and YouTube show “Lutheran Answers.” Whenever he can, he enjoys spending time with his wife of 10 years, Samantha, and their three special needs cats.

1 Melancthon, P. (2023, September 23). The articles of the Augsburg Confession. The Book of Concord Online. <https://lutheranconfessions.org/boc/augsburg-confession/articles/#iv-of-justification>
2 Now known as the *International Pentecostal Holiness Church*, maintaining over 16,000 congregations worldwide.
3 By way of John Darby and Charles Parham, and later fueled by Azusa Street.
4 International Pentecostal Holiness Church. (2019, December 13). Beliefs. IPHC. <https://iphc.org/beliefs/>
5 Hat Tip: Rev. Chris Rosebrough
6 I finally got the hint when once I texted him that God couldn’t love me, and he texted me back, “Stop it.”



The Means of Grace: The Delivery Mechanisms of Salvation

By Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey

God is free to do what He wants. He didn't have to save us. Thankfully, He loves the whole world, and He wants to save us. It was His plan from before the creation of the universe for the Eternal Son to take human nature to Himself so that He could live in perfect obedience to the law on our behalf, die sacrificially as our substitute, and rise victoriously for our justification. The Apostle John says that Jesus "is the propitiation [that is, the turning aside of God's wrath] for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

So God uses the means of a human being proclaiming His law and His gospel to us, using human language, as well as water, bread, and wine, combined with His Word, to deliver Jesus to us with every spiritual blessing he has to give.



So from one perspective, God has declared every human being who has ever lived and who will ever live to be perfectly just. That is because Jesus is united to all human beings by sharing the same human nature with us (though He was without sin). So when God the Father declared His incarnate Son to be perfectly just and righteous at His resurrection (1 Tim 3:16), that declaration became true of everyone who shares a human nature with Jesus. We call that “objective justification” because it is true whether anybody wants it or believes it, or not.

But we also believe that faith is the instrument by which we must receive what Jesus has done for us¹. So if people are born dead in our trespasses and sins, as Paul says in Ephesians 2:1-3, how does anyone come to have faith in the first place? How does anyone come to have all the benefits of salvation that Jesus accomplished for us?

Of course, since God is free to do what He wants, He could secretly make someone spiritually alive and give them faith without using any means. But in His Word, God tells us that He wants to use “means” — He wants to use other human beings and physical things in this world to give us new life, faith, and all the benefits of salvation.

One verse that is quoted repeatedly throughout the Book of Concord is Romans 10:17: “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” God uses called and ordained men to preach His law and His gospel using human language. When the law does its convicting work, the gospel is the cure. This verse is God’s promise to create faith in spiritually dead people. It’s a good reason for us to be in the divine service on Sundays and to pay close attention to the sermon. It’s also a good reason for us to invite friends, neighbors, and anyone else we can, to come with us to the divine service.

Another means that God uses to create faith in people and to deliver all the benefits of salvation to us is Holy Baptism. As we learned in confirmation, it is not that water has any special power or properties on its own; but it is the water combined with God’s Word in Matthew 28:19 (I baptize you “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”), that makes Holy Baptism powerful and effective.

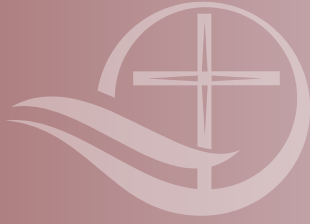
And powerful and effective it is! Titus 3:5-7 tells us that Baptism gives us the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (new, spiritual life), justification (being declared righteous), and makes us heirs of Jesus according to the hope of eternal life. Acts 2:38 tells us that Baptism gives us the forgiveness of our sins and the Holy Spirit. Romans 6:1-14 tells us that Baptism unites us to Jesus somewhat like a bride is united to her husband in marriage — so that everything that is ours (that is, our sin) belongs to Jesus, and everything that is Jesus’ (resurrection life, justification, sanctification, etc.) belongs to us. And, of course, 1 Peter 3:21 tells us that Baptism saves us. After all, our Lord himself said that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16).

Holy Communion also delivers to us all the benefits that Jesus has earned for us. However, the Church has rightly understood that this sacrament is reserved for those who have been baptized. When you read the words that Jesus used to institute the sacrament of Holy Communion in Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, it becomes clear that the body and blood of our Lord, delivered to us in the bread and the wine, give us the forgiveness of our sins. Our Lord also emphasizes that his body and blood are *for you*. By taking Jesus’ body and blood into our own bodies, there is a real union of our Lord with us. This is, again, like the union of a husband and wife. Plus, Jesus also said that his body is real food, and his blood is real drink, both of which give us eternal life (John 6:52-59). So in that sense, Holy Communion is a meal; and just as our earthly meals give us fuel for this life, Jesus’ body and blood in the bread and the wine give us fuel to strengthen our faith for our spiritual journey.

So God uses the means of a human being proclaiming His law and His gospel to us, using human language, as well as water, bread, and wine, combined with His Word, to deliver Jesus to us with every spiritual blessing he has to give. What a good God we have, Who, like a loving parent, stoops down to our level to use words and means that we can understand and receive in order to give us salvation! †

The Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey is an instructor at ALTS and serves the congregation of St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, Augusta, KY.

¹ Paul Timothy McCain, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 88.



An Old Communion Kit

By Rev. Dean Stoner

I like old things. Which is why I was captivated by this vintage Communion kit when I saw it in an on-line auction. This set is pretty “old-school” as it is made of sterling silver, not silver plate, and was originally sold in the 1930s and 40s by a company in England. When examining the set, you will soon find that it was evidently used quite a bit, as the outside case has worn corners. One of its two straps to carry the kit is missing, and the other is wrapped in electrical tape. Inside is an old wine stain, and many worn spots which are easily noticed. All are signs that this Communion kit was used often, serving the people of God throughout its long career. But now I don’t mean to suggest that this set is retired from service, far from it. But now I am the proud owner, or should I say “caretaker” of it, but like her previous owners, just for a little while. At some point I hope that this set will be passed down to another pastor and used for its proper purpose ... to bring God’s Means of Grace to His people.

Initially, I was quite pleased with myself when I discovered that I was the winning bidder on this Communionware. I had always assumed that my attraction to this Communion kit was because it was old and had character. But after some thought I came to realize that what drew me to this set wasn’t because it was silver or that it may be a vintage collector’s items. No. What I believe drew me to this was her provenance. What has caught my attention was how many men our heavenly Father has called into ministry and who have used this holy “tool” to serve the Body of Christ.

Underneath this thought is my own story of what drew me to Lutheranism originally. As one never brought up in the Lutheran tradition, I find our Lutheran sacramentology compelling and biblical, something that I had struggled with and questioned in my earlier Reformed thinking. It is both the majesty and also the mystery of the Supper that confessional Lutheranism revealed to me, knowing that I can be comfortable without having a logical explanation as to how simple bread and wine become the true body and blood of our Lord. What confessional Lutheranism has given me is the appreciation that the Lord’s Supper is more

than just a promise or proclamation of the Gospel, but, as Hermann Sasse suggests, an actualization or appropriation of redemption and “the fulfillment of salvation history.”¹ When recalling my journey to Lutheranism, I remember what Luther said in his Large Catechism: that this Holy Communion is the antidote to the poison of our sin. Such things resonate with me and are foundational to my adherence to confessional Lutheranism.



So as one who is called and privileged to bring Holy Communion to God’s people, I see then that my fondness of this old Communion kit is more than just in her nostalgic beauty, but rather in her historic profession each and every time it is used of Christ and Him crucified. This sterling silver set, then, is a witness to a right understanding of the Supper found in the *Verba Christi*, which is something, like this Communion set itself, is very “old-school,” as old as the early Apostolic Church.

Nowhere has confessional Lutheranism captured my heart more than here in the Lord’s Supper as a tangible expression of God’s grace. Nowhere has confessional Lutheranism resonated with my theology more than here at the Table, where Christ is present ... for you.

So I relish this old Communionware, and if it could talk, what stories it could share! For this Communion kit is an instrument by which Christ’s mercy is given. It is a tool to distribute the gift that it is. Though this little home Communion kit is old and worn, it will still continue to bring forth the mysteries of God, timeless and eternal truths of Jesus for you! Amen. †

The Rev. Dean Stoner serves as Administrative Assistant to The AALC.

1 Confessing the Gospel, A Lutheran Approach to Systematic Theology. Vol II, ed. Samuel H. Nafzger et al. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 2017), 809.

THE LORD BE WITH Y'ALL

By Rev. Joe Christina

I am originally a yankee “city boy.” Not once in my entire life did I ever give more than a passing thought to the southern portion of these United States and certainly not the State of North Carolina. The Confessional Lutheran church has a presence all throughout the country. But, as one might guess, she certainly doesn’t dominate the landscape of the so-called “Bible Belt.” Being distinctively Lutheran in a place where Baptists and many other non-Lutheran denominations rule has both its challenges as well as its unique advantages. Nevertheless, the gospel message of the full and free forgiveness of sins is just as powerful in the land of pork rinds and grits as it is in the land of cheese and beer.

Now no church exists in a “cookie cutter” location. In other words, even in the south every city and geographic area has its own unique features. For example, North Carolina is known for its unique barbecue. But that can be different depending on what part of the state you’re in. So it is with the City of Fayetteville. Fayetteville lives in the shadow of the largest military installation in the world. Some call it Fort Liberty; most call it Fort Bragg. As such, people from all over the country and the world make their often temporary homes here. You will see license plates from all over on our streets and hear all kinds of accents. There is a local native North Carolinian population as well. And for the most part, this area retains its “southern-ness.”

The challenges of being distinctively Lutheran in the Bible Belt are really not all that many nor insurmountable. Many non-Lutherans consider Lutheran churches “too Catholic” in nature because of our liturgy, vestments, etc. Because of Christian freedom, Lutherans—like many denominations—can enjoy alcohol in moderation if their health allows for it. Many Baptists, on the other hand, are teetotalers who believe that alcohol consumption is a sin. (That said, at one point in history Fort Bragg was one of the largest consumers of Budweiser in the country.) What really sets Confessional Lutherans apart is our theology and practice. Our worship retains the Confession and Absolution, a source of great comfort for our people. I had a Baptist once tell me that it rubbed her the wrong way to have a “man” (pastor) forgive her and that only God Himself could do that.

We remain a sacramental church among many churches that do not confess the Real Presence in the Holy Supper and deny the efficacy of Baptism. We are the “baby sprinklers” in the eyes of many (and that’s not a compliment). Finally, many churches retain a focus on community service and holy living at the expense of the message of the cross of Christ. I had a non-Lutheran visitor once tell me he just didn’t understand why his church didn’t talk more about the Crucifixion and its benefits.

Now I certainly don’t want to coronate myself the arbiter of other denominations. And I also know some of these same differences exist elsewhere and are not unique to the South. But there are most certainly advantages to being a Lutheran in the Bible Belt. The last sentence of the previous paragraph would be one such example: We have a pretty incredible message to convey to troubled hearts in need of comfort.

Another advantage to being a Lutheran in the Bible Belt is the Bible Belt itself. Christianity still seems to remain “top dog” in these parts. I mean taking the Lord’s name in vain will literally get you kicked out of at least one restaurant I know of in town. When we first moved here, my son’s public school third grade teacher would begin every day singing “Jesus Loves The Little Children.” Whether folks attend church or not, I would venture to say many will still proudly claim the title “Christian.” Related to this is also the many opportunities for churches to work together in ways that don’t involve worship or inappropriate fellowship endeavors. Christian-based food banks, pregnancy crisis centers, soup kitchens, and many other opportunities exist for churches to pitch in together to love their neighbors. We are proudly the only Lutheran church to collect items for the Agape Pregnancy Crisis Center in town, for example.

By God’s grace, we have been blessed with the opportunity to work in this particular field of labor. Many show themselves grateful to hear the no strings attached gospel of Christ, crucified for their sins. All in all, the Lord blesses our ministry here as Confessional Lutherans in the Bible Belt. And every so often, He will send us someone who wants to learn about Lutheranism because he or she wants to know what “y’all believe.” God is faithful all the time.

And everywhere †

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



The Lutheran Distinction:

The Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar

By Rev. Benjamin Baker

Our LORD Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took the bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to His disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way also He took the cup after supper, gave thanks, and gave it to them and said, “Take, drink of this, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”¹



When considering and speaking about the Lutheran distinction in regard to the Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, we should bear in mind that though there are certainly distinctions in teaching and emphasis that set Lutherans apart from other Christians, there is also much that is not distinct, that is, Lutherans are not unique in our confession of the real, substantial, bodily presence of our Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar. We share this confession with both the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, as well as the ancient catholic Church prior to any schism between East and West. In spite of this there are indeed some genuine differences, and they have primarily to do with certain emphases and the rejection of errors that have crept in over the centuries (e.g., *Eucharistic Sacrifice and Transubstantiation*). In our rejection of errors along these lines we do not, however, seek to answer them by diminishing the Sacrament as Christ has instituted it by reducing the visible elements (bread and wine) to mere symbols and empty signs.

The Lutheran Confession in Distinction to Reformed Theology

The basic difference between Lutherans and the Reformed in regard to the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper is that of Christology, that is, the Doctrine of Christ, and in particular, the Doctrine of the Person of Christ. In Reformed theology, the reason that Christ cannot be bodily present in the Lord's Supper is because His human nature is not capable of being in more than one place at one time. And so they reason from this that Christ is only present on earth in the Holy Supper according to His divine nature, while His human nature remains "in heaven" at the right hand of God.

The fault in this way of thinking is chiefly that of bifurcating or sundering the Person of Christ. Ever since the Incarnation of our Lord, Jesus interacts with us as the Incarnate God-Man. He does not appear here according to His divine nature and there according to His human nature. This makes in effect two Christs. Rather because there is only *one* Christ, the divine and human natures are united in His singular Person. Where the Person of Christ is, there He is according to both natures. If Christ is indeed present in the Lord's Supper, He is present in His singular Person as the Incarnate God-Man. We cannot separate Him into two Christs. There is also this basic error: the "right hand of the Father" is not a *location*. For one, the Father is spirit (John 4) and not incarnate, and therefore has no hands. Secondly, the Father is omnipresent, and so His "right hand," if He had one, would be everywhere present where He is. The "right hand of the Father" is rather a title and statement of authority, not of location.

The Lutheran Confession in Distinction to Roman Catholicism

Though we share with Roman Catholicism the confession of Christ's bodily presence in the Holy Eucharist, there are indeed notable differences. The two I will focus on here are those of transubstantiation and Eucharistic Sacrifice. Transubstantiation is that doctrine that teaches that the consecrated elements *change their substance*, while at the same time their *accidents remain the same*. So upon Consecration, the substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the body of Christ even though it still looks, feels, and tastes like bread. In the same way, the substance of the wine is changed into the substance of the blood of Christ, all the while retaining the look, feel, and taste of wine. The chief reason Lutherans reject this doctrine is that it is an attempt to explain philosophically the *how* of Christ's bodily presence in the Eucharist.

The Presence of Christ in the Sacrament is a mystery, and mysteries are to be confessed and believed, not explained according to human reason. It is enough to know from Christ's own Words that He is bodily present in the Holy Supper; the *how* is His domain.

The bigger issue that Lutherans have with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Lord's Supper is that of Eucharistic Sacrifice. According to Rome, in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist the priest offers Christ to God on behalf of the people. In the celebration of the Eucharist, Christ is sacrificed again and again, and this sacrifice is propitiatory, that is, it is a satisfaction of God's wrath against sinners. The chief issue that Lutherans have with this doctrine is not the idea of sacrifice in *itself*, but that the Sacrament itself is regarded as a sacrifice, that is, something *we* offer to God, rather than *gift*, something that God offers to us. If when we speak of the celebration of the Eucharist, we include the attendant prayers of praise and thanksgiving, we can indeed speak of these things as sacrifices. Prayers of praise and thanksgiving are indeed things that we offer to God. The Sacrament *itself*, that is, the consecrated bread and wine that are now also the body and blood of Christ, are purely God's gift to us. This is clearly seen from our Lord's own Words that His body and blood are given and shed—not so that we offer them back to God—but rather they are given and shed *for you for the forgiveness of your sins*. The direction is clearly from God to us, not us to God.

Comfort, Mercy, and Grace: The Heart of the Lutheran Confession Concerning the Presence of Christ

As Lutherans we rest in the clear Words of our Lord's last will and testament: that when combined with His Word and promise, the bread is indeed His body—the same body that was crucified and raised from the dead—and the wine is indeed His blood—the same blood shed on the cross to win our redemption. The importance and centrality of the substantial, bodily presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist in the Lutheran Confession can be seen by the unity of the *essence* of the Sacrament and the *benefits* of the Sacrament. In other words, it is precisely *because* our Lord is bodily present in the Holy Supper that there are any benefits given to Christians who partake of this holy meal. Christ and His benefits go together. In the Holy Sacrament we are united to Christ and are His body because He feeds us with His own body and blood. Participation in the Holy Eucharist connects us to the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord. In the giving of His body and blood to His Christians, Jesus creates and strengthens faith, delivers to us the forgiveness of sins, strengthens us against the attacks of the devil, and raises the new man to life.

Because we receive Christ, and thus all His benefits, in the Holy Eucharist, the Lutheran Confessions exhort and encourage Christians to frequent reception of the Sacrament. Since we sin daily and are often weak in our struggle against the devil and our sinful flesh, we are in need of a steady diet, as it were, of our Lord's life-giving and strengthening body and blood. Our struggle with the devil and our sinful flesh should make us long for the Holy Eucharist and our Lord who gives Himself to us there. †

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

1 Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 467.



AALC News

New Chairman for The AALC's Board of Trustees

The AALC wishes to thank Mr. Mark Leonard, past Chairman of The AALC's Board of Trustees, for his many years of service. His years of service on the Board of Trustees began in Oct 2012, when he filled a vacancy in the Greater Heartland Region for the 2011-2015 term. He then was elected in 2015 for the 2015-2019 term and re-elected in 2019 for the term 2019-2023.

Mr. Doug Taylor has been appointed as the new Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

Introduction

By Doug Taylor

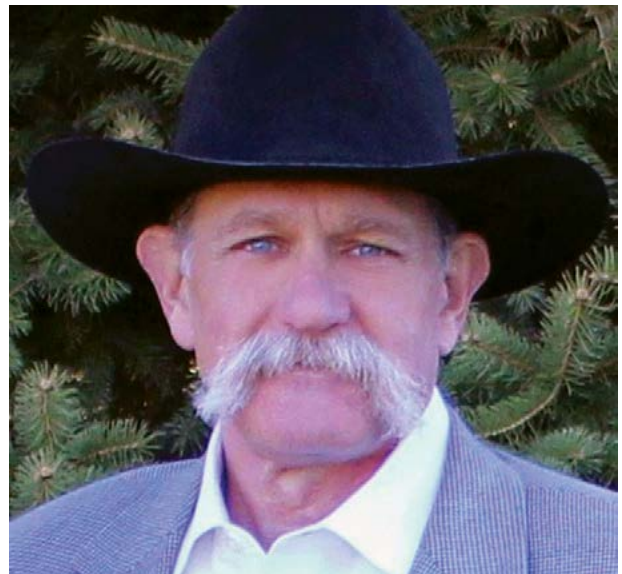
A friend once told me that one is morally obligated to invest time in his community. Buying into that, I'm a past president of the Williston Area Chamber of Commerce, a two-time past president of the Williston Area Development Foundation, and I spent thirteen years on the Board of Directors of the North Dakota chapter of the Make A Wish Foundation. Since joining Our Redeemers Lutheran Church, I spent ten years as chair of the Church Council. I'm in my second four year term on The AALC Board of Trustees, and I currently serve as President on The AALC Foundation's Board of Directors.

My work life was a little unusual as I spent six years as a golf professional, nine years as a drilling fluids technician in the oil industry, and thirty-five years as a Certified Financial Planner retiring in 2018.

I have been married forty-two years to my wife Donnette. We have two children: Katie (39) and Perry (37). Katie and her husband have three children and live next door. Perry lives twelve blocks away.

Donnette also believes in volunteering. She has served twenty-five years as a volunteer and board member for the Williston Area Relay for Life. She currently serves as Treasurer for The AALC Women of L.I.F.E. Additionally, she is constantly doing something at church.

I'm glad that I have been able to contribute in a leadership role with The AALC. I challenge all who read this to seek ways to help in your church and community. Don't automatically say no when asked to serve. †



Top: Mr. Mark Leonard has served The AALC as Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the past 10 years. Submitted photo.

Bottom: New Chairman of The AALC's Board of Trustees Doug Taylor with his wife of 42 years, Donnette. Submitted photo.



May 2024

PRAYER BOOKMARK

50th Anniversary of Ordination: Rev. Beighley



On Sunday, January 28, 2024, the Reverend Norman Beighley and the American Lutheran Church, Mandan, ND, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination into divine ministry. Rev. Beighley received congratulations and recognition from The AALC and the congregation. Rev. Beighley graduated from Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, IA, in 1973. Pictured are: Rev. Dean Johansen, Rev. Norman Beighley, and American Lutheran Church President Todd Kuester. Submitted photo.

1. AALC Leadership
2. Dss. Brigitte Gassman
3. Rev. Michael Badenhop
4. Christian Education Directors
5. For law enforcement officers
6. Faith Lutheran Church, Watseka, IL
7. Rev. Larry Juergensen
8. First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Parshall, ND
9. For our veterans
10. Commission for Women
11. Those struggling with anxiety
12. Grace Lutheran Church, Nunda, SD
13. Women of L.I.F.E. Executive Committee
14. Hope Lutheran Church, Hampton, VA
15. For the families of Christian martyrs
16. For those who are homebound or in nursing facilities
17. Online Ministries
18. Pastors and Church Workers
19. Rev. Neil Cadle
20. Rev. Chris Rosebrough
21. Prison Chaplains
22. Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry
23. Hospital Chaplains
24. That all would believe good works are the natural result of faith, not the means of salvation.
25. Rev. Len Brokenshire
26. That all would believe the Bible is the only norm of doctrine and life.
27. Rev. Michael "Myke" Main
28. Rev. John Bergson
29. Rev. Norman C. Hoffeld
30. Seminary professors
31. That we confess that "God's Word cannot err"

Women of L.I.F.E to Gather at Convention

In this edition of *The Evangel*, we are discussing the Lutheran Distinction. How are Lutheran women different? Our prayer is that we are Christ-like and filled with the Holy Spirit! The AALC women are spread across the United States but we are connected by our faith in Christ. This connection is very dear to us, but it can be difficult to feel when we are so far apart. Thankfully, we do have our General Convention to look forward to every two years.

We encourage you to join other Lutheran women (and men) at the 29th General Convention of The AALC from June 25-28, 2024, at Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary in Plymouth, MN.

The women have two opportunities to meet together for fellowship, business and prayer:

1) Our Women of L.I.F.E. luncheon (all women are invited!) will be Wednesday, June 26, from 11:20 AM-12:55 PM. We will have a devotional, enjoy lunch and fellowship together, and conduct the business meeting. During the meeting, we will review our benevolence giving and the work being done by the missionaries we support, and we will vote on our benevolences for the next two years. We will also need to vote on new officers. The positions that need to be filled are: 1) Co-Chair(s) 2) Treasurer, and 3) Materials Resource Coordinator. So please be thinking about joining the executive committee, or, if you know someone who would like to serve on the executive committee, feel free to nominate them! We also have an opening for the West Great Lakes Regional Representative.

2) Our prayer meeting will be Thursday, June 27, from 7:30-8:15 AM at the college. Shuttle service will be available. Come be a woman of prayer with us! Coffee and treats will be provided.

If you are unable to join us at convention, please know that we would still love to hear from you. You may contact Katherine Hofinga, Co-Chair, at 605-586-2233 or khofinga@hotmail.com. †



June 2024

PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. West Great Lakes Region
2. Regional Home Mission Developers
3. To study Holy Scriptures daily
4. Rev. Thomas Baumgarten
5. American Lutheran Church, Mandan, ND
6. Rev. Robert Wallace
7. For the Word of God to reach the lost
8. Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper, ALTS President
9. To remember our pastors are given as a gift to the church
10. Rev. Matthew Fenn
11. Lucky Mound Lutheran Church, Ryder, ND
12. Protection for the unborn
13. Rev. Rusty Phillips
14. For pastors and leaders in the church as they serve
15. To remember the Bible is the source of truth and not our feelings
16. For The AALC General Convention
17. Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Williston, ND
18. Ukraine Ministry: Rev. Scott Yount
19. Parish Education Commission
20. Military Chaplains
21. Rev. Norman R. Beighley
22. Trinity Lutheran Church, West Hempstead, NY
23. Rev. Phillip Hofinga
24. Rev. Poul Erik Norgaard
25. That we would be unified in the gift of faith
26. Rev. Robert G. Snitzer
27. For ailing pastors
28. Rev. John Linch
29. Christian Martyrs
30. For Seminary Students

Pastors' Wives Plan Gatherings



Two years ago, at our last General Convention, the pastors' wives (PWs) were able to get together for a meal and fellowship with each other and brainstorm about ways to improve our ability to connect with each other. Unfortunately, this has not proven to be an easy task! We have created some meaningful connections but there is still plenty of room for improvement. At our General Convention in June, we will have at least two, and maybe three, opportunities to get together:

1. Come early on Tuesday, June 25, and join us for an informal get-together. Many pastors arrive early for Convention and many PWs are "along for the ride." If you are able to come early, this would be an excellent opportunity to have some extra time to get to know other PWs. We will keep the Registration Table informed of happenings.
2. There will be a Pastors' Wives dinner on Wednesday, June 26, from 5:00-6:30 PM.

We continue to recognize the need for older women to train younger women (Titus 2) and that PWs have a calling in the church that we might not feel adequately trained to do well. We are hopeful that older PWs will be able to encourage and share words of wisdom with younger PWs. So, whether you're young or old, join other PWs at Convention. Be refreshed!

If you can't be at Convention but would like to be kept in the loop about pastor's-wife stuff, please email Katherine Hofinga at khofinga@hotmail.com or Gretchen Baker at flowerspurple@hotmail.com and we will be in touch. †

First Lutheran Church and Lucky Mound Lutheran Church Celebrate 110th Anniversary

By Shannon McNally

2024 marks a milestone anniversary for First Lutheran Church of Parshall, ND, and Lucky Mound Lutheran Church, located on the outskirts of Parshall. Both parishes, shepherded by the Rev. Abraham McNally, are celebrating 110 years!

Founded within the same year as the town of Parshall itself, it is encouraging to see how God's inerrant Word has remained steadfast through the generations to come through these doors. The members of our congregations have a passion to serve and are incredibly generous with their time and their giving hearts. I only just arrived to this area from Upstate New York in late October of 2023, in preparation to marry Rev. Abraham on November 5, 2023, during a joint worship service, but I was enveloped by their Christian love through their actions. Love is

an action, after all, and they welcomed me among them with open arms.

Although the overall population of the town fluctuates and has been in decline in recent years, God continues to shine His light in this little corner of the Midwest: providing for the needs of His people and opening doors to spread the good news of the Gospel. We look forward with great anticipation to see what He'll do in us and through us in the years to come. †



Left: The wedding of Rev. Abraham and Shannon McNally took place during a joint worship service on All Saints Sunday, November 5, 2023. Submitted photo.



Right: Rev. Abraham McNally standing at the altar of First Lutheran Church, which is celebrating its 110th anniversary in 2024, along with Lucky Mound Lutheran Church. Submitted photo.

The American Association of Lutheran Churches

921 East Dupont Road, #920

Fort Wayne, IN 46825-1551

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(260) 755-9401
theaalc@taalc.org



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UPCOMING EDITIONS...

Please be in prayer for and consider contributing to these upcoming editions.

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

Jul/Aug: Lutheran Worship (*deadline May 1*)

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

Or mail: St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church, Attn: Gretchen Baker
207 Taylor St., Traer, IA 50675