

The

# EVANGEL

The Lord's Prayer





# From the Editor

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One of my favorite places to vacation is my childhood home where my parents still live. Even as a forty-something adult, I get the best sleep of my life in the house nestled in the woods of northern Minnesota; I sleep like a teenager for hours and hours and then wake up stiff and slightly confused—oh dear.

Despite the imperfections that each family deals with, this home was a place where we were loved and secure. To this day, I am greeted at the door with hugs and eager eyes and ears, ready to hear all we have to tell them.

I wonder if places and people like this are a picture of what it is like to come to our heavenly Father in prayer: He stands with loving eyes and open arms to receive us and hear our requests.

This is the beauty of what the Bible teaches, explained further in *Luther's Small Catechism*: we understand that coming to God in prayer is possible because in Jesus, we are forgiven, washed clean of our sin in the waters of baptism, and adopted as God's own children.

We are then welcomed and invited to come to Him in all peace and calm, as His own dear ones. Our requests are heard, and He takes action—has already taken action—for our good.

The theme this edition is The Lord's Prayer. Our writers delve into the first four petitions, or parts, giving us more details for contemplation on this prayer that many of us pray each Sunday in the worship service or in daily devotional time.

I pray you are blessed with the reminders that it is not *how* we pray, but to *Whom* we pray, that makes this prayer so meaningful.

Peace be with you,

*Gretchen Baker*

Gretchen Baker  
The Editor

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By Rev. Dr. Cary G. Larson

At the heart of Lutheran worship and personal devotion lies the Lord's Prayer, the prayer that Christ Jesus Himself taught His disciples when they asked Him how to pray (Luke 11:1–4; Matt 6:9–13). Within Lutheran doctrine, this prayer holds unique theological significance, representing not merely a formula of words but an embodiment of the believer's relationship with God through Christ.

Martin Luther regarded the Lord's Prayer with the highest reverence, placing it alongside the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed as one of the three chief parts of Christian doctrine in his *Small Catechism*. In his *Large Catechism*, Luther wrote, "There is no nobler prayer to be found upon earth than the Lord's Prayer... for God Himself prescribed and taught it."<sup>1</sup> He further declared it to be "the greatest martyr on earth. Everybody tortures and abuses it; few take comfort and joy in its proper use."<sup>2</sup>

The petitions of the Lord's Prayer systematically encompass the totality of Christian existence. From the hallowing of God's name to the coming of His kingdom, from the provision of daily bread to the forgiveness of sins, the prayer addresses both spiritual and temporal needs. This comprehensive nature reflects the Lutheran doctrine that God cares for the whole person—body and soul—and that faith permeates all aspects of life, as affirmed in the Augsburg Confession and its Apology (AC XXVII; Ap IV).

Particularly notable in Lutheran understanding is the petition "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Luther teaches in his catechisms that this petition reminds us daily of our need for God's grace and forgiveness (SC, The Fifth Petition). The emphasis on forgiveness aligns with the central Lutheran doctrine of "justification by faith," that we are declared righteous before God not through our own merits

but through Christ's atoning sacrifice received by faith (AC IV; Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration III).

In Lutheran liturgical practice, the Lord's Prayer occupies a pivotal position in both corporate worship and private devotion. In the Divine Service, it is prayed just before the distribution of Holy Communion, connecting Christ's words with His sacramental presence. As Luther noted that this placement is significant and reflects the Lutheran understanding that prayer and sacrament are intimately connected as means through which God comes to His people (German Mass, 1526).

The Lutheran Confessions emphasize that the Lord's Prayer is not simply to be recited but prayed with understanding and faith. Luther's explanations of each petition in both the Small and Large Catechisms were designed to deepen the believer's comprehension of what they are praying, transforming rote recitation into meaningful communion with God. As Philip Melancthon wrote in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, "Prayer exercises faith."<sup>3</sup>

For Lutherans, the Lord's Prayer remains a daily anchor, connecting individual believers not only to God but also to the universal church across time and space. At the very least, Connie and I pray the Lord's Prayer together before we go to sleep. When we pray these words, we join our voices with countless Christians throughout the world and history who have found in this prayer the perfect expression of dependence on God's mercy, confidence in His promises, and hope in His deliverance.

Therefore, dearest Christ Jesus, teach us to pray...†

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

1 Tappert, Theodore, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 422.

2 Dr. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 43, Devotional Writings II, ed. Gustav K. Wiencke, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 209.

3 Tappert, Theodore, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 156.



## *The Lord's Prayer*

# First Petition: Hallowed Be Thy Name

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*By Lisa Cooper*

*What does this mean?* God's name is certainly holy in itself, but we pray in this petition that it may be kept holy among us also.

*How is God's name kept holy?* God's name is kept holy when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as the children of God, also lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to God's Word profanes the name of God among us. Protect us from this, heavenly Father! <sup>1</sup>

*He is the one who made us, who loves us, and who sustains us. He is the one who reigns with authority over all things. As the source of all things, God is indeed “set apart”—the very meaning of the word “holy.”*



Having earlier addressed God as “Our Father who art in heaven,” we have already established *to whom* we make our petition: The one true God, who created all things, who established the skies, the limits of the seas, and placed all creatures on the face of the earth (see Gen 1–2; Job 38). He is the one who made us, who loves us, and who sustains us. He is the one who reigns with authority over all things. As the source of all things, God is indeed “set apart”—the very meaning of the word “holy.”

God being holy is a truth that is presented throughout Scripture. For example, Isaiah references God as “[T]he High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy” (Isa 57:15 NKJV). Certainly, God does not *need us* to make His name holy. It already is holy! And yet, this is how Jesus teaches us to pray. This raises the question: Why then should we pray this?

According to *Luther’s Small Catechism*, the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer calls us to three realities. First, it reminds us of God’s incredible holiness. He is indeed worthy of our wholehearted praise. By recognizing God’s rightful place as “holy, holy, holy,” (Rev 4:8 NKJV) we order our love for Him rightly.

Second, it reminds us of our holy mission on this earth as believers. We must bring the good news of our salvation in Jesus to all so that they too can hallow the name of God. When we ask that God’s name be hallowed, we are asking that His name be praised and held in high esteem everywhere including among us. As we rejoice in God’s greatness, we ask for God’s wisdom and power and glory to be known in all places by all people.

And how is this done? We must teach the Word of God “in its truth and purity,” as Luther says. Certainly, this is a charge for the pastors, ministers, leaders, and missionaries among us to preach and teach the whole counsel of the Word of God faithfully. At the same time, it is a call to us laity as well—that we would submit to such faithful teaching and let the Word of God form us. And, using the Scriptures and the teachings of the *Small Catechism* in our own families, we can help shape and teach our families.

Third, God’s name being hallowed in our midst reminds us that His holiness inspires our holiness: “[B]ut as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:15–16 NKJV). God Himself has called us to a higher calling, one that involves self-sacrifice, submission to His law, belief in the saving power of His grace, and love of our neighbor (including our enemies). Though an incredibly difficult call, God provides for us His own Spirit, the Helper, that we are equipped and strengthened for the task at hand (Jn 14:26 NKJV).

Even though God’s holiness can sound frightening, it does not prohibit us from coming to Him in prayer. Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection has paved the way for us to approach God the Father without fear. The curtain that divided us from God’s presence was torn in two upon Christ’s death (Mat 27:51 NKJV). Therefore, God’s holiness should not make us fear, but it should make us rejoice with a gladness that shines forth to the people around us.

So, as we petition the Lord that His name be hallowed, do not fear, but “come boldly to the throne of grace,” (Heb 4:16 NKJV) trusting that God will provide what is needed to truly make His name hallowed in us and everywhere.

As we await the second coming of Jesus, we can trust that God’s name will indeed spread abroad, that He would be worshipped by all kinds of people everywhere. As in the great vision of the Apostle John in Revelation, we too will see standing at the throne of Christ, “a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Rev 7:9–10 NKJV).

Praise be to God, whose name is Holy!†

*Lisa Cooper is a graduate of ALTS. She works as a marketing specialist and copywriter at Paravel Insights and recently published a book of poems entitled Hasty Corporeal Ink.*

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1 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 20.



## The Lord's Prayer

# Second Petition: Thy Kingdom Come

The  
HOLY  
BIBLE

By Chaplain Clark Brown

“My kingdom come:” this is not representative of Christ’s will. Jesus taught the “Our Father,” or Lord’s Prayer, as a guide for how the King’s children ought to petition their loving heavenly Father. Yet, examples abound of those choosing their own ways and expecting God’s blessing.

As children of God, we know we are in a battle of spirituality that is not bound by time, except when Christ comes again, to definitively judge the world. The stakes are greater than geography, prestige, wealth, and power, which are transitory. We are focused upon eternally being either in the presence of God, or separated from Him. As with any war, it is necessary to prepare to prevail.

The accusation could be leveled that I am overly simplistic in the affairs of our life in Christ. Perhaps a measure of influence has come through careers as a trooper, soldier, sailor, and airman. Each was approached, hoping individual talents may help to craft the organization owning my pledge. It was the Army that helped most in setting aside self, for the sake of all; and therein, finding great wealth.

In training there was little opportunity for individuality with times ingrained to wake, dress, eat, exercise, receive instruction, recreate, bathe, and sleep. Life was a series of established sequences. If you ever wondered what to do, there was always a sergeant willing to

guide you back on the path of Army righteousness. We experienced required memorization texts, mind numbing recitations, and singing teaching “hymns,” known as jodies.

Although part of “you” remained, your actions, thoughts, and performances became predictable by others and reinforced them as well. Individuals were feckless, but as a unit, effective enthusiasm was our ingrained character. By graduation, little thought was given to personal accomplishment. Instead, joy came from seeing the sergeants beaming in pride over the product of their tutelage.

In the Second Petition of the “Our Father,” we ask to be part of a greater gathering of souls, unified in belief, mission, and goal. Observe surrounding “Christian” communities; it is common to see organized chaos. Sadly, many have engaged in a spiritual smorgasbord: church shopping until they find a charismatic pastor, a setting that is more expressive of their *feng shui* with innovative popular tunes, then lost the faith that saved them.

A year ago, at a non-AALC Lutheran Pastor’s conference, the worship format and instruction was focused upon meeting personal “felt” needs. The topic study text had nothing to do with the Word of God. Instead, the topic was how to satisfy the needs of each and every demographic in our congregations. Divisions in the worship and study opportunities within Body of Christ were encouraged.

*To effectively train us for spiritual battle, we also give thanks for the tools given for our instruction, to keep us in the one true faith.*



When conference attendees heard the words, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph 4:5), these were inconvenient concepts to all but two participants. In later conversations, it was discovered there were nearly as many doctrines as they had members. Such division is a work of Satan to instill doubt in the minds of all mankind; it is not the way to train a spiritual army.

So, how do we prepare for the coming of His Kingdom? From the *Small Catechism* we read, “The Kingdom of God comes when our Heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity.”<sup>1</sup> St. Paul assures us of the efficacy of the Word, “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17).

Through the *Large Catechism* (LC) we learn the Second Petition’s meaning: “We ask Him to be our King, and rule us, that he deliver us from Satan, and lead us to salvation.”<sup>2</sup> **He is King. We are His subjects.** As such, His children love to do that which pleases Him.

Again, “We pray... that it may come to us, that is prevail among us and with us, so that we may be a part of those among whom His Name is hallowed.”<sup>3</sup> There’s not much room for individual expression. Our faith is relational, because we are in Him.

Again, “We pray for an eternal, inestimable treasure.”<sup>4</sup> Is comprehension of His proffered blessing even possible? We pray that through immersive learning from His Word, we develop the confidence of dear children, praying for this fulfillment.

To not have this confidence is an act of unbelief; or at least evidence of struggling belief. The LC enlivens this understanding by speaking of worldly examples, “What folly, to have an emperor promise to give us everything, and we ask for a bowl of gruel. We would rightly be judged as a rogue and scoundrel.”<sup>5</sup>

So, how do we prepare to boldly pray, “Thy kingdom come,” and not, “My kingdom of porridge?” The LC simplifies this preparation: “[His Kingdom] comes here through word and faith, and in eternity.” Above fallen reason of men, “We pray: Give us your Word; that it be received in faith, prevail among us and defeat Satan.”<sup>6</sup>

Christ told Pontius Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). Just so, His means and methods of our training are foreign to this world. In His place, Christ has appointed under-shepherds to labor in the Word and doctrine (I Tim 5:17).

While we fearfully obeyed our sergeants, we eagerly submit to the teaching of our pastors, “As they that must give account” (Heb 13:17). Their personal passions and desires are set aside that you may learn confidence in the Word and Sacraments. Unlike the many fallen spiritual disciplines, who dictate mere hirelings to feed each one of them according to individual needs, we are enabled to stand together, supporting each other, against Satan, by Christ’s might.

Army graduation brought us joy at the sergeants’ success. In the spiritual realm, we stand behind pastors, “that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb 13:17).

To effectively train us for spiritual battle, we also give thanks for the tools given for our instruction, to keep us in the one true faith. First of all, we have the Spirit-inspired Word of God. As an accurate compendium of the Scripture, Lutherans enjoy the works of the confessors, compiled within the *Book of Concord*. This exquisite Lutheran “Canon Law” serves to keep us spiritually marching in unison, as binding upon us all.

Because these documents can overwhelm us, brief statements are offered for memorization, discipline, and strengthening. These tools, found within the hymnals that have innocuously trained us with bits of memory work: the three ecumenical creeds, *The Small Catechism*, catechetical hymns, and a liturgy crafted in a manner encouraging each other with Holy Writ read responsively.

Other disciplines are not blessed to have these mnemonics to prepare for the struggles of living beneath the cross. In the Bible, the *Lutheran Confessions*, and hymnals we acknowledge they were acquired, at great expense, for our benefit, since before the time of Moses. With such a vast cloud of “sergeants” dedicated to our preparation, we are blessed with the “now and not yet” of being in His Kingdom.

Knowing the necessity of the right faith, we cherish pastors, who teach according to this maxim of St. Paul. “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain” (I Cor 15:1, 2). †

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1 *Concordia Triglotta* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 178.

2 *Ibid*, 711.

3 *Ibid*, 711.

4 *Ibid*, 713.

5 *Ibid*, 711.

6 *Ibid*, 713.





*The Lord's Prayer*

# Third Petition: Thy Will Be Done

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*By Rev. Abraham McNally*

What is the greatest prayer you can imagine? Some teach that the best prayers are the biggest prayers, the prayers that ask for the greatest and most, because certainly God is powerful enough to grant such prayers. To these people, such prayers also demonstrate great faith in God's own faithfulness and power. If we are not praying big bold prayers, they say, then we demonstrate a lack of faith and are not faithful in the kinds of prayers God wants us to pray.



It is indeed a wonderful gift that the God of the universe invites us to pray, He asks us to pray, and commands us to pray to Him for our good. In this He demonstrates His love and care for us. Greater still, He promises to hear our prayers.

But is it true that the biggest and boldest prayers are the best? God can certainly do all things. He has all power. But a focus on the boldness of our prayers gets things backwards. If prayer is all about what I ask and what I want, the emphasis is on myself. Prayer can become a selfish act rather than one born of humility. Our prayers have a danger of becoming, "My will be done."

On the other hand, there are times in our lives when we feel like God does not hear our prayers. We have raised an earnest prayer to God's ear and have not received that for which we asked, or we feel we have received no answer at all. We are tempted to think in this way: "If God asks me to pray, He promises to hear my prayers, yet He does not grant my request, then what is the point of prayer?"

We must also remember that God is not a genie who is there to grant our every whim. Instead of a genie, He is our Father. A genie does whatever his master says. A Father does what is best for His children.

It is a great comfort that the one who invites us to pray is indeed our Father. This means that we can have confidence in praying to Him knowing that He knows best and will do what is best. A child asks his earthly father for all things. He knows that his Father loves him and is able to provide for him. But the father will (and must) deny many requests from his child because many times the things for which he asks are not good for him. "Father knows best," as they say.

A genie-god is not worth praying to. Many stories and fables recount the destructive results of hubris-laden wishes. But it is a boon and a blessing to pray to a God who tells us He is our Father. He knows what is good for us. He has our best interests in mind and at heart. We can ask him all things as dear children ask their dear Father and can be assured not only that He hears, but that whatever His answer may be, it will be what is best.

In prayer God invites us to bring all our cares, concerns, and requests to Him. David and the other psalmists pray even the most heart-wrenching imprecatory prayers. These prayers are Scripture breathed out by the Holy Spirit through the men. If even these prayers have their origin in God Himself, we know He is the one to whom it is safe to pray. He hears and receives the most guttural outcries of our souls. And in times when we are in too much pain even to pray, He promises help.

The Scripture says, "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom 8:26-27 NKJV).

Our Father not only knows what is best, but he knows our hearts and minds. In the deepest sense, He knows what we need. When we are completely powerless in our hurts and pains, the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us. He prays for us. He prays in our place. And if the Holy Spirit is praying for us, then we can be certain that the will of God will be done among us.

Because God is our Father, there is no greater prayer than the third petition we pray in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done." It is the sum of all our prayers. God wills that His name be hallowed, that His kingdom come. He even wills that we receive daily bread and forgiveness.

But we think, "Isn't God's will always done? Why do we need to pray, 'Thy will be done,' if God's will is done even without our prayer?" Luther helps us to understand in his *Small Catechism*. Our prayer is not merely that God's will would be done in some general way, but that His will would be done among us, that His will would be done for me. Such a prayer is an active prayer which turns everything in my life over to the will of God.

Our Blessed Lord Himself prayed such a prayer even in His darkest hour. On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane. He knew He was soon heading toward His suffering and death. How would He spend his last few hours of freedom and life? He spent them in prayer. He prayed, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matt 26:39 NKJV).

We wonder, "If Jesus was willingly going to the cross for our sake, why did he ask that the cup of His suffering pass from Him?" No sane person wants to suffer. Only the masochist desires suffering. Jesus did not want to suffer, but He was willing to suffer for us, and He wanted what was best. It was His Father's will that the Son suffer so that we might be forgiven. It was not merely the Son's will to do the will of His Father (merely, as if that were a small thing), but Christ Himself willed that our sins might be forgiven even if it be through His innocent suffering and death. Ultimately, like His Father, Jesus wanted what was best not for Himself, but for us. Therefore, He ended His prayer to His Father, "Not as I will, but as You will."

Our Father was willing to send His only begotten Son to suffer and die for our sake, a gift and a blessing beyond anything we could ever ask, hope, or imagine. If that is an example of His will for us, then we must certainly pray, "Thy will be done." Beyond that, our Father has the power to raise Jesus from the dead. If that is an example of His power, then we must certainly pray, "Thy will be done." If we pray "thy will be done" to the One who knows what is best for us, to the One who wants what is best for us, and to the One who has the power to bring it about, what better prayer can there be? †

*The Rev. Abraham McNally serves the congregations of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Parshall, ND, and Lucky Mound Lutheran Church, Ryder, ND.*



*The Lord's Prayer*

# Fourth Petition: Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

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*By Rev. Joseph Christina*





*We trust that if our Lord feeds the likes of Baby Daisy, He will most certainly care for us.*

Many people don't know that our family houses a lot of critters. Namely three dogs, currently five cats, two chickens, a duck, a ball python, and a Russian tortoise. And I'm sure I'm forgetting something as well. Needless to say, we are "frequent flyers" at Tractor Supply and Pet Smart. Our most recent addition is a beagle/dachshund mix that we call "Baby Daisy." She is the princess of the family and basically won the dog lottery when she came from the shelter. I buy her food and dog cookies, pay for her vet care, get her toys, and pretty much everything else a dog with a charmed life can have.

I am constantly reminded in this process of Jesus' assurance to us that if His Heavenly Father cares for even the critters of the world, He most certainly cares for His children. Therefore, we pray with confidence the petition "Give us this day our daily bread." And we trust that if our Lord feeds the likes of Baby Daisy, He will most certainly care for us.

One of the things I've come to grips with in adulthood with bills and mortgages and food costs, etc., are the words of King David in Psalm 24: "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." This makes it considerably easier when I know that I need to get in God's truck to take God's beagle to the vet to pay with God's money. It's all His anyway. But He graciously provides it for us to use as stewards here on earth. And when He hears us in this petition of the Lord's Prayer, He graciously provides the things we need—and sometimes want—in life to sustain His children.

In fact, I'm convinced that this petition of the Our Father is one of the most "provable" petitions that God does, in fact, answer

our prayers. I will often ask my lambs what they're going to do when they get home from church. The response: Eat lunch. Like Baby Daisy when she hears the Nurse's iPhone alarm (my wife is a nurse) in the morning, she knows there's gonna be grub.

God provides. God richly provides. We ask for His provision in the Prayer, and He graciously answers us according to His good and perfect will. Whether you sit down to a full course meal at Chris' Steak House (if you're ever in Fayetteville, highly recommend) or you're at your office desk with a cup of ramen, this is God's answer to your petition.

In fact, as we know from Scripture, God even provides for the wicked who never think to ask Him but instead believe that they are the ones who provide for themselves. That's what sets us apart. We retain the Lord's Prayer as a staple in our worship because He bids us to ask Him as our gracious Father. Like my young son Adrian walking into the garage as a six-year-old to ask for a snack, we can boldly approach our Father in the Lord's Prayer and be confident that He will answer.

Baby Daisy knows that when that alarm goes off, she will be fed. Our "alarm" is the gift of the Lord's Prayer and the Spirit-given faith in our Father to trust He will listen and respond. So we treasure this precious gift the way Daisy treasures her deer antlers. After all, if God provides "daily bread" for a little beagle, He will most certainly provide for His redeemed children. †

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





## Congregation Feature



Submitted photo

### Christ Lutheran Church–Duluth MN

Our roots began as the first Mission Package of the Women’s Missionary Federation of the former ALC. They pledged \$33,000 and extended a call to Reverend Garland Gotoski to start a church in April of 1951. He advertised in the paper, held a meeting at the community club, and organized the congregation. Our first service was held in the Piedmont School Auditorium on September 23, 1951, with 70 men, women, and children.

Groundbreaking for our chapel began that November and our first service was April 13, 1952, Easter Sunday! Rev. Merrill Herder was called in November 1955, with 265 confirmed members. We called Rev. Dennis Schlossin in January of 1961. Outgrowing our space, groundbreaking began at our current location May 8, 1966. Rev. Dr. Thomas Aadland was installed as Senior Pastor in August of 1980.

With the ELCA merger, our core beliefs of biblical inerrancy and sound doctrine were challenged. We withdrew and joined The AALC on February 6, 1989. Rev. Aadland took the call of Presiding Pastor of The AALC in 1999. He then worked with the LCMS to obtain our altar and pulpit fellowship. We called Rev. Michael Main in January 2000. Vicar Chris Schroder joined us in 2005. Rev. Gary DeSha was called in January 2019.

In April of 2023, without a shepherd, we looked to the leadership of Rev. Dr. Cary Larson. As we prayed and patiently waited, we continued our ministry under God’s hand. On July 17, 2024, we called Rev. Mark Raitz. We are truly blessed to have Pastor and his wife Marianne as part of our church family.

Our Bible studies have grown to 40-plus members. On Sundays, Pastor Raitz is reviewing the writing styles of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Wednesday evenings we are reviewing *Luther’s Small Catechism*.

We are passionate about outreach. Our mission statement is “To know Christ and to make Him known.” We have a “Food Share”

on the fourth Thursday of each month, and we provide bags of groceries to neighborhood families. Our Evangelism Committee hands out children’s bags with crafts, Bible verses, and treats. Birthday bags are given with cake mix, candles, and a “Birthday Blessing” card.

We join our neighbors to celebrate National Night Out in August, where we hand out ice-cream, fliers and Gideon Bibles. Our congregation supplies hats and mittens to Piedmont Elementary School and provides snacks for their kindergarten classes. We bless their teachers on their first day of school with pastries, coffee, and a prayer for a blessed school year. We also provide a community event called the Father Daughter Ball (see pages 18–19).

Our Esther Circle Ladies meet once a month for Bible Study and other activities, including care for our gardens. The quilters group donates to the women’s shelter. Our men’s group, Band of Brothers, meets Wednesday morning for devotions, coffee and fellowship. They make a great pancake breakfast too!

At present, we have seven Junior and Sr. High school aged youth – two of which are in confirmation. All plan to attend The AALC Youth Conference in Estes Park this summer.

We have two favorite traditions at our church: making pasties every fall and our special Spritz cookies before Christmas—hand squeezing out 6500-plus cookies! Both have heavily guarded recipes! Monies earned are donated to many local ministries and used for church needs.

Our congregation looks forward to Sunday morning worship together. Greeters and ushers visit with our congregation and welcome visitors. We take note of who is missing or out ill. We all partake in a wonderful and uplifting service where God’s infallible and inerrant Word is spoken. Being true Lutherans, we cannot gather without having coffee and treats after our service! God is good, we are blessed! †





# Clergy Feature



Submitted photo

## Rev. Edwin Mendivelso

### When/how did God call you into the ministry?

In 2004, during a mission trip to Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada. One morning, I went out to pray and reflect. As I walked toward a small hill, I saw big ravens circling around and threatening a little cat hiding under some rocks. I rushed over, and the ravens flew off, leaving the cat safe.

Feeling thankful, I sat on the rock where the cat had been and opened my Bible, where I found a real miracle. The pages fell to Matthew 28:19-20: "...Go and make disciples of all nations..." I realized this was God's clear call for my life. That moment marked the start of an incredible journey of faith, filled with adventures and a deeper trust in God's plans.

### Where are you serving now?

Mountain View Lutheran Church, Thornton, CO. This church is small and has an older congregation but is ready to face today's challenges. We now have one service for all ages in simple, common language, with plans to grow.

Our church is located in an area with many working-class people who are mostly renters, as well as young families with small children. These families are busy and stressed, as the demands of life leave them with little time to attend church.

We are 20 minutes north of Denver; the city and state are promoted as tourist destinations, focusing on arts, sports, and a materialistic lifestyle, leaning heavily on liberal values. Church properties are being sold under the false promise of affordable housing. In this dry land, it is pertinent to remember with hope the verse in Romans 5:20: "...but where sin increased, God's grace increased much more."

### What do you most want your congregation to know?

In the Bible, God used people like Moses, Abraham, Noah, Anna, Elizabeth, and many others to serve Him, no matter their age. It is the same for us today. Don't feel discouraged; you are precious in God's eyes.

I also want them to help others learn about hope and salvation as the world grows dim. We need to be willing and ready to use our talents to serve, no matter how old we are.

### What brings you joy in your tasks as pastor?

I find joy in God's Word because it is my main source of strength and support. I also feel joy when sharing the Gospel, praying for people at a bus stop, or giving a Bible to someone in need on the street. Our Gospel has the power to transform lives.

Also too, I find joy in seeing people grow in Christ and watching the congregation grow together in faith every Sunday.

### What has been the most surprising/unexpected aspect of becoming a pastor?

Rely more on God and less on yourself. God always answers prayers, and His love is endless. Each day, He shows us His mercy and teaches us through His Word in His Church. No matter what condition the Church is in, He will always provide support in one way or another.

Whatever plans we have, it is always better to seek God's guidance first, even when things seem impossible to understand.

### What is one of the biggest challenges you see Christians facing?

Encouraging discipleship can be challenging because many people are hesitant to commit to one church. They often move from church to church, becoming receivers rather than contributors. Over time, their hearts can grow hard, making them resistant and sometimes even disrespectful toward things of God. The good news is that God has given us the tool of prayer, allowing us to lift them up as part of our good fight of faith.

### Where have you seen God working lately?

God is present everywhere and hears our prayers. One important lesson we've learned is the value of connecting with the community in meaningful ways. By engaging in local events, offering practical help, and building relationships as ambassadors of Christ, God opens opportunities for us to serve and grow together. Simple efforts, like creating welcoming spaces and providing resources, can have a big impact and pave the way for future initiatives, such as a "Mothers' Support Program." By meeting the needs of the community, we can share the Good News of salvation and make a lasting difference. †



American Lutheran  
Theological Seminary



## My Role as Chair of Lutheran Dogmatics

Rev. Dr Jordan B. Cooper

I have had the privilege to be involved with American Lutheran Seminary (ALTS) for the last thirteen years—first as a student, and then as a professor. In that time, I have seen the seminary grow immensely, both in its student body and in its continual improvement of educational resources and methods. Even with a small budget and staff, ALTS continues to provide top quality theological education, academically and practically. What impresses me most about our faculty and staff is that they are always looking for new ways to improve the quality of our education and to reach new students. I am ever-thankful to our Lord for His faithfulness to us as we seek to pass on the great truths of our Christian, and Lutheran, heritage to future generations of pastors, church workers, and interested laity.

I have been teaching at ALTS in some capacity for the last decade. That teaching has consisted mostly in dogmatics, or systematic theology, courses. This includes: Doctrine I, Doctrine II, Theological Prolegomena, Lutheran Confessions I, and Lutheran Confessions II. I have also taught Law and Gospel, Apologetics, and Homiletics I.

Along with this teaching, I served as the President of ALTS for four years from 2020 through 2024. When I served in that role, I created a student manual of policies and procedures (with the help of the rest of the ALTS staff) and officially began our journey into accreditation through the Association for Biblical Higher Education. Out of a desire to focus primarily on both teaching and writing, I stepped back from that role, where the Rev. Dr. Leins is now serving us faithfully.

The position I now hold is the Chair of Lutheran Dogmatics. There are three responsibilities to outline here which are part of my role. Before discussing those three aspects of my call, however, I want to first explain exactly what dogmatics is for those who are not sure how precisely what that term means.

### WHAT IS DOGMATICS?

The theological discipline is roughly divided into four distinct categories: historical theology, exegetical theology, practical theology, and systematic theology. The first, historical theology, refers to the study of theology throughout history. A historical theologian is focused on questions like, what did Martin Luther say about justification? and, what did St. Athanasius teach about the two natures of Christ? The second, exegetical theology, is centered on a close examination of the books of the Bible. Exegetical theologians will often specialize in one specific author, like Paul or Matthew, or one genre of Biblical books, like wisdom literature. The third, practical theology, explores how theology is to applied in a practical context.

My area of expertise is in the last of these categories of theology: systematic theology. Systematic theology is a study of doctrines in a clear and systematic way. The systematic theologian will ask questions like, what is the doctrine of original sin? This discipline draws from both exegetical and historical theology, working to define terms and ideas, putting them all together in a coherent way. The term “dogmatics” is simply another way of speaking about systematic theology. It comes from the word “dogma,” which means an authoritative teaching.

The call of the dogmatic theologian (also called a dogmatician) is to explain doctrine that is present in Scripture with the categories and debates in mind that have developed throughout church history. For one who engages in *Lutheran dogmatics*—as is my title—the doctrine which is taught is consistent with the Lutheran Confessions. This means that while Scripture is always the primary and foundational source of dogmatic authority, the dogmatician should also be regularly engaged in reading both the Lutheran Confessions and earlier Lutheran authors.



## WHAT IS MY ROLE?

My new role as Chair of Lutheran Dogmatics consists of three primary responsibilities.

The first of these is teaching. I will continue to teach each of the courses that I have taught previously, which includes everything in our academic program that falls under the category of dogmatics. This includes courses on doctrine and on the Lutheran Confessions. Further, as we are continuing to develop of Doctor of Ministry program, I am heading up one of the tracks which our students can take that specializes in Lutheran dogmatics. I will be forming those courses, along with Rev. Matthew Fenn, and teaching.

Second, I serve as a representative of the seminary and The AALC to a variety of theological conferences, journals, and institutions. Through writing and speaking, I continue to bring awareness to our school and to The AALC in the broader Christian world—including outside of Lutheranism and outside of North America. I have sometimes presented up to five talks at various venues within a single month and have been writing articles for several publications. As one

example, recent museum-attendees in New York City at the Metropolitan Museum of Art have heard the name American Lutheran Theological Seminary if they took the audio tour of the Caspar David Friedrich exhibition (a well-known Lutheran painter from the eighteenth century) through a talk I gave to the Museum. Our hope is that this kind of exposure will raise the profile of The AALC and will result in a broadening of our reach.

Third, I have been commissioned to write a Systematic Theology textbook for use at our seminary. This is a work which will take many years, as it is likely to include multiple volumes. I have begun to do a significant amount of research into the project, and have a rough outline of what some of the sections are going to look like when completed. This is a task I do not take lightly and will not do hastily, as I hope to produce something which can be an aid to pastors for many decades to come.

As I continue to do this work, I ask for your prayers, that my teaching will always remain consistent with God's Word, and that as venues and opportunities to teach keep opening up, the message of the Gospel will spread, and that the reach of ALTS grows. †

# Installations



The Rev. Greg Stenzel was installed as Pastor at Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Williston, ND, on Sunday, March 2, 2025. Present at the service: Rev. David Huskamp, AALC Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, Rev. Stenzel, and Rev. Kevin Beard. Submitted photo.



The Rev. Dean Stoner was installed as Pastor of First English Lutheran Church of Gibsonburg, OH, on Sunday, January 19, 2025. AALC Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Cary Larson presided over the service. Pastor Stoner had been serving First English Lutheran in a vacancy capacity for over two years. Pastor Stoner will continue to serve as Administrative Assistant to The AALC in addition to this new Call. Submitted photo.



The Rev. Jamie Strickler was installed as Pastor at St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, Otis, CO, on Sunday, February 16, 2025. Present for the installation were: Rev. Benjamin Vanderhyde, Rev. Kurt Hatteberg, Rev. Dennis Fitzpatrick, Rev. Jamie Strickler, Rev. Bror Erickson, Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, Rev. Edwin Mendivelso, and Rev. Dr. Craig Loving. Submitted photo.

# Women of L.I.F.E.

## Bible Study Meets in Holstein, IA

*Ladies from Faith Lutheran Church in Holstein, IA, meet for the Women of L.I.F.E. Bible Study on Ruth. Our gracious host, Dorothy, shares her home and always has a treat and coffee for us to enjoy fellowship afterwards! Picture submitted by Debbie Friedrichsen*



## Our Redeemer's Lutheran WOL hosts Valentine's Day

By Donette Taylor

Women of L.I.F.E. from Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Williston, ND, planned and held a Valentine's Party Brunch on Saturday, February 8, 2025. About thirty ladies came to the event on a cold, below zero February morning. We shared a devotion on love and how important it is to "Love Your Life," and learned if you don't love God and put Him first in your life, it is hard to love your life.

We served egg bakes, homemade muffins and fruit. A member of our church, Mick Soiseth, played and sang a few love songs. We had a wonderful morning of fellowship and visiting.

We also played a game of moving a wrapped gift from left to right as a story was read. It was the greatest love story ever, "The birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ". Whoever was holding the

gift when the game finished kept the gift and unwrapped it. We also gave out a few Valentine's door prizes.

Our church has three circle groups that work within our church to serve funerals, Lenten suppers, and anything else that is needed. We meet monthly for Bible Study; right now we are studying "The Armor of God," written by Laurie O'Brien. One circle group meets Wednesday mornings at 10:30 am, one meets Thursday mornings at 9:30 am and one meets Thursday afternoons at 5:00 pm.

We plan three special events each year for the women: Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and something special for Christmas/Advent. We take turns planning and serving these events. We are always trying to encourage our younger women to join in Bible study or helping serve. †

## In Memoriam: E. Mardell Lindberg



E. Mardell (Kvitne) Lindberg, daughter of Sam and Martha (Hauge) Kvitne, was born on June 13, 1932, at the family home in Grand Forks, ND. She was baptized as an infant by Rev. Stromme at her mother's home church: Buxton Lutheran in Buxton, ND.

She attended school in Grand Forks, graduating in 1950. On June 5, 1954, she graduated from the University of North Dakota, majoring in home economics and dietetics, and the next day was united in marriage to a fellow graduate and Army Lieut., Duane Lindberg.

Her skills as a dietitian and homemaker served her and her family well when her husband answered God's call to the ministry. Her gracious kindness had a very positive effect not only on the family but also on the parishes they served in Williston and Epping/Wheelock, ND; and West Union, Traer, Holstein, and Waterloo, IA.

Mardell was an avid Bible student, Bible Study leader, and Sunday School teacher. Mardell also advised the national Women of L.I.F.E. Board of The AALC for several years, in addition to writing a Bible study guide entitled, "God's Encouraging Word."

Mardell had the privilege of nurturing her five children and was also proud to be "Bestemor" (Grandmother) to 11 precious grandchildren and "Oldemor" (great grandmother) to eleven great-grandchildren.

Mardell entered the Church Triumphant on March 20, 2025. Funeral services were held March 25, 2025, at Ascension Lutheran Church, Waterloo, IA.

May the Lord Jesus Christ bless her memory among her family, friends, congregations, and in the communities where she served! †





# Come on, Ring Those Bells

By Steven Rash



**Left:** The view of the bell in the bell tower at St. Luke Lutheran Church, Traer, IA. Photo by Steven Rash.

**Right:** The weave to repair the old rope still held strong. Photo by Steven Rash.

A few weeks ago, I went to ring the bell for Church and down came the pull rope. A few weeks later, I and a couple friends made the journey up into the bell tower to attach a new pull rope and check things out.

We noticed the rope had broken before and was spliced/woven together by what must have been a navy knot of some kind, at least I've never seen this weave before. It was quite a weave.

Being up in that bell tower and seeing that knot brought back a lot of memories. It reminded me of the way we are all woven into the body of Christ, and nothing can break that bond. The rope was as good as new. I also noticed the date on the bell, 1868, 157 years ago. It came from Jones & Company in Troy, NY.

I started to reflect on all the events that bell had rung out over the years. It's been ringing out the good news for over 77 years at our church in Traer, IA, since being relocated from Blairstown, IA, in 1948 and sounds as great as ever. Just think about all the weddings, baptisms, funerals, installations, graduations, dinners. and services, etc., it has rung out over in Traer and the 80 years prior.

There have been a lot of changes over the years and our numbers are dwindling as they are in many other churches today but that bell just keeps ringing out and proclaiming the good news, drawing people in to hear of God's redemptive plan. What the future holds, only God knows, but until He calls us home, we'll just keep ringing out that good news of Jesus Christ and His redemptive plan for all mankind.✝

*Steven Rash is a member of St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, Traer, IA.*

## May 2025 PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. To believe God is our true Father in heaven
2. Rev. Mark Raitz
3. Gretchen Baker, *Evangel Editor*
4. Rev. Richard Day
5. To keep God's name holy
6. Bible Lutheran Church, Dodge Center, MN
7. Rev. Thomas Baumgarten
8. Rev. Matthew Fenn, *ALTS Provost*
9. Rev. Orlando Hash
10. For abused children
11. Rev. John Bergson
12. Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church, Saint Paul, MN
13. Rev. Paul Hueter
14. Christ Lutheran Church, Chetek, WI
15. Rev. Norman Hoffeld
16. Women of L.I.F.E. Committees
17. Christ Lutheran Church, Chippewa Falls, WI
18. That God's kingdom will come to us
19. Rev. Arne Bjelland
20. Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry
21. Rev. Jay Eberth
22. Women of L.I.F.E. Executive Committee
23. Rev. Dr. Fred Hall
24. Unity in the Church
25. Rev. Len Brokenshire
26. That God would lead us to receive our daily bread
27. Rev. Tylan Dalrymple
28. Ukraine Ministry - Rev. Scott Yount
29. Mr. Michael Baumgarn
30. That God's Word would reach unbelievers
31. The Sending Place



June 2025

PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. West Great Lakes Region TAALC
2. Rev. Eric Ishimaru
3. To ask God to forgive us and to enable us to forgive others
4. Rev. David F. Johnson
5. Christ Lutheran Church, Duluth, MN
6. Rev. David M. Johnson
7. For The Lord's Prayer and explanation be taught
8. Rev. Larry Juergensen
9. That God would guard and keep us
10. Rev. Leon Knitt
11. Clam Falls Lutheran Church, Frederic, WI
12. Those planning to attend The AALC Youth Conference
13. Rev. Michael Main
14. Board of Trustees
15. That God would rescue us from every evil
16. Rev. Dale Zastrow
17. The AALC Ministerium
18. Evangelism Commission
19. That God's will be done among us
20. Seminary Professors
21. Rev. Joseph Marsh
22. Community Lutheran Church, Wausaukee, WI
23. Standing Committee for Men
24. Mr. Nathan Rinne
25. For missionaries serving overseas
26. Rev. Robert Ross
27. Protection for the unborn
28. Rev. Dan Sollie
29. Local AALC church
30. Rev. Dr. Thomas Stover

## Father Daughter Ball

Hosted by Christ Lutheran Church, Duluth, MN



*A father and daughter enjoy the music on the dance floor at the Father Daughter Ball. Photo by Lynnette's Portrait Design, used with permission.*

On January 25, and again on February 8, 2025, Christ Lutheran Church, Duluth, MN, celebrated our 29th Annual Father Daughter Ball, a community event held two Saturdays each January or February. We were blessed this year to have a total of 1,100 in attendance!

It was a joy to watch the faces of our new pastor, Rev. Mark Raitz and his wife Marianne, as they walked into the Ballroom of the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center for their first time to see all the excited dads and their daughters all dressed up and the grandeur of the room. With prayers and God's direction, Pastor Mark gave a wonderful Christian message to our guests.

This all started in 1997 when a small group of women from Christ Lutheran read an article in the *Focus on the Family* magazine about a Father Daughter Dance. It was about a father inspired to have a dance after listening to Dr. James Dobson, who was addressing the importance of a strong and healthy relationship between fathers and their daughters.

We presented our proposal to our church council. Of course, there was some apprehension, but we prayed and received support of our vision! We took a leap of faith and God opened doors. We rented the Marshall School cafeteria, advertised in the paper, recruited volunteers, and worked with KDNW Christian radio station to borrow their sound system and "rent" a DJ. We managed this in about a month!

*continued on page 19*





*Top and top right photos: Fathers and daughters enjoy the evening's festivities at the ball held each year for 29 years. Photo by Lynnette's Portrait Design, used with permission.*

Dads weren't as thrilled. We begged, pleaded, and promised that if they came, they would have fun, and, they did! We charged \$7.50 a person, we didn't go in the red, and in February of 1997, The Father-Daughter Ball of Duluth was "born".

We now cap our attendance to around 700 each evening to allow for enough dance floor space. One of our last attendees stated they have been attending since our first event. In 1999, we moved to the Greysolon Plaza Ballroom and gradually began adding additional nights. By 2006, we had expanded to four evenings with just over 1,400 guests! In 2007, tickets for the ball sold out in just over an hour! In 2009, we began hosting our event at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center.

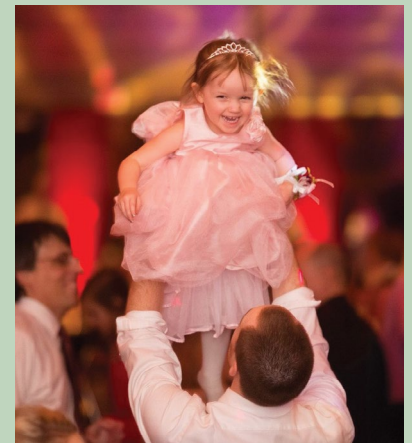
We have had as many as 950 guests attend each evening. Dads have brought their daughters as young as 6 months old, and daughters have brought their dads who are 80-plus years old – sometimes three generations!

Each evening begins with our announcements and Pastor's message, followed by a sit-down dinner, dessert and three hours of dancing to selected music. We have a professional photographer available to take portraits to remember the evening. There are drawings throughout the evening with door prizes for stuffed animals and gift certificates and baskets from various local restaurants and businesses.

The Father Daughter Ball has been blessed to be able to sponsor some men and their daughters from MN Adult and Teen Challenge – Duluth Campus. This is a blessing for the dads as they rebuild their relationships with their families on their road to recovery.

2026 will mark our 30th Anniversary. Each year we continue to be encouraged by the wonderful response of our community and are so thankful for the continued help and support from our church family. We are amazed at the workings of Christ and praise Him for the success of this outreach event. From our humble beginnings with 150 guests, our desire remains the same: for fathers (and father figures) and their daughters in our area to enjoy an evening together that they will treasure forever and that the presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is felt.

For more info, visit [www.fatherdaughterballduluth.org](http://www.fatherdaughterballduluth.org). †



*Marianne and Rev. Mark Raitz, Carolyn Lofald (co-coordinator of this event and VP of Christ Lutheran Church), and Mike Pickar (co-coordinator of this event and President of Christ Lutheran Church). Photo by Lynnette's Portrait Design, used with permission.*

## 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:**

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](mailto:theevangel@taalc.org)

**Or mail:** St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church, Attn: Gretchen Baker  
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