

The

# EVANGEL

The Lutheran Home





# From the Editor

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As I reviewed the articles for this edition on “The Lutheran Home,” I was reminded of how many people God has brought into my life to encourage me and point me to the truth of Scripture. Besides the blessing of my parents, many others played a role as well.

My parents: I’m sure they didn’t think much of it at the time, but as we sat around the table at meal time, we talked. Yes, just talked. Through that simple routine, we kids were shown how to think of people with kindness and think through issues with Biblical discernment.

My grandparents: when they babysat for an evening, my grandpa read the Bible to us before Grandma tucked us in. My aunt: as she closed a birthday card to my sister, she wrote: “Relax in His grace” – a phrase that still comes to my mind at times. Another grandma closed every card or letter with the same verse: Romans 8:28, except for one time, she used a different verse. We chuckled and commented: “Is Grandma ok?”

Besides the blessing of faithful family members, I had teachers, older Christians, and others who, in some way, encouraged my faith, taught me Scriptural truth, or showed me faith through humble service.

How about you: who has God used throughout your life of faith?

Maybe some of you readers are not in what we typically think of as “home” with parents and children. But maybe you are a grandparent, an older Christian at church, a mentor, teacher, or godparent, who has a relationship with children and young adults. Take what you glean from these articles and ponder how God can use you as a voice of encouragement and truth to these young people.

As Paul wrote, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well,” (1 Tim 1:5). Timothy’s grandmother was important to the growth of his faith; maybe you are to someone as well?

You matter. Your prayers, notes, words of kindness or advice – God may be using it in a way that you don’t see. But trust that He is working, even in the “little” things.

Trusting in His grace,

*Gretchen Baker*

Gretchen Baker  
The Editor

*Note: The themes for the 2025 editions have been set and are listed on the back page. Would you prayerfully consider writing an article on one of the themes? If you are interested, let me know and I can share a specific topic with you. Email me at: [theevangel@taalc.org](mailto:theevangel@taalc.org).*

- 2** From the Editor
- 3** Presiding Pastor
- 4-5** God’s Order in Marriage
- 6-7** Busy Parents
- 8-9** Catechesis in the Home
- 10-11** A Place of Grace
- 12-13** Counseling for the Christian
- 14** Seminary Accreditation Progress
- 15-18** Church News
- 17-18** Prayer Bookmark
- 19** Lutherans & Nativities
- 20** Themes for 2025

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# The Lutheran Home and the Home Altar

By Rev. Dr. Cary G. Larson

My first call was to two open country rural Lutheran congregations. The larger congregation was a former American Lutheran Church congregation and very proud of its Norwegian heritage. They even had “*ære til Gud*” (“glory to God” in Norwegian) painted on the archway above the naive toward the chancel. The other congregation was much smaller and once part of the Lutheran Church in America with a robust Swedish descent. The founding pastor, Rev. Eric Norelius, founded Lutheran churches across southern Minnesota in the late 1800s, as well as Gustavus Adolphus College (which was once a very faithful Lutheran college).

I recall vividly that the Swedish Lutheran church had as a practice and part of the annual congregational meeting to publish a list of things each member was to commit themselves to as a faithful congregational member. One such item on the list was to construct a home altar. I have been a Lutheran since my baptism at three weeks old, yet I was not familiar with this Lutheran distinction, “the home altar.” I’ve only seen an actual home altar at a couple of pastors’ homes. To date, my family has never had one either.

After some research, I’ve learned the home altar is a very Christian thing to do. The home altar no doubt has its connection all the way to the Luther household in Wittenberg. When I was growing up, the family dining table was a sort of home altar. We would pray over our meals and talk about the Christian life, and it was at that table, my brother and I would recite our memory work for confirmation class to our parents. This may be familiar to you as well.

But, as our country is rapidly becoming more and more secular, that is, farther and farther from the Church and the Christian faith, I’m thinking we should be more intentional about marking our home as a Christian home and more deliberate about our home devotional life.

As Lutherans, we believe that the family serves as a small representation of the Church. The father is considered the leader of the family and is responsible for guiding his wife and children towards Christ Jesus. In order for Christian families to

thrive, daily prayers and reading of God’s Word are essential, just as God’s Word and Sacraments are necessary in our lives to establish and maintain faith (Rom 10:17). These are the ways through which forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are granted to us (Augsburg Confession V). Martin Luther even advises that “the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household” at the beginning of most of the chief parts of the *Small Catechism*.

The home altar doesn’t have to be a specific piece of furniture, or a shrine placed in the corner of the living room. More importantly, we must dedicate time to our spiritual life apart from our busy schedules. It’s essential to supplement our worship life with home devotions, reading the Scriptures, the *Small Catechism*, or even parts of the *Book of Concord*, and prayer. Frankly, if dedicating only one hour on one day of the week to God’s Word and prayer is the extent of your spiritual practice, you are running on fumes, and this won’t be sustainable as our society drifts farther and farther from Christ Jesus.

I’m delighted to report that through pictures on social media, it appears that younger Lutheran families not only maintain and expand such devotional practices but often center them around an actual home altar in their home that may include a small table with candles, a Bible, a hymnal, the *Small Catechism*, prayer books, with a crucifix or other images of Christ Jesus.

As the Presiding Pastor of The AALC, I invite you to join my wife, Connie, and me in forming and maintaining a “family altar” in one way or another. Because we live, move, and have our being as Christians and Christian families through the Word of God, which we share with one another, such practices will inevitably lead to an increased desire to join and receive the inerrant and infallible Word of God and the Sacraments each week with the larger family of God. “*ære til Gud*” †

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





# The Lutheran Home



## God's Order in Marriage

By Rev. Benjamin Baker

The topic of the relationship between husbands and wives is a difficult one to discuss in our society today. There are many thoughts and opinions, and a good deal of general misunderstanding—both within the Church and without. There are also the complications and complexities that come from the fact that we are sinful people, and that the devil is always on the attack because he hates God's ordering of relationships and seeks to create chaos and disorder.

In this article, I cannot hope to address every question or objection that is raised. What I will seek to do is lay out in a basic way the Biblical foundation that should guide our thinking, and from which we can have a proper way to think through and about the various issues that arise. For those who wish to take a deeper dive on this issue (well worth the effort), I will give recommendations for further reading.

In keeping with the goal of laying the foundation at a basic level, I will address two particular concepts from the New Testament and how they relate to husbands and wives: 1) order and subordination, and 2) Christ's relationship with the Church. Let's dive in.

### The Language of "Subordination"

Part of the difficulty in addressing this topic is how our common English translations have chosen to translate verses like Eph 5:21b–24 (so also 1 Pet 3:1, 5; Heb 2:8). Common translations use either *submit/submission* (e.g., ESV, NIV, KJV), or *subject/subjection* (e.g., ASV, NASB, NRSV).<sup>1</sup> These terms tend to communicate something *negative*. They often speak of a forced subservience to another person, or they readily communicate ideas of power and oppression. But neither of these terms hits the mark of what St. Paul and St. Peter are teaching.

A better English word is *subordination*.<sup>2</sup> Though we can bring our own negative connotations to this as well, it stands a better chance of being correctly understood. This language speaks of the various ways that God has ordered human relationships. In fact, we can hear the connection between *order* and *subordination*.<sup>3</sup> Thus, *subordination* is not an intrinsically negative word. The varied ways that God has arranged human relationships do not speak to superiority/inferiority, or to who has the power and who does not. Certainly, there are distinctions in *authority* in the various relationships, but authority is not the same as power.

## Not All Relationships are Ordered in the Same Ways

God has different orders for different relationships. Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves/employers and employees are different kinds of relationships and they have their own ordering by God. Sometimes Ephesians 5:21b, “*being subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ,*” is taken to apply specifically to the marriage relationship, as if to say that husbands and wives are subordinate to each other. This simply does not work. We can see this if we look at the other two pairs of relationships that St. Paul details, of which Ephesians 5:21b is a general heading. Parents and children are not subordinate to each other, nor are masters and slaves/employers and employees subordinate to one another. So what St. Paul is saying is this: *being subordinate to one another as is proper for each relationship as ordered by God out of reverence of Christ.*

### Christ and the Church: The Purpose of God’s Order in Marriage

A question often arises: “Why *this* arrangement?” A legitimate question, to which St. Paul gives a direct answer in Eph 5:32: “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” In speaking of the marriage relationship between husband and wife, St. Paul says that this arrangement/order is designed by God to image Christ and the Church. Don’t pass over that too quickly. What St. Paul is teaching is that the reality of Christ and the Church is what undergirds and gives shape to the order in marriage as God has instituted it. God *designed marriage from His very institution of it for this chief purpose: that husband and wife reflect and image Christ and the Church in their relationship to each other, which also includes how God has ordered the marriage relationship.*

Building from this, we can answer in a simple and direct way why God has placed husbands in the superordinate/headship office and wives in the subordinate office. Again, consider the picture: in this unique relationship of marriage, we have one *male* and one *female*. God intends for this relationship to image Christ and the Church. Christ took on human flesh as a male, and He remains so to all eternity. It would be rather odd and confusing for Jesus, a man, to be imaged by a woman in a relationship in which there is only one man and one woman, and the relationship is described in terms of bridegroom (male) and bride (female). These two (bridegroom and bride) cannot be interchanged with one another. God has said, according to His apostle here in Ephesians, that this is how it is.

This arrangement is of the *essence* of the marriage relationship. To suggest that husband and wife are equals in terms of office is therefore to claim that the Church is on the same level as Christ, rather than He being her Head. Likewise, to claim that the “roles” – better, “offices” – of husband and wife are interchangeable is to claim that Christ and His Church are interchangeable as well. To reverse the order, or to turn it on its head, claims that the Church is the Savior and Christ the saved, which, of course, is completely false. If we mess with God’s ordering of the marriage relationship, we give false images of Christ and the Church to the world.

## Headship and Subordination

What does it mean for a wife to be subordinate to her own husband? St. Paul and St. Peter define this on a basic and straightforward level: respect and honor. This will (ought to) guide what a wife says to her husband and how she says it, how she acts toward her husband, what she says about her husband to other people, and the attitude of her own heart toward her husband.

What does it mean for a husband to be the head of his own wife? St. Paul and St. Peter again define things in a simple and straightforward way: self-sacrificial love, nourishing and cherishing his wife, understanding, gentleness, and compassion, caring not only for her physical well-being, but also for her mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. This will (ought to) guide what a husband says to his wife and how he says it, how he acts toward his wife, what he says about her to other people, and the attitude of his own heart toward his wife.

### Conclusion

This basic foundation provides the Biblical framework from which we can evaluate various ideas and approaches to this subject, and from which we can address various problems that arise due to our sinfulness and the attacks of the devil and the world on God’s ordering of the marriage relationship.

### For Further Study

For further study on a deeper, more technical level, I offer the following two resources:

1. *Ordered Community: Order and Subordination in the New Testament* by John W. Kleinig. Can be found here: <https://alc.edu.au/public/assets/ltj/2023feb/John-W-Kleinig-Ordered-community-order-and-subordination-in-the-New-Testament-LTJ-39-2and-3-2005.pdf>
2. *Ephesians* by Thomas Winger. Concordia Commentary. Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, MO, 2015. 598–653.

On a non-technical level, I offer the following resource:

*Family Vocation: God’s Calling in Marriage, Parenting, and Childhood* by Gene Edward Veith, Jr. and Mary J. Moerbe. Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2012. 35–72. †

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[1] Some, like the ESV, make things more complicated when they use *submit* in Eph 5:21b–24 and *subject* in 1 Pet 3:1, 5, even though the same Greek word is used in the same context. St. Paul and St. Peter are speaking of the same things in their respective texts.

[2] See further, *Ordered Community*, 200, n. 12.

[3] These words are connected in Greek as well: *taxis* (τάξις), *order*; *hypotassō* (ὑποτάσσω), *subordinate*.



# THE ONE THING NEEDFUL FOR BUSY PARENTS

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*By Laurin Fenn*

Parents often rush about the day, making sure their children are fed, their houses are (sort of) clean, and the requisite activities are accomplished. Finally, at day's end, mom and dad may have a minute to recollect themselves. During those quiet moments, they may wonder, "Am I really caring for my children as I should?" This is indeed an important question. Thankfully, Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions help cut through all the many seemingly important things to the "one thing needful" (Lk 10:42).

Perhaps it may be a surprise that there are only three vocations, or "orders" mentioned in the Table of Duties in the Lutheran Confessions<sup>1</sup>. A vocation is not what we do to make money. Rather, a vocation is a sacred calling from God, a holy "office" to which God has appointed parents, pastors, and government leaders<sup>2</sup>. These are hierarchies of service and obedience that lead to the flourishing of all people when they are ordered rightly<sup>3</sup>. Those in authority are called to lovingly serve those placed under them, subordinating their needs and desires to the good of all. Those in a vocation of submission are called to honor, love, and obey those placed over them (cf Rom 13:1-7, Eph 5:21-6:9, Phil 2:3-7, Heb 13:7).





*The story of Mary and Martha serves as a helpful reminder and encouragement to weary and overloaded parents who may feel this duty is burdensome or an extra thing that they cannot squeeze in (Lk 10:38-42).*



Of the three holy orders, the call of parents to exercise their duties towards their children has a special place. Luther states in the *Large Catechism*: “To the position of fatherhood and motherhood God has given special distinction above all positions that are beneath it...He separates and distinguishes father and mother from all other persons upon earth and places them at his side.”<sup>4</sup> His statement is not without Scriptural support. Man and woman were blessed with the gift of holy matrimony. The natural fruit and blessing of the marital union was—and continues to be—the birth of children (Gen 1:26-28, Ps 127:3). Along with the gift and duty of procreation, husband and wife are charged with the duty of raising godly children (Gen 1:28, Deut 6:7, Eph 6:4).<sup>5</sup> When children learn how to love and honor their parents, they also learn to honor God himself and all other earthly and spiritual authorities (Deut 6:7, Prov 2:1-5).<sup>6</sup>

In all of Scripture, it would be difficult to find any text that tells parents to teach children how to be successful in worldly terms (cf. Mat 6:19, LC I.172-173). Luther writes in the *Large Catechism*: “Therefore, let everyone know that it is his duty, on peril of losing the divine favor, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God above all things.”<sup>7</sup> Parents are first and foremost responsible to instruct their children in the Lord’s ways and to prize the Word above all (Deut 6:7, Eph 6:4). A child’s bodily needs are of great importance, yet the spiritual needs are of even more because physical bread perishes but the spiritual Bread of Word and Sacrament leads to eternal life (Jn 6:47-51). The duty of parents, therefore, in bringing up children to love and fear the Lord should not be underestimated and is their central duty.

The story of Mary and Martha serves as a helpful reminder and encouragement to weary and overloaded parents who may feel this duty is burdensome or an extra thing that they cannot squeeze in (Lk 10:38-42). While Martha was overwhelmed with busily serving her Lord, Mary realized that the one thing truly needful was receiving God’s Word, sitting quietly at His

feet rather than rushing about in acts of service. Fulfilling our duty as parents to raise reverent and obedient children may feel challenging at times, yet it is a true blessing and brings long-lasting joy. It does not even have to be difficult. Luther’s advice is to begin with simple recitation of the key parts of the catechism daily, along with morning and evening prayers (LC Prefaces). Weekly attendance at church and partaking of Word and Sacrament with the community of God further nourishes children with spiritual food (Heb 10:25). As parents order their lives around ministering to their children’s deepest needs, all the other things are added and more, especially as the Spirit works to bring his fruit (Gal 5:22-23).

If you are a parent of a busy family and troubled with “many things,” then give heed to your holy calling, and re-order your life around the Word. The vocation of parenthood is truly a delight when we realize that our primary duty is to share God’s superabundant gifts with them. Sports and activities will come and go, but God’s gifts will give your children eternal life, and that’s a treasure that can never be taken away from us and our children. †

*Laurin Fenn is wife of a pastor, mother to five, and holds her Master of Theological Studies from Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St Catharines, Ontario. She currently lives in Iowa and loves thinking about theology and current issues when she isn’t caring for her home and family.*

[1] Paul Timothy McCain, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 346.

[2] *Ibid.*, 346.

[3] *Ibid.*, 105.

[4] *Ibid.*, 105.

[5] *Ibid.*, 46, 211.

[6] *Ibid.*, 373, 375, 377.

[7] *Ibid.*, 378.



# The Lutheran Home



## Catechesis: Who, What, Where?

By Rev. John Anderson

I found this definition of “catechesis” on an LC-MS congregation’s website: “The word ‘catechesis’ comes from the Greek (and also Latin) word for ‘oral instruction’ which involves some repetition and dialogue. The teachings imparted in catechesis are those foundational to Christianity as Lutherans understand them to have existed all the way back to Christ and His apostles.”<sup>1</sup>

Is catechesis still important?

That church website continues: “If [work, school, sports, etc.] dominate our lives and we pay little attention to Christ and His

Word as the source of our life and faith, at the end of days when Christ returns, what will be left? Jesus said, ‘Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away’” (Matt 24:35).

So we know WHAT catechesis is. But WHO does the “catechizing?” And WHERE does it take place?

When I was just beginning seminary in 1962, Professor William Streng (Wartburg Theological Seminary, then part of The American Lutheran Church) taught an “introductory” class on Christian Education. Rev. Streng had a strong message for us:



we need to have a focus on educating the **adults of the church** and help them grow in the teaching of their children and grandchildren—and in their own faith walk.

Luther wanted the Catechism to be used by the head of the household to teach the family the Christian faith and life. In his preface to the *Small Catechism*, Luther wrote: “The deplorable, miserable conditions which I recently observed when visiting the parishes have constrained and pressed me to put this Catechism of Christian doctrine into this brief, plain, and simple form.”<sup>2</sup>

For each of the last fifteen years or so, our family has gathered at a Wisconsin Bible Camp for our annual “Christmas family reunion.” Usually there are around forty family members who gather for three days and nights at the “Good News Lodge.” Several Christmases ago, Joan and I gave a special gift to each family member: a shirt with a stylized picture of a husband, wife, and four kids—with a cross in the background. Beneath the picture was the Scripture reference that was the theme of at least one of our devotional times that year, Deuteronomy 6:4-7:

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”*

Paul, McCain, editor of the *Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord*, wrote this: “Luther never intended the Small and Large Catechisms to be only ‘church books,’ but rather ‘house books’—to be used in everyone’s homes. And, in his ‘short preface’ to the *Large Catechism*, Luther wrote: “It is the duty of every father of a family to question and examine his children and servants at least once a week and see what they know or are learning from the catechism.”<sup>3</sup>

Luther’s commentary on the Fourth Commandment (*Large Catechism*) is longer than for any other Commandment. He obviously had strong feelings about the “responsibilities” of fathers (and mothers) and their children. Luther wrote: “First of all, they (fathers and mothers) should seriously and faithfully fulfill their office, not only to support and provide for the bodily necessities of their children, servants, subjects, and so on, but most of all, they should train them to honor and praise God [Prov 22:6]. Therefore, do not think that this matter is left to your pleasure and arbitrary will. This is God’s strict command and order, to whom also you must give account for it [1 Pet 4:5].”<sup>4</sup>

At the 2005 AALC General Convention (Bethel University, St. Paul, MN), our family was privileged to present a musical concert. On

stage were my wife Joan and myself, our five children and their spouses, and about eight of our grandchildren (there were about nine more grandchildren being cared for offstage.) One of the songs we sang was “Tell It To Your Children.”

The words of the chorus: “Tell it to your children and your children’s children, Stamp it on the doors of their hearts ... tell it with your talk, And tell it when you’re workin’ and tell it when you walk....”<sup>5</sup>

Most of our family recently gathered at our home for my wife Joan’s birthday. As we worshipped together on Sunday, we sang that song again for the congregation; the singing group had grown considerably since 2005, since the number of grandchildren has grown to 30.

Most certainly, there continues to be a need for our pastors to be providing solid Lutheran catechesis in our churches. And, likewise, parents should seek to diligently teach God’s truths to their children, talking about them, “when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut 4:7) †

*The Rev. John A. Anderson, Pastor Emeritus, resides in northern MN with his wife, Joan, and delights in spending time with his family and in providing pulpit supply to area churches.*



[1] Town & Country Lutheran Church LCMS, “What We Believe: Catechesis,” accessed Sept. 6, 2024, via <https://www.tclutheranchurch.org/catechesis>.

[2] Paul Timothy McCain, Concordia: *The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 313.

[3] *Ibid*, 356.

[4] *Ibid*, 378.

[5] William J. and Gloria Gaither, “Tell It To Your Children,” *A Treasury of Praise* (Alexandria, Gaither Music Company, 1978), 28.



# The Lutheran Home: A Place of Grace and Blessing

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*By Karen Holst*

As the morning periwinkle heavens graciously bow out before the blush of dawn, baby Jon screams in anticipation of his first meal of the day. For the last three months, every morning has begun with a tired nursing mother who never seems to get enough sleep with everyone else in the household vicariously sharing this routine in varying degrees of acceptance and accommodation. With three generations constantly readjusting their physical, emotional, and spiritual requirements to meet the demands of daily coexistence within this familial framework, life at home is often more challenging than the outside world.

Without the cornerstone of our precious faith as our pattern for living, the assaults of the devil and this world would slowly destroy any good and gracious design that God has for our lives. Confessing our faith, caring for one another in love and calling on our Triune God for every need preserves and protects the Lutheran home and those who live, work, rest and find peace under its sheltering beams.





Even before rising from bed, each family member starts their day in quietly thankful praise with “Luther’s Morning Prayer” and the “Our Father,” introduced and memorized from a young age. This preliminary routine allows Christians of every stage in life to thoughtfully consider our place, our God-given vocations and responsibilities, and the heavenly gifts bestowed on us freely shared with loved ones and strangers alike. In this household, breakfast for everyone arrives in various locations and times according to work and class schedules, but table prayers are always conscientiously remembered before any eating begins. While backpacks, phones and keys are retrieved for departures, the youngest members of the family are already striving for childish dominance over the various resources within their sphere of control- peppery arguments over bathroom usage, culinary preferences, belongings, and outdoor activities always appear to catastrophically dissolve any semblance of hard-won Christian rearing. Fortunately, Confessional Lutheran caregivers have large portions of Luther’s *Small Catechism* to immediately correct misbehavior, reinforce active listening skills, and model patience and forgiveness for the seventy-seventh time.

With daylight subtly bending sharp shade into softly sculptured shadows, hours of learning are deliberately infused with examples of fine art, classical poetry, Biblical lessons, catechesis, and foreign languages. Respite for exercise, daily chores, piano practice, and gardening provide ample opportunities for receiving God’s bounteous blessings in unexpected, creative ways between generations of faithful servants. Preparing and eating lunch together provides lively opportunities for midday Scripture reading and fellowship with available family members and friends. Establishing consistent patterns of worship throughout our daily routines creates a habit of spiritual growth and learning in theological understanding for all Christians, no matter where we start from.

Not surprisingly, the ending of the day is usually more rushed and frustrating than the start: everyone comes home hungrier and more tired than when they left that morning. Adults and children alike may be feeling anxious about the day’s accomplishments while anticipating tomorrow’s fretful deadlines. Accidents, illness and unfortunate events arrive with our loved ones as we welcome them home from the trials and attacks they faced during their day apart from us. Conversations missed at breakfast and lunch suddenly want to burst out from everyone all at once: excitement, disgust, humor, and disagreements all beg us to listen in patient Christian love and encouragement.

Enjoying evening meals together with gentle table etiquette is a monumental demonstration of Christian self-control and humility out of respect for the countless efforts of everyone’s preparations of food, the care of the household, and God’s gracious provisions of all that we need for these bodies and lives. Such self-control and humility can only be worked by the Holy Spirit in those who regularly receive the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith that Christ’s Word and Sacraments provide. And what a genuine blessing to have our Evening Prayers to calm us, our meditations of the Daily Office to call us, and our Confessions to cheer us!

The Confessional Lutheran isn’t perfect. Repentance is always necessary. But by God’s grace and blessing we live for our family members and not for ourselves “... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:2-3).†

*Mrs. Karen Holst is the Western Regional Representative and Co-Chair of The AALC’s Women of LIFE. She joined the Commission for Higher Education last year and volunteers at St. Luke the Evangelist Lutheran Church in Jurupa Valley, CA.*





# The Lutheran Home: COUNSELING FOR THE CHRISTIAN

By Rev. Dr. Tom Stover

As a pastor and a therapist, I have been asked if I believe it is appropriate for a Christian to seek out help from a counselor. The reasoning is, “if I pray and have faith, doesn’t Scripture declare that I will be able to overcome my situation or my dark moods and be at peace? Therefore, if I go to a counselor for help, doesn’t it show a lack of faith on my part?” These are reasonable questions, and when I am asked, my standard answer is: it doesn’t matter what I believe or think; what matters is what God’s Word says. I believe we can go to Scripture to help answer these questions.

The Apostle Paul instructs Timothy, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for **teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness**, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17,

emphasis added). A part of the confusion lies in the idea that visiting a counselor for help becomes an either/or proposition: I can pray and have faith to overcome my present situation, or I can go to a counselor for help sorting out my issues, but by going to someone else, it shows a lack of faith on my part.

The truth is, for a Christian to seek help from a counselor isn’t an either/or but a both/and proposition, as the Bible is very clear that seeking out guidance and counsel is a wise and prudent thing to do, “Where there is no guidance, a people falls but in an abundance of counselors there is safety,” (Prov 11:14). Proverbs 13:10 and 15:22 suggest that wisdom comes from receiving good counsel: “By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom,” (Prov 13:10). “Without counsel plans

fail, but with many advisers they succeed,” (Prov 15:22). So, it is biblically sound and can be beneficial for a Christian to seek out counseling if needed.

And because of sin, **we all** need daily counseling due to the battle that rages for our souls. Because of our unrighteousness, we don’t understand our own actions: “For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate,” (Rom 7:15), so we confess our sins and call out our petitions in prayer to the Lord knowing He hears them and forgives us entirely for the sake of His Son by faith. This forgiveness is why we are so thankful for beginning each Sunday’s Divine Worship Service with confession:

*Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.* <sup>1</sup>

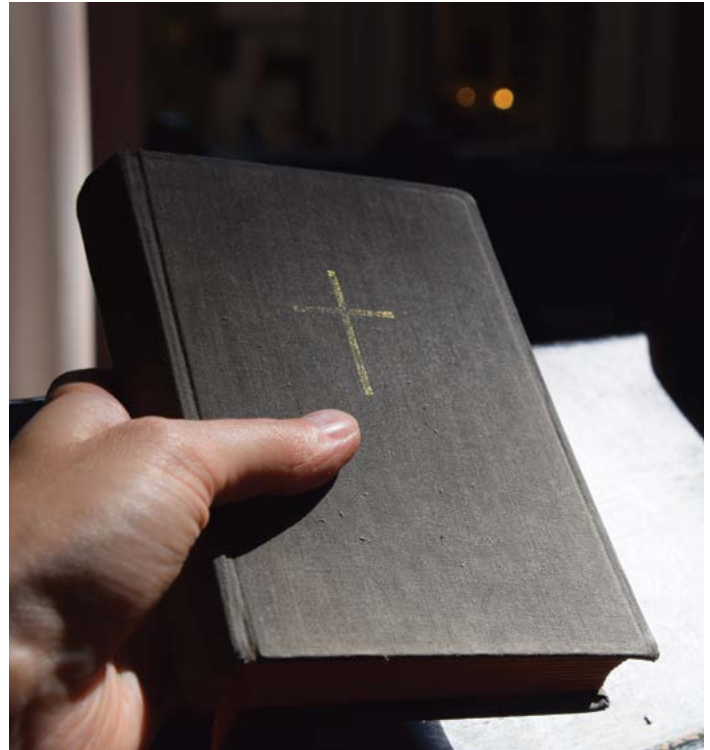
And then, in His stead and by His command, we hear the Lord’s absolution given by our pastor: “Because of this your confession, all of your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.”

We can now walk away with a renewed spirit, having had this sin burden removed, as we receive this counsel by faith. However, there are times when we continue to struggle with unresolved pain, trauma, or other issues that interfere with living our lives. It is in these times when we need to seek out further counsel and guidance, such as private confession with our pastor or pastoral counseling, which can help individuals deal with various issues, such as depression, anxiety, or trauma, by providing a safe environment to express thoughts and emotions freely. We can be confident that hope for change is possible through the message of God’s Word– the gospel of Jesus Christ, the foundation of biblical counsel.

If you are struggling with mental health issues, I recommend you begin by talking privately with your pastor and discuss your situation. If he believes it would be helpful for you to continue with a counselor or therapist, he can recommend a pastoral or faith-based counselor. †

*The Rev. Dr. Tom Stover, PhD, is a Clinical Pastoral Psychotherapist and serves Holy Trinity Mission Church, South Minneapolis, MN.*

[1] *Lutheran Service Book*, Divine Service Setting One, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 151.



*We can now walk away with a renewed spirit, having had this sin burden removed, as we receive this counsel by faith. However, there are times when we continue to struggle with unresolved pain, trauma, or other issues that interfere with living our lives.*





## American Lutheran Theological Seminary

### ALTS Continues Steps Toward Accreditation

By Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey

Accreditation is a program of quality control and quality assurance. As we go through the accreditation process, we are learning how important it is to have good, commonsense policies and procedures written down—and that we follow them. So when we are finally accredited, we can know that our seminary is the best version of itself, and that we are offering the best confessional, affordable, online Lutheran seminary education.

ALTS has hired Dr. Kathryn Helleman of Winebrenner Theological Seminary to be our consultant in the accreditation process. Plus, early in August, Dr. Leins and I met with our staff representative, Ron Kroll, from the Association of Biblical Higher Education (ABHE). We spent an entire day discussing the four conditions of eligibility that the ABHE had highlighted when they accepted us as applicants a year ago.

First, we discussed state authorization. For those who attended the General Convention of The AALC, you may remember the great concern we all shared about the potential enormity of the costs associated with registering with all 28 states where we currently have students. I am thrilled to report that Dr. Helleman has already shown that she is worth more than her weight in gold by informing us that the total amount we will need to pay states each year until we are accredited will be less than \$10,000. She let us know that 20 states where we currently have students will not require any money, some want us to fill out an online registration application, and some simply do not care. There are five states that want us to pay for registration (totaling \$8,250 annually, plus a nominal annual fee for a surety bond). Two states have no path to registration until we are fully accredited. Ron Kroll had a helpful suggestion about a possible workaround for those two states, and we are currently following his suggestion.

Next, we discussed the governance of ALTS and the relationship of the Commission for Higher Education to the Board of Trustees, the Joint Council, and the General Convention. I am very pleased

to report that Ron was completely satisfied with our explanations. Our governance structure and philosophy are like a family dynamic where we want to ensure that everyone understands and buys in to the decisions that are made and the directions that are taken by ALTS and the CHE.

After lunch, we talked about the size of our student body, and the long term plans we have for developing and maintaining steady and sustainable growth in enrollment. We are deeply grateful to Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper—the new Professor of Lutheran Dogmatics at ALTS—for bringing so many students to us through his podcast, YouTube channel, and his many speaking engagements. Of course, many people hear about us from Rev. Roseborough’s podcast, too, and we appreciate him giving visibility to The AALC and ALTS that we wouldn’t otherwise have.

Finally, we talked about our student handbook, or course catalog. A year ago, the ABHE wanted us to include very specific outcomes for each course in the catalog. But since then, they have shifted their policy and no longer require those outcomes to be in the catalog. Still, Ron asked us to work on a definition of “satisfactory academic progress” and include that—along with related policies and procedures, in the catalog.

At the end of that day with Ron Kroll, he told us that he was very pleased with the progress that we have made over the last year, and that we are exactly where we need to be at this point in the accreditation process. Plus, if we can implement multiple cycles of self-assessment in terms of gathering data about our quality and effectiveness, analyzing that data, and then adjusting course as necessary, we can request acceleration in our accreditation process. Please pray for us and with us as we continue on this journey!†

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





# Church News



## AALC Welcomes Pastor and Church to Rosters

By Rev. Anthony Voltattorni

Near the bottom center of Michigan's mitten, the lower peninsula, right at the crossroads of Interstates 94 and 69, you'll find the charming, small town of Marshall, MI. There are only about 7,000 residents, but Marshall is packed full of history and enjoys an impressive amount of 19th-century architecture. Almost since the founding of this little town, Lutherans have been a part of that rich history. For 168 years, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church has faithfully served as a beacon of light to the community, proclaiming the Gospel of Christ crucified for sinners.

The origin of the congregation dates back to 1848 when a circuit rider, Rev. Friedrich Schmidt, rode 70 miles on horseback to visit Marshall every six weeks to provide Word and Sacrament ministry to forty German families in the area. By 1856, the congregation was officially formed and able to call their first pastor. Since then, Zion has been blessed with a rich heritage in the Lutheran Confessions and a tradition of worship that has transcended the ever-changing spirit of the age. The saints of Zion have had the privilege of worshiping in the same historic building since 1901, using the same organ since 1916, and singing out of the same red Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) of 1941. The services at Zion are liturgical, sacramental, and thoroughly centered on the Gospel of Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of us wretched sinners. The Holy Eucharist is received every Lord's Day by an average of 90 parishioners in attendance.

As the current pastor, I have had the privilege of serving this congregation since February 2013. Prior to that, I had pastored

Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Standish, MI, having graduated with my MDiv from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 2008 and my B.S. in Electrical Engineering in 2003. Both my high-school sweetheart, Sarah, and I are MI natives. The Lord has richly blessed us with a marriage of 22 years and seven children between the ages of 5 and 19.

Although Zion had been a member congregation of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod for 77 years, she had recently been independent since 2017. Despite various changes over the years, I have witnessed a unique faithfulness among the parishioners here, surrounding those in need and bearing the burdens of fellow saints in times of suffering.

The mere existence of this congregation over so many decades has only been by the grace of God. Just like any assembly of Christians living in a fallen world, Zion has seen both difficult times and periods of great rejoicing. She has been blessed in many ways, and now again Zion can count among God's blessed providence being a part of The American Association of Lutheran Churches. Our Lord has worked through Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, and Rev. Dean Stoner, who have visited our congregation on numerous occasions. These men of God have impressed upon us the faithful and caring nature of Church fellowship in The AALC, and we are overjoyed to be able to confess the same Faith alongside brothers and sisters in Christ across our nation! "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity" (Ps 133:1). †

**Top Left and Right:** Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Marshall, MI, joined The AALC at the General Convention in June 2024. The congregation dates back to 1848 when it was served by a circuit rider pastor who traveled on horseback to conduct services. Submitted photo. **Top Middle:** Rev. Anthony Voltattorni was welcomed to The AALC Clergy Roster in June; he is pictured with his wife, Sarah, and their children (listed from oldest to youngest) Isabella, Eden, Malachi, Martin, Evelyn, Edmond, Caroline. Submitted photo.



# Church News



Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry welcomed over 70 college students and family members to their Independence Day cookout in July. Submitted photos.

## Wittenberg Door Hosts Cookout

By Rev. Dave Spotts

In the past, when Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry held a cookout around Independence Day, we had a good response. We would routinely have 10–20 guests, a nice dinner, and some good conversations.

This year, we decided to move the event to Friday, July 5. Why? For no reason in particular. It just seemed like a good plan. What could go wrong?

We followed our normal publicity procedure, by sending texts or emails to people who have normally come to our events during the school year. That amounts to about 50 people in all. We knew that many of those people would be on the road, as most aren't year-round residents in Columbia, MO. We also have the ability to put events in an email newsletter that the University of Missouri sends out on a weekly basis to their list of about 3,000 international students, faculty, and visiting scholars. For purposes of comparison, when we do this for our Friday dinner and conversation evenings, we normally meet 3–5 new families in the course of a year. Everything seemed perfectly normal.

The first Mizzou email newsletter went out on the Tuesday morning of our AALC General Convention, June 25. By the end of that day, I had about 20 respondents. By Friday, June 28, I had more like 50. Almost all were people we had never met. At this point, nothing seemed perfectly normal. Thanks be to God for bringing us into contact with many people from countries with little or no exposure to the Gospel!

Onto any picnic, some rain must fall. Tuesday, July 3, we received six inches of rain. Though there wasn't any serious damage, the

area we planned to use for the cookout was under several inches of water. We quickly jumped into action and decided that we could move the event about 50 yards to the north, some 15 feet above the water level. Parking was a little more of a challenge, but we were able to cross that bridge without falling into the water.

When all was said and done, I must admit it strained our follow-up structure. I lost track of how many people came! Normally I manage to visit with each person who is present. That didn't happen this time. The cookout was scheduled to begin at 7:00 p.m. on July 5. At about 7:10, I counted 60 people in my driveway. Some people were still arriving!

Speaking in my big, outdoor pastor voice, I welcomed people. I described a passage from Ephesians chapter two where Paul wrote about the reconciling love of Jesus which called the nations who were far away to be part of His family. I pointed out that we had several items to give our visitors, and we prayed as Luther suggested in the *Small Catechism*:

*“The eyes of all look to You, O Lord, and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. Lord, God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts, which we receive from Your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.”*

The twenty or so people we already knew to be Christians, along with about 50 newcomers, enjoyed a dinner of traditional American cookout dishes. They had a great time playing games with frisbees and bean bags, and shooting off a few fireworks.

continued on page 17





# November 2024

## PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. Prayer of Thanksgiving for all the saints who have gone before
2. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Marshall, MI
3. Rev. Dean Johansen
4. Board of Trustees
5. For opportunities to share Christ
6. Board of Directors of TAALC Foundation
7. For godly parents
8. Rev. Joseph Marsh
9. For faithful marriages
10. New Hope Lutheran Church, Newfolden, MN
11. Rev. William Moberly
12. Mighty Fortress Ev. Lutheran Church, Seward, NE
13. For homes to teach Biblical truth
14. Rev. Darrel Deuel
15. Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, Williston, ND
16. Rev. Harold Petersen
17. Regional Chairman
18. St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Charleston, WV
19. Rev. Jay Eberth
20. For fathers to lead their families in devotions
21. Rev. Mark Raitz
22. Holiday travels
23. Rev. Antonio Romano
24. Rev. Don Ginkel
25. For strained family relationships
26. For godly grandparents & extended family
27. Redeemer Lutheran Church, West Union, IA
28. Prayer of thanksgiving for God's blessings during the past year
29. Rev. Thomas Jahr
30. To remember what Advent is all about

## Cookout continued...

One young man from Iran had some very interesting questions after reading about half of Luther's *Small Catechism*. A couple from Indonesia especially wanted to thank me—I had met the wife at the airport when she arrived in Columbia about a year ago and helped her feel at home. It was great to meet her husband at last. Several scholars from China, Iran, Uzbekistan, Taiwan, and Korea said they were relieved to find people who would care about them, as they felt far from home. Most of the people who came said they would welcome hearing more from us as the year progresses.

In Christ, those who are far from home can find a home, a family, an identity in the family of God through Jesus' work to reconcile all nations in Him.

Please pray for the ongoing work of Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry, as we bring the Gospel to students, faculty, staff, and administrators at the various college campuses in Columbia, MO. For more information about this ministry and how to support it, please visit our website at [www.wittenbergcomo.com](http://www.wittenbergcomo.com). †

*The Rev. Dave Spotts is a missionary campus chaplain in Columbia, MO. He also serves the Mid-Missouri Lutheran Hospital Ministry as a part-time hospital chaplain.*

## St. Luke Celebrates 75 Years



**Top:** St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, Traer, IA, celebrated its 75th anniversary with a special service and lunch on Sunday, July 14, 2024. The church began with 28 charter members in 1948. The building, still used today, was initially purchased in 1950 for a mere \$1,345 and moved from Blairstown, 45 miles away, to its current location. **Right:** Currently serving at St. Luke is Rev. Benjamin Baker, pictured with Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, who brought the message during the service. Submitted photo.







# December 2024

## PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. Sonland Lutheran Church, Casa Grande, AZ
2. For older Christians to teach the younger
3. Rev. Bruce Ritter
4. Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, Sidney, MT
5. Rev. Robert Ross
6. Holiday season ministries
7. Rev. David Huskamp
8. St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Elk Grove, CA
9. Pr. Charles Sandison
10. Commission for Pensions
11. Rev. Leon Knitt
12. Rev. Steve Smeback
13. St. Luke the Evangelist Lutheran Church, Jurupa Valley, CA
14. Rev. Kent Sperry
15. Rev Gary Koutsopoulos
16. Holiday stresses
17. St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Napoleon, OH
18. For older Christians to teach the younger
19. For those unable to be with family
20. Rev. Irvin Stapf
21. St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, Augusta, KY
22. For those grieving during the holidays
23. Rev. Dr. Duane Lindberg
24. Rev. Richard Sunderlage
25. To remember what Christmas is all about
26. Rev. Alexander McNally
27. Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran Church, Frazier Park, CA
28. Rev. Roger Twito
29. St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church, Traer, IA
30. To reflect on God's faithfulness
31. Rev. Anthony Voltattorni

# Installation of Rev. Edwin Mendivelso



**Top:** Gathered for the installation service at Mountain View Lutheran Church in Thornton, CO, on August 10: Rev. Clyde Awtrey, Regional Pastor Rev. Steven Klawonn, Rev. Craig Loving, Rev. Edwin Mendivelso, Rev. J.P. Stolen, Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, and Rev. Steve Wadle. Submitted photo.

**Bottom:** Present were three pastors who have served Mountain View: Rev. Craig Loving, Rev. Edwin Mendivelso, and Rev. Clyde Awtrey. Submitted photo.

On August 10, 2024, the prayers of Mountain View Lutheran Church in Thornton, CO, were answered when Rev. Edwin Mendivelso was welcomed by the congregation and officially installed as their pastor. It was a privilege to have Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Cary Larson in attendance to officiate the installation.

Pastor Edwin is from the country of Columbia and has been on the roster of TAALC for some time. He now has opportunity to cultivate a multi-cultural ministry in Thornton as the Lord guides and directs him in shepherding this community in a suburb of Denver. †

# WHY DO SO MANY LUTHERANS HAVE NATIVITY SETS?

By Rev. Dave Spotts

The visiting scholar asked me an interesting question: Why do Lutherans have nativity sets? Since I work as a missionary campus chaplain at a secular university, maybe I'd better set the scene more thoroughly. A nativity set is a set of figurines (sometimes small, sometimes large) depicting one or more elements of the birth of Christ. So there's usually a manger with a baby, a Joseph and a Mary figure, some farm animals, and sometimes shepherds and/or wise men who have come to visit. This visiting scholar was a Christian who had recently come to this country from China. She was intrigued by a local church which had a display of several hundred nativity sets.

The season of Advent and the prominence of the celebration of the Nativity is striking to many people. Within historic Calvinist settings, there won't be images depicting God, so they normally won't have such pieces of artwork. Many people from the more radical Reformation will avoid most elements of church history, so they might be unlikely to put an emphasis on the Nativity.

However, in Lutheran circles, because of our special theological emphasis, we're very likely to have things like nativity sets or other artwork depicting events in the life and ministry of Jesus. Unlike the Calvinist point of view and those which fragmented from Calvinism, Lutherans don't build their theology on the sovereign power of God. Rather, we focus on Jesus living and dying for you. The incarnation, then, is a really big deal.

Essentially, we can recognize three basic perspectives coming from the time of the Protestant Reformation. One, generally held by those who would fall into a Zwinglian or Arminian perspective, would emphasize your responsibility to believe Jesus and follow him. Another, generally held by Presbyterians and other Calvinists, would emphasize God's sovereign desire to forgive sins for the elect. A third, held by Lutherans, is that Jesus is God with us, true man and true God so that he can live a fully human life and die a fully human death to atone for the sins of the world.

Are the other two points of view valid? The Bible clearly says we are supposed to believe Jesus and follow Him. The Bible clearly shows God as the sovereign Lord of all who forgives sins. And the Bible leaves it crystal clear that Jesus is God with us. The elements of theology are true. However, the different groups of Christians start their theology in different places, so their theological buildings look different.

Back to the nativity sets, then? It's in the conservative Reformation, specifically Lutheran thought, that we find the emphasis on the incarnation. This makes our times of penitence, the seasons of Advent and Lent, especially vivid. We make a particular effort to recognize the sinfulness of sin, the fallenness of the world, and our need for a savior. Based on the incarnation of Christ, we also have a strong emphasis on the revelation of Jesus' work during the season of Epiphany, after Christmas and before Lent. Because we are focused on Jesus as God with us, during the Christmas and Easter seasons, we will have glorious depictions of Jesus, true man and true God, who was born for us, died for us, and lives for us. We will also pay special attention to the timeline of the ordinary season, between Easter and Advent, as we walk through the different elements of the Christian life in our Scripture readings. Jesus, God with us, has walked through just the same kind of things.

In the end, Lutherans focus on the incarnation. It's not about us, nor about a distant and theoretical view of God, but about Jesus, God with us.

That's why we looked at a few hundred nativity sets together. Jesus, the real God, was really born to save us. †

*The Rev. Dave Spotts serves as a missionary chaplain to the college campuses in Columbia, MO, under the auspices of Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry, a mission of The AALC.*



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## UPCOMING EDITIONS...

**Overarching theme: Chief Parts of Luther's Catechism**

**Please be in prayer for these upcoming editions:**

Jan/Feb: 10 Commandments (*deadline Nov. 1*)

Mar/Apr: The Creed (*deadline Jan. 1*)

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

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

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

Nov/Dec: Table of Duties (*deadline Sept. 1*)

**Church News:**

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

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