

The

EVANGEL

Table of Duties





From the Editor

It can be difficult at times in this upside-down world to know where to begin and what to do?

Often the answer is quite simple, as we see in this month's edition on the "Table of Duties" section of *Luther's Small Catechism*.

The answer is to look around. Who do you see: a spouse and children? Aging parents or grandchildren? Boss and coworkers? That family next door? The people in the pews next to you?

What do they need? Have I taken the time to talk with them and find out?

As a child of God, our salvation is secure in Jesus. We are free to then look around us and see who might need our help.

I encourage you to take some time as you read these articles and consider who is next to you in your little corner of the world. How can you get to know them better and show Jesus' love to them?

The writers in this edition give us glimpses into these various roles: spouse, parent, congregation, citizen, worker, and more.

May God bless you in your vocations and enable you to be a missionary to your part of the world.

Peace be with you,

Gretchen Baker

Gretchen Baker
The Editor

Note: The themes for the 2026 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.

- 2** From the Editor
- 3** Presiding Pastor
- 5** What Hearers Owe Their Pastors
- 6** To Husbands
- 7** To Wives
- 8** To Parents
- 9** To Children
- 10** On Civil Government
- 11** Of Citizens
- 12** To Workers of All Kinds
- 13** To Everyone
- 14** Seminary Growth
- 15** Congregational Feature
- 16** WOL Bible Study for 2026
- 17** Mountain View Church
- 17-18** Prayer Bookmark
- 18-19** Clergy Feature
- 20** Themes for 2026

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God at Work in All of Life

By Rev. Dr. Cary Larson

Towards the end of his *Small Catechism*, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther provided a simple yet insightful guide to Christian living often overlooked today: the Table of Duties. The Table of Duties with its collection of biblical verses associated with various roles in life, might seem outdated. Yet, for 21st century Christians navigating a complex world of work, family, and society, the Table of Duties is extremely relevant. It speaks profoundly to our never-ending search for meaning and purpose, offering a scriptural framework for seeing God at work in our daily lives.

The Table of Duties is rooted in Luther's concept of vocation or calling. Rather than reserving the term "calling" for pastors, missionaries, or monks, Luther argued that every Christian has a divine calling in their daily life, whether in the home, the church, and the state.¹ He saw these three hierarchies as "holy

orders" through which God exercises His care and love for the world. This was a radical idea in the time of Luther, elevating the farmer, the mother, and the civil servant to the same level as the priest or pope. In a society that often divides life into "non-secular (sacred) and "secular," the Table of Duties reminds us that all of life is sacred.

This conviction is critically important today. Many Christians struggle with the idea that their faith life is limited to Sunday mornings or personal devotion. They feel a disconnect between what they do in church and what they do at work and at home. The Table of Duties bridges this gap. It declares that our duties as parents, children, spouses, employers, employees, or citizens are not contrary to our faith but are the very means by which we live it out. For example, a parent who faithfully provides for and

continued on page 4

God at Work continued...

nurtures his or her child is a “mask of God,”² through which God Himself cares for that child. An employee who works diligently and honestly is a means by which God provides for his or her neighbor, that is, the employer, the customer, and his or her own family. As Luther explains, in these vocations, “God doesn’t need our good works, but our neighbor does.”³ Perhaps we can think of the Table of Duties, as a practical handbook for loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Furthermore, the Table of Duties addresses the present-day struggle with identity and purpose. In a culture that often ties a person’s worth to titles, salaries, or social status, the Table of Duties grounds our identity in our God-given roles, which are all equally valuable in His sight. It liberates us from the tyranny of seeking meaning in a job and instead helps us find purpose in faithfully fulfilling the duties of whatever vocation we occupy. Whether we are a CEO, a stay-at-home parent or a student, our calling is a gift from God through which we serve Him and others. This outlook brings a profound sense of dignity and significance to even the most ordinary tasks, whether it’s doing the dishes, changing diapers,⁴ filing a report, or caring for an aging parent.

The Table of Duties also serves as a necessary moral compass. In an age of distrust in institutions, it reminds us that our mutual responsibilities are to one another. It outlines the duties of a government to govern justly and of citizens to respect authority. It reminds husbands and wives to submit to one another in love, and children to honor their parents. These are not merely cultural norms but are divinely appointed roles with specific, biblically based responsibilities. In a world of fragmented relationships and a pervasive “dog eat dog” mentality, Luther’s Table of Duties calls us back to community and mutual accountability, grounded in God’s will for a flourishing society.

Luther’s Table of Duties is far more than a historical novelty. It is a vital and powerful resource for 21st century Christians. It provides a theological foundation for understanding that the everyday places where we live our lives, are the primary arenas where we live out our God-given faith. By seeing our vocations as a gift from God and a means to love our neighbor, we are equipped to find purpose and joy in every aspect of our Christian life. It is a timeless reminder that God is not only found in the sacred sanctuary of divine worship, but He is at work in all of life.†

The Rev. Dr. Cary G. Larson is the Presiding Pastor of The AALC.

1 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 54: *Table Talk*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 446.

2 “God could easily give you grain and fruit without your plowing and planting. But He does not want to do so. . . . What else is all our work to God—whether in the fields, in the garden, in the city, in the house, in war, or in government—but just such a child’s performance, by which He wants to give His gifts in the fields, at home, and everywhere else? These are the masks of God, behind which He wants to remain concealed and do all things.” Martin Luther, “Psalm 147,” *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 14, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Daniel E. Popellot, (Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, 1958), 114–115

3 Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, tr. Carl C. Rasmussen, (Muhlenberg Press: Philadelphia, 1957), 10

4 “Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool, though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in Christian faith, my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most keenly ridiculing the other? God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling, not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith. Those who sneer at him and see only the task but not the faith are ridiculing God with all his creatures, as the biggest fool on earth. Indeed, they are only ridiculing themselves; with all their cleverness they are nothing but devil’s fools.” Martin Luther, “The Estate of Marriage” (1522), *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 45: *Christian and Society II*, ed. Walther I. Brandt and Helmut T. Lehmann, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), 40

To our AALC family

The Gospel accounts remind us of the true meaning of the Christmas season. In our Advent and Christmas worship, we can cut through the clamor and hear the timeless message of the Gospel: we are saved by grace, through faith, through Christ Jesus alone.

God’s promise of mercy and salvation is for all people. He cares for all of humanity, from the Muslim in Iraq to the little Indian boy in the jungle of India, and will not rest until His saving Word reaches everyone. God’s abundant mercy gives us the ultimate cause for hope. The wrath we deserve for our sins has already been poured out upon Christ Jesus, the incarnated God who took every single sin upon Himself. Jesus drank the “bitter cup” of God’s wrath for us, so we can be saved from judgment. The birth we celebrate is the One who is our ark of salvation, inviting us to come unto Him to know His love and mercy.

This Christmas, let us embrace the good news of Christ Jesus. As we gather around not only the Christmas tree but under the tree of our salvation, the cross, confessing our sins and hearing the Good News that “God and sinner are reconciled,” let us also humble ourselves and ask the Lord to send us into the mission field to be used by Christ to seek and save the lost, and to aid those who have been hurt by the church.

From our house to yours, we pray that you enjoy a most blessed Advent, Christmas, and a New Year filled with the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guarding your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen!

~ Presiding Pastor, Rev. Dr. Cary and Connie Larson



Table of Duties



What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors

By Rev. John Linch

God blessed me with short arms.

If I want a suit or sport coat to fit me correctly, I go to a men's clothing store that provides tailoring. It's a blessing to me that we have a full-service clothing store in my town, otherwise I would have to travel at least 45 miles to find something similar. Even though that doesn't sound all that far away, it wouldn't be nearly as good an experience to go there because they don't know me.

When I go into the store in my town, I am greeted by name by the owner. He remembers what I have in my wardrobe already, and I don't have to explain my preferences; he's just ready with a solution. He also knows that once in a while I can be challenged to try something a little out of my comfort zone. He asks about my family, and I about his. We share common experiences because we live in the same town.

The depth of my relationship with him is beyond anything I could have with a mere passing acquaintance 45 miles away or, even more starkly, with a faceless someone/something on line. Yes, it costs more to have this relationship with my local clothier, but what God has given me in resources is more than enough to encourage him and his family by staying loyal to his store when I could easily go elsewhere.

These two things—provision and loyalty—are the emphases within the section of the Table of Duties entitled, "What the Hearers Owe to Their Pastors." I suspect that most members of congregations understand that they must provide financial resources for their pastor and his family, not only for household expenses but also to help educate his children and to provide for the time of his retirement. So, the primary question that most congregations face is: how much?

In some Christian traditions an Armani suit, a mansion, a Rolls Royce, and a private jet are the signs that God is blessing a pastor and his congregation. But we Lutherans are (and should be) of a different mind. We recognize that those things are valued by the world, and it would be an affront to God for our pastors to be draped in that kind of finery.

Our pastors are not greedy, and they understand that their congregations are made up of those across a broad spectrum of financial means. Our pastors are extremely conscientious not to make their call an issue of comfort let alone enrichment; they are prepared to make real sacrifices in the eyes of the world to serve all who come to hear the Word of God and receive the Sacraments. But their reticence must not be interpreted as a congregation's permission to provide just enough to keep them above the poverty line. A poor pastor is a pastor looking for another job; so, a congregation's responsibility is to keep its pastor focused on them by providing for his and his family's every need. A congregation does not have to be unanimous in determining what "need" means (there's always someone who thinks deprivation is good for someone else's soul), but a congregation with a pastor who groans over his financial struggles will find that he is joyless and of no advantage to them (Heb. 13:17).

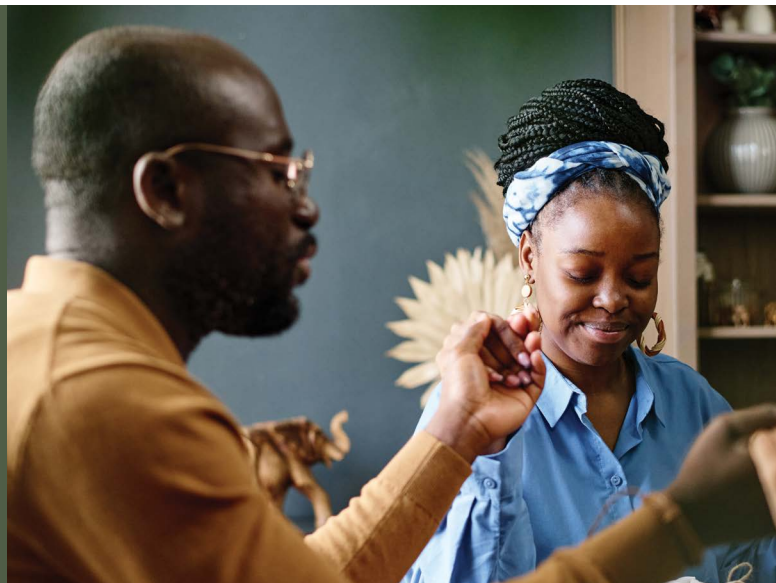
The other duty owed to a pastor is loyalty. In years past, congregations were more stable and opportunities to hear other pastors were limited. But now, with a click of a mouse, any person can bring virtually any pastor into the comfort of her living room. And there's no doubt that many of these men are talented teachers of God's word, dynamic in both speech and thought. But these men don't know you or your family, they don't know your struggles and your successes, they don't know your fears and your joys, and they cannot help direct the desires of your hearts except by sheer providential timing.

So, let no other teacher come between you and your pastor. Your pastor pours himself out for you because he is called by God and by your congregation to a vocation of caring for your souls. He is faithful to you, so you be faithful to him. Your pastor proclaims the Gospel to you every Sunday, he prays for you, and he loves you. Love him back by giving him your undivided attention, encouraging him with words of praise, and invigorating him with your regular presence in the pew.†

The Rev. John Linch serves as Assistant Pastor at Ascension Lutheran Church, Ames, IA.



Table of Duties



To Husbands

By Rev. Jon Holst

I am in my third decade as a husband, and during that time, I've heard the men that God has put in my life say all kinds of things about their marriages: often about how hard they work, how much they sacrifice, and, of course, the classic: "my wife just doesn't understand." But not once have I ever heard a man say to me, "I think I'm loving my wife too much." I've heard things like, "She doesn't appreciate me," or "I need my space," but I've never heard a man say, "I'm being too considerate."

This silence is telling. It points to the fact that our fallen human nature would have us set a limit on the love, consideration, and sacrifice that we are willing to show to our wives. Yet, God's Word is clear: the love of a husband for his wife is meant to be lavish, abundant, Christlike, and could never be too much.

Saints Peter and Paul (whom Dr. Martin Luther quotes in the Table of Duties in his *Small Catechism*) don't let us off the hook on this. Peter writes, "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives" (1 Pet 3:7); and Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them" (Col 3:19). Not harsh ... not distant ... not impatient (note that they do not give us any exceptions here). But rather, considerate ... respectful ... loving. These aren't merely suggestions for a happier marriage, they are divine commands that reflect Christ's self-sacrificial love for His Church.

Of course, words like "considerate" and "loving" sound very nice and polite to us—at least until we realize that they call us as husbands to die to ourselves every single day.

Take my own marriage (and I can do this since I have her approval). Karen and I are totally different. I am typically

guarded in my speech. She is happy to provide her unfiltered analysis. I plan for the long haul. She improvises in the moment. And yet, in spite of all the differences between us (opposites attract – let the reader understand), Holy Scripture tells me to honor her, respect her, and love her—not on my terms, but on Christ's.

That's not so easy. Our fallen human nature wants to love our wives when it's convenient, respect them when we think they've earned it, and honor them when we feel like it. But Christ doesn't call me to love Karen when I happen to feel like it. He calls me to love her when I'm tired, when I'm torqued-off, and even when my sinful pride expects her to love me first.

And – although this part is often overlooked – St. Peter admonishes us husbands to do this, "so that nothing will hinder [our] prayers" (1 Pet 3:7). In other words, when we husbands fail to love our wives well, our spiritual lives are bound to suffer. That should be sobering.

You see, we husbands are always trying to excuse our failures to honor, respect, and love our wives (I'm tired ... I had a bad day at work ... she expects too much), but Christ doesn't excuse us. His will is His will. But He does, by His life-giving Word and Spirit, lead us to repentance. He forgives us by His grace and mercy. And He calls us to start again—dying and rising anew each day, strengthened by His Gospel Word and Sacraments—to love our wives as He loves His bride, the Church: sacrificially, tenderly, patiently, without keeping score, and always explaining everything (to ourselves and to others) in the kindest way.†

The Rev. Jon Holst is a husband, father, pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Lutheran Church, Jurupa Valley, CA, and Administrator of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary.



Table of Duties



To Wives

By Karen Holst

Growing up in a military household with two hot-tempered brothers formed me into a very independent woman. While putting myself through college, I met Jon and quickly realized that he was the one I wanted to share all my life's adventures with. Family and friends thought that I was giving up freedom and self-sufficiency by getting married and they had plenty of unsolicited advice based on their own relationships. Established wives and mothers in my life seemed especially proactive in shoring up defense strategies to combat any matrimonial deficiencies in their spouses' duties as breadwinners and fathers.

Listening to these disparaging lists of solutions to their lifelong grievances should have given me pause, but I grew resolved instead. Marriage was never meant to be an easy vocation in a fallen world: "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot" (Rom 8:7). Very few of these wives were domestically satisfied because they were occupied with empowering themselves above their husbands' headship. Much to their chagrin and our pleasure, my husband and I have remained firmly joined through many seasons and adventures by the grace of God through our enduring Christian faith.

In *Luther's Small Catechism*, he uses Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord," to emphasize the importance of obedience through submission. For the modern woman, being submissive within marital relationships is often mistaken for subservience or weakness, when in truth it is neither. A Christian woman's submission in deference to her husband's headship is a daily gift of Biblical trust in God's design for marriage, lived out as an example of our faith.

Paul's complementary command to husbands a few verses later completes a picture of care and compassion for us: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). A husband's headship is not tyranny – it is servant leadership patterned after Christ's sacrificial love. So, a wife's obedient submission is not blind obedience to her spouse's

authority within their marriage, but a willing alignment of her heart and life with God's order, rooted in mutual love and respect.

Peter also gives us an example in Sarah, who followed Abraham through uncertain lands and times of testing, trusting God's promises even when her husband faltered: "They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear" (1 Pet 3:5–6). Sarah's submission was anything but timid. It required courage to follow her husband into unknown places, to wait decades for the child of promise, and to endure the consequences of Abraham's mistakes. Yet through it all, she was anchored in God's protective care—an enduring pattern of submission born not of fear, but of faith.

Living out this vocation is countercultural. Our world exalts independence and self-rule, yet God calls us to display the beauty of His order in marriage. When we exemplify our marital status with courage and trust in Christ, we bear witness to something the world cannot explain: joy that is not dependent on circumstances, but on God's grace.

Through the years, Jon and I have learned that a marriage built on God's design does not remove challenges – it transforms them! There are always moments of disagreement, periods of strain, and times when submission feels costly. Yet every trial has become a testimony to God's faithfulness—shaping us into something stronger, richer, and more Christlike than we could have accomplished or imagined on our own.

So, for us wives today to walk as daughters of Sarah is to walk in faith—doing what is right in God's eyes, rejecting fear, and trusting God to sustain our marriage through every season. Our graceful, purposeful submission toward our husband's authority honestly reflects Christ's love and displays His grace to a watching world.†

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



To Parents

By Rev. Roger Twito

In the Table of Duties, Dr. Martin Luther, gives only one Bible verse to parents: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4).

In the first half of the verse, we are warned that it is possible for parents to provoke their children to anger or to exasperate them. Paul Kretzmann, in the *Popular Commentary of the Bible*, writes about this verse,

“Parents will, first of all, avoid all things which are apt to embitter, irritate, and exasperate their children, injustice, unreasonable severity, a senseless goading and teasing, and the like, all of which is likely to make the children indisposed to render the honor and obedience which is their duty.”¹

Injustice has to do with wielding punishment where credible evidence of wrongdoing is lacking. Unreasonable severity reminds us that applying a consequence to inappropriate behavior is wise, but the possibility of being overly harsh should be guarded against.

Another way that parents can provoke their children to anger is by being inconsistent in their response to misbehavior. If a child has a habit of disrespecting their mom, and on some occasions the father laughs at it and the next time gives a consequence, the child ends up confused, frustrated, and angry. From this place of anger, negative behavior often originates.

Let’s pray for parents that they will not provoke their children to anger but will instead, provide their children with the God-ordained, Spirit-led discipline they long for.

The second half of the verse admonishes parents to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. St. Paul makes it clear that the number one influence on a child’s relationship with God is their parents.

Parents can pray for their children. The Bible promises that, “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (Jas 5:16b). Every day parents can bring their children before the throne of grace and pray that their hearts will be open to the things of God, that God will protect them from the lies, attacks, and fiery darts of the adversary, and that God will give their children a desire to walk in His ways.

Parents can model what it means to be a follower of Christ. When parents have to make a tough decision, it’s good for children to see them turn to the Lord in prayer. When parents have been hurt by others, it’s good for children to see them forgive. When parents have sinned against God and wronged others, it’s good for children to see them repent. When parents go through difficult times, it’s good for children to see them turn to the Lord for the grace and strength they

need to press on. It’s good for children to watch their parents walk in faith and repentance.

Parents can put their children in the places where God has promised to be at work. Taking children to the baptismal font where they receive the gifts that God has promised is a life-changing starting point. Praying before meals and doing family devotions together is a formal way of passing down the faith. Talking about the things of God wherever and whenever is an informal way of helping children grow in their relationship with Christ. Taking children to church where they witness others in worship and begin to apply the read and preached Word to their own lives helps faith grow. Taking children to Sunday School, VBS, Confirmation, Youth Group, Bible Camp, and the other activities helps develop a Biblical worldview.

What about those situations where parents have diligently prayed for their children, modeled a life of faith and repentance, placed their children consistently in the places God has promised to be at work, but as the children grow into their independent years, make self-destructive choices?

Pray for them. Monica prayed for her son, St. Augustine, for 17 years before he was baptized a Christian. Pray that the Lord will reveal Himself to the wayward child. Pray that God will open the prodigal’s heart to a life-changing relationship with Him. And while you’re praying, be honest with God about your fears, failures, and frustrations. He knows them anyway, and He will by no means turn you away.

Speak the truth in love. Some parents continue to be able to communicate with their lost child, and if so, you can’t change God’s Word to fit the misguided positions of your child, but you can say what needs to be said in the most loving way possible.

Continue to present your wandering child to a God Who loves them more than you ever could, and then live your life for Christ and serve Him with the gifts He has blessed you with.

What an amazing responsibility and opportunity parents have – to help their children grow in their relationship with the God Who created them, Who comes to them in the waters of Holy Baptism, and Who continues to be at work in them until the day of Christ Jesus.

As sinful humans, we won’t always get it right, but God stands ready to forgive and help parents walk worthy of the calling to which they have been called. May God bless each of the parents among us as they live out the invitation from God’s Word not to provoke their children to anger, but to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.†

The Rev. Roger Twito is a husband, father, grandfather, and pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church, Ames, IA.

¹ Paul Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible – New Testament*, Vol. II, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921) 289.

To Children

By Martha Spotts



“Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and your mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may be well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Eph 6:1–3).

Do children have a vocation? “Yes,” you may think, “to create messes, make noise, and cost money!” Martin Luther, not to mention the Apostle Paul, thought they have a more important and valuable calling, as we see from the Bible passage above, which Luther lists in his table of duties under the heading, “To Children.” Here we see that the vocation of children is to obey and honor their parents—a tall order! Why is obeying and honoring parents important to the Lord?

Sometimes, in the eyes of a child, parents can be so unreasonable. “What do you mean I can’t eat cookies and ice cream for supper?” “But I don’t want to wear a coat even though it’s snowing!” “All my friends are going to jump off a cliff! Why can’t I?” It may seem to a child that his parents’ job is to put a damper on his enjoyment of life. Obedience becomes easier when children come to understand that their parents are God’s gift to them for their good, to feed and clothe them, to put a roof over their heads, to help them to grow and mature, to guide them through many dangers, and most importantly, to train them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph 6:4). It’s a matter of trust—trust in parents’ love and greater wisdom, but also trust in the Heavenly Father as He operates through His gift of parents.

According to Thomas M. Winger in his commentary on Ephesians, the word translated “obey” has a broad meaning in this context and includes not just the child’s obedience to parents but also trust toward them and a willingness to learn from them and to receive their instruction, especially “in the Lord.” Winger suggests that “heed” covers the full meaning of the word better than “obey.”¹ Children operate in their vocation as children when they willingly and gladly receive their parents’ guidance and training.

The phrase “in the Lord” indicates that the parent/child relationship reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church in a similar manner as the husband/wife relationship

as stated in Ephesians 5:22–33.² “In the Lord,” says Winger, “implies that ordinary earthly relationships have been transformed by one’s Baptism into Christ. The implication is that the children should heed their parents not simply because their parents gave them birth or have been set over them with authority, nor because they fear punishment, but because their parents are earthly representatives of God himself.”³

The next part of Paul’s instruction to children, “for this is right,” is a matter of natural law. We are all born with the God-given understanding that it is good and proper for us to heed our parents. Additionally, Winger indicates “for this is right” relates to the Fourth Commandment, which Paul cites in the next two verses. The injunction for children to obey their parents is not new with Paul but is a time-honored precept found throughout the Old Testament.⁴ Paul reiterates it here for all those living under the New Covenant, and then he reminds us that this commandment is accompanied by a promise: “that it may be well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Eph 6:3).

Jesus Himself is our example. As a boy, He perfectly obeyed and honored His earthly parents. Even while suffering on the cross, He honored Mary by giving her into the Apostle John’s care. While on this earth, He honored and obeyed His Heavenly Father perfectly and continues to do so now. He did what we cannot do and purchased forgiveness for our failure to keep God’s law, including the command to obey and honor our parents. When we realize our failure in this area, we should look to Jesus in repentance and seek the forgiveness found only in Him.

So, do children have a vocation beyond the messes, noise, and expense they entail? The answer is a resounding “Yes!” They serve God and fulfill their vocation by honoring and obeying their parents, following Jesus as their example, and turning to Him when they have failed. We can surely give glory, honor, thanks, and praise to our Lord who has called children to relate to parents and to Himself, in such a way. It helps them, from an early age, to see how to relate to their heavenly Father as they learn how to relate to their earthly parents.†

Martha Spotts is a pastor’s wife, mother, and grandmother from Columbia, MO.

¹ T. M. Winger, *Ephesians* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 656.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 657–658

⁴ Ibid., p. 658



Table of Duties



On Civil Government

By Remy Sheppard

Christians often find themselves in tension over politics and the government. This is especially true in America, where revolution is in our blood. The Table of Duties offers us a practical guide for dealing with this tension. Guided by Romans 13, Luther shows us how Christians are to view and interact with our government. Echoing Jesus and Paul, Luther tells us that God gave us civil government for our benefit. Because of this, we should respect and honor those in authority.

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are appointed by God” (Rom 13:1).

Civil government is not a mere human invention. Rather, God Himself establishes it. We have freedom on the form government takes, but the authority of our rulers comes from the Lord. As such, civil rulers and government officials are servants of the Lord, whether they recognize it or not, and are one of the ways that the Lord provides for our earthly needs (things like justice, peace, etc.).

“Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil works. Do you wish to have no fear of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from him, for he is the servant of God for your good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain, for he is the servant of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him who practices evil” (Rom 13:3-4).

The role of civil government is to reward those who do good, and to punish those who do evil. Governing authorities enact laws to restrain the lawless and provide safety for their citizens. And while God’s appointed rulers are not perfect, they always serve His purposes; truly they can do no other.

“Render to all what is due them: taxes to whom taxes are due, respect to whom respect is due, fear to whom fear is due, and honor to whom honor is due” (Rom 13:7).

What, then, is the Christian’s duty to the government? Paul tells us: Pay your taxes, and offer respect, fear, and honor where they are due. Luther notes that obedience to governing authorities is obedience to God. Consequently, disobedience to governing authority is rebellion against the Lord. Christians are a peaceful people. We pray and serve those around us in love and charity. We interpret our neighbors’ words and actions according to the eighth commandment. This includes the government and our elected officials.

We aren’t perfect in this. We live in a world of increasing distrust and political tension. The media exploits your fear and anger for their own profit. It can be very easy to view political leaders we don’t like as our “enemies.” We must resist this! And when we fail here, we must be quick to turn to Jesus. Where we fail, He succeeds! Christ loved, served, and prayed for those who persecuted Him—even while they killed Him! Let us, those baptized into His name, go and do likewise by the power of the Holy Ghost. We must remember: We are salt and light, not soot and darkness.

So go! Pay your taxes with thanksgiving! Report for jury duty with joy, ready to serve! Be a valuable and loving member of your community, known for your willingness to help and serve. Pray for your leaders. Submit in love to any demand that is not sinful. Give generously to the poor. Bless those who curse you. Be a healing balm to those around you, not a bitter curse. Against these things, there is no law.✝

Remy Sheppard is a third-year seminarian at ALTS and the host of the Know the Faith podcast.



Table of Duties



Of Citizens: “Faith-filled Subjects”

By Chaplain Clark Brown

Particularly in this most Western of nations, we chafe at words that describe us as “subjects,” as well as the synonyms “servants” and “slaves.” Yet, honestly, which one of us could not identify a “master” whom we serve?

Various Lutheran catechisms, hymnals, and the *Book of Concord* refer to the “Of Citizens” section differently, using “citizens” or “subjects” or even “What Subjects Owe to the Rulers.”¹

We live in a world where the “Boomer” philosophy has postulated the supremacy of the individual as sacrosanct and inviolate. Every group, and sometimes even individuals, demand carve-outs for their individual proclivities, even if not based upon law or precedent; but instead, on feelings alone. The resultant chaos leads to a lack of joint community commitment, cohesiveness, and cooperation. Left unchecked, the obvious weakness leads to grievous danger from enemy aggression.

Please refer to your catechisms to see all the pertinent Bible verses. Here, we will look at two: “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good” (1 Pet 1:13–14). “Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work” (Titus 3:1).

We are, by God’s design, meant to live in harmony and communion with our fellow men. To do this, we must not only comply with the appointed authorities, but acknowledge we are slaves, servants, or to use the lesser offensive title: “subjects” of the government.

Now, to be certain, there are some instances where disobedience to the civil authorities is occasionally mandated by God: “We must

obey God rather than human beings” (Acts 5:29). When the laws of men are anti-theological to the clear Word of God, we must not comply with men.

The converse of this chaos is that we are enabled, as “God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:10). In other words, our faith shines in our compliance and support of the civil authorities.

One can see similarities with the content of Ephesians 5:22–32, where we read an ideal way a married couple ought to conduct their relationship. It is so ideal that it is impossible, and finally we are informed that the words are descriptive of the relationship between Christ and His church. Try as husband and wife may to fulfill the pattern, they can do little more than point to the perfect marriage between Christ and the Church Triumphant as the end goal.

In like manner, governments and subjects are imperfect reflections of a Christian’s submission to the Church’s doctrine and practices, as we are subjects of the one Holy Christian Church. We routinely and joyously, put aside our perceived “rights” for the sake of the others, who may be the weaker brothers and sisters, who find our individually desired practices confusing.

Putting aside individuality in practice and doctrine, and submitting to the Church, we exhibit to the world a godly commitment, cohesiveness, and cooperation which brings glory to His Holy Name and defeat to Satan.✚

Chaplain Clark Brown is a rostered clergyman of The American Association of Lutheran Churches and is currently serving the Michigan Wing of the Civil Air Patrol in Northern Michigan.

¹ McCain, Paul Timothy (Ed.), *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader’s Edition of the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 373.



Table of Duties



To Workers of All Kinds

By Rev. Jerry Storrs

We all work for someone else. Whether in our home life, our employment, our church, or our government, we all must respond to certain other people who have authority over us. God has created structure in His creation. He is the ultimate authority in all these areas of our lives since He has given those in leadership the responsibility to lead in appropriate ways so that everything works to the benefit of His entire creation. In all aspects, this organization of things should illustrate and give glory to our Triune God for giving instruction to all people at all the levels of responsibility. He, of course, does this in various places in Scripture.

There are varied translations of the sixth group of life-vocations which the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther includes in the Table of Duties in his *Small Catechism*, yet it can be read (in English) as “Male and Female Servants, Hired Men, and Laborers.” However, to avoid any cultural influences on the sideline, let us consider the group to be called “Workers of All Kinds,” since this addresses any workers’ responsibilities regardless of the job they are in. The Biblical references for this sixth category are:

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ – not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free (Eph 6:5–8).

Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord (Col 3:22).

Basically, we are told that those who perform tasks under the direction of someone else, do the work in the same way that one would if it were God assigning that task to them. The supervisor or manager or “overseer” should be sincerely respected as if they were Christ Himself regardless of his kindness or knowledge of the job you are doing. Be the example of your Lord to the individual even if they do not reflect that toward you. After all, St Paul tells us that “whatever good anyone does...will be received back from the Lord” (Eph 6:8).

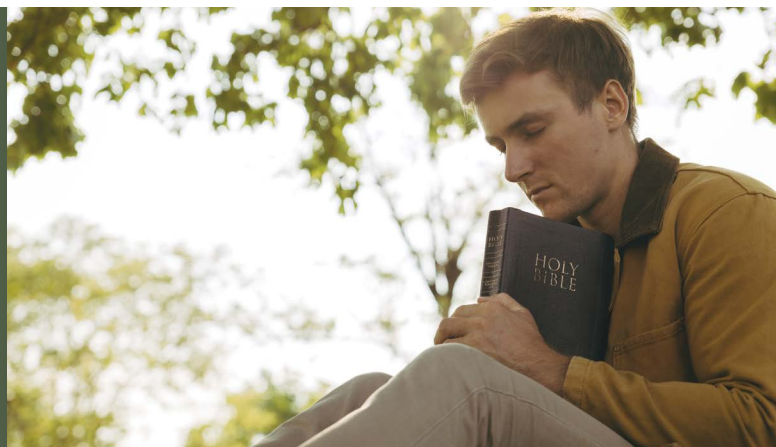
In simpler words, if one has a heart-felt desire to please their Lord, one should endeavor to please their worldly master. Whether that is in a place of employment, volunteer service, congregational environment, or one’s home. If all followers of Jesus strove to please Him in everything they think, do, and say, then imagine the difference we would all see in the world.

This, of course, coincides with the following of the commandments. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Luke 10:27), “Honor your father and your mother,” and “You shall not give false testimony” (Deut 20:12, 16). Respect the authority which God has had placed over you. That would be public officials, work overseers, church leadership, and home authority. Don’t do it just to avoid relationship problems with those people as “people-pleasers” would, but rather do so to please the Lord who has charged all of His children to “obey your earthly masters” (Eph 6:5).†

The Rev. Jerry Storrs serves Sonland Lutheran Church in Casa Grande, AZ.



Table of Duties



To Everyone: The Call to Every Christian

By Shannon McNally

It is extremely easy for every Christian to reduce faith to “my life” and “my circle.” We read Scripture for comfort. We pray for those we love. We try to do right in our homes and workplaces. This is good, but Luther closes his “Table of Duties” with a reminder that keeps us from shrinking the faith into something private. After speaking to pastors and congregations, rulers and citizens, husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and workers, even youth and widows, he turns to a final group: “To Everyone.”

These two words sound general, almost like an afterthought. In reality, they are the weight that holds the whole catechetical structure together. The Christian life cannot stay boxed into one role or one duty. God calls each and every one of us to remember that our lives touch more than the small sphere of family or work. In Christ, our calling reaches out to everyone. No excuses or exceptions.

Paul’s words in Romans 13:9 give the foundation: “The commandments ... are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” He does not define “neighbor” merely as a spouse or a child, or a friend or a co-worker. “Neighbor” means anyone God places across your path. A neighbor can be a stranger, or even an enemy. It is the person you would rather ignore, and the person whose needs inconvenience you. When Luther ends with “To Everyone,” he is pressing this point home. The command to love does not stop at the edge of our comfort zone.

Love of neighbor involves sacrifice and patience. In daily life, it often means giving time, attention, or resources when it feels costly. This is why Luther ties the command to prayer. In 1 Timothy 2:1 Paul writes, “I urge ... that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.” All people. Prayer trains the heart to care in ways action alone cannot. It bends our self-centered instincts toward God’s concern for the world.

Prayer also unmasks weakness. We struggle to pray consistently. Even when we do, our prayers can circle back to ourselves and those closest to us. Praying for all people asks us to lift those we do not know and may never meet: leaders, prisoners, the poor, even those opposed to our faith. This reveals where our love is shallow. Perfect love stretches as far as God Himself reached in Christ.

Luther concludes: “Let each his lesson learn with care, and all the household well shall fare.”¹ Every believer has a role to fulfill. The health of the household of faith — the Church — does not rest on pastors alone. They proclaim the Word and guard the Sacraments, but the body of Christ is made up of all its members. That’s where we come in. You, me, every believer — each of us carries gifts, tasks, and opportunities no one else can supply. We are not interchangeable. We are not replaceable. We are each indispensable to the life of the Church because every member is the living embodiment of the Church. The body suffers when one component is absent. The body thrives when every component works.

This perspective ought to change the way we view our everyday existence. God’s purpose is not separate from what appears to be routine. Unnoticed service, consistent faithfulness, and simple prayers are all grafted into His larger plan. In Christ, nothing is ever wasted. He turns what we consider to be unimportant into something timeless.

However, simply fulfilling required tasks is not the only way to serve Christ. Faith connects us with Him in such a way that even the smallest action contributes to His continuous work. He is evident in the way we care for others, in our prayers, and in the decisions we make out of obedience. He gathers the prayers for His own intercession. His compassion and selfless love are demonstrated through deeds of kindness. Even when we cannot see the results, every action we take in faith advances His kingdom.

This reality demands humility and courage; humility because service means being faithful to Christ rather than getting recognition, courage because He really uses us. The well-being of His people depends on our lives. In ways that are invisible our prayers support others. When we obey, we contribute to a testimony that transcends ourselves. This is something we can be happy about! Prayer turns into a privilege. Service turns into a habit we expect. Instead of limiting freedom, obedience increases it.

All believers are needed and called. No one is left out. Indeed, the Christian life, the entire body, belongs “To Everyone.”†

Shannon McNally is a pastor’s wife and poet in Waterloo, IA.

¹ Dr. Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 36.



SEMINARY: AN EXPLOSION OF GROWTH

Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins

Three years ago, at the 28th General Convention of The AALC, our seminary was just beginning to see some growth. Several new students had entered the Master of Divinity program. They were preparing to become AALC pastors. Also, several lay leaders had entered the seminary. They wanted to increase their knowledge of the Holy Bible, Lutheran Confessions, Church History, and congregational lay leadership.

Our problem was that the seminary income was only \$62,000 per year! Some money came from student tuition; some came from personal and congregational gifts. Our entire budget was \$228,000 per year, but we were anticipating a shortfall of over \$158,000 every year. How could we plan to grow the seminary when we could not even fund the small budget that we had?

The General Convention was given a challenge. It was a new financial support program for American Lutheran Theological Seminary called SOLA 500. The challenge was to find 500 faithful men and women who would support our seminary with \$25 per month or \$300 per year. With that kind of commitment, our seminary would receive \$150,000 per year. That would make a tremendous difference for the growth and development of our seminary.

The wonderful news is that faithful members of The AALC rose to that challenge. Each of these past three years, SOLA 500 and ALTS have received over \$100,000 per year from July of 2022 through June of 2025!

As a result, our student body now includes over 40 Master of Divinity students who are preparing for Holy Ministry. When other seminaries are struggling to find pastoral students, God is sending us an abundance! Our Master of Arts in Theology and Master of Arts in Religion student numbers also are growing, with more than 30 men and women in those programs. In addition, ALTS has begun a new Doctor of Ministry program that included nine students in the first cohort. Of course, the seminary continues to receive many students who are auditing courses either to sample seminary education or in order to prepare for colloquy onto our AALC Clergy Roster.

This is a rapidly growing seminary! In order to meet the demands of this student population and in order to meet the requirements for accreditation, we have added several members to our faculty and staff. Here is a current roster, not including Adjunct Faculty:

- Rev. Ben Baker is the new Professor of Ancient Languages and our new Registrar;
- Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey is the new Professor of Biblical Studies and our Accreditation Coordinator;
- Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper is the Professor of Lutheran Dogmatics;
- Rev. Matthew Fenn is the new Provost;
- Rev. Dr. Cary Larson is the Professor of Practical Ministry;
- Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins is the Professor of Historical Theology;
- Rev. Dr. Mark Mattis is the new Professor of Doctoral Studies (effective June, 2026);
- Rev. Jon Holst is the Seminary Administrator; and
- Mrs. Bonnie Ohlrich is the Office Manager.

Unfortunately, though these positions require a great amount of skill and knowledge, not one of them is full time, and some receive no financial remuneration.

So, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I am writing to say "Thank you!" Three years of faithful and generous giving to American Lutheran Theological Seminary have made our growth possible, by the grace and mercy of God. Your sacrificial giving and our Lord's hand of blessing have given stability and strength to the seminary, and a faithful future to our beloved church body.

As we begin a fourth year of SOLA 500, if you have given in the past, please continue your generous giving. We count on your support! If you have not given before, please prayerfully consider supporting ALTS.

The men and women who attend our seminary will be leading our church body for generations to come. Your faithful giving has made possible an explosion of growth at American Lutheran Theological Seminary! Thank you! ✚

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



Congregation Feature



Submitted Photo

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ellis, KS, was founded in 1907 as the Ellis Lutheran Church. The original building, purchased in 1910 for \$1000, was located at the south end of the present building. The church began under the Rev. Johannes Holszburger as part of the Nebraska Synod but changed to the Iowa Synod in 1912. The English language was first introduced into services (originally in German) in 1923. Also in 1923, a lightning strike to the steeple caused the original building to be damaged beyond repair. On May 10, 1925, the cornerstone of the current building was laid. The church was dedicated five months later on October 11, 1925.

In 2006, Christ Lutheran Church left the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and voted to join The American Association of Lutheran Churches (TAALC). A history book was compiled to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the church in 2007. It is available to read on the church website at clcellis.org. The Rev. Alexander McNally is the current pastor of Christ Lutheran Church. He and his wife, Ashley, arrived in the fall of 2024.

There are a number of events, ministries, and activities that the church looks forward to every year. The Women of L.I.F.E. group organizes the annual Hunters' Meal in November which serves as both a fundraiser and outreach event. The meal coincides with the start of pheasant hunting season and attracts hunters as well as church and community members. Soups and sandwiches are served along with pies and other desserts. Members also donate items and baskets for a raffle ticket fundraiser. The youth of the congregation help with serving and cleaning. Funds raised help support Women of L.I.F.E. projects and benevolences along with future youth events.

Vacation Bible School is also a highlight of the year. The Sunday School and youth leaders go all out decorating the church for the theme of the year. Older youth of the church and community volunteer as helpers. The youth of the congregation also meet monthly during the school year. Recent projects have included leading bingo at the nursing home, making and delivering freezer meals to homebound members, and helping members with cleaning around their property. The annual youth lock-in event is also a big hit. There are lots of crafts made and all kinds of fun and games to be had.

Christ Lutheran's Sunday service is held at 10:30 a.m. Adult Bible Study and children's Sunday school precede the service at 9:30 a.m. The children learn from both the Bible as well as *Luther's Small Catechism*. Holy Communion is currently celebrated twice monthly on the first and third Sundays. Members enjoy a number of traditions throughout the year, like the thanksgiving potluck meal on the Sunday following the Hunters' Meal, and the Palm Sunday pancake breakfast. Everyone works together to decorate the church for the Christmas season following the service on the last Sunday of the church year. The congregation also serves the community together. The church helps to serve the free BBQ dinner at the Ellis County Jr. Free Fair during the summer every year.

God has certainly been at work at Christ Lutheran this past year. We see the work of God as He strengthens the faith of both young and old through His Word and Sacraments. We also see Him at work in the generous, serving hearts of so many in our congregation. Our prayer is that God would continue to draw us closer to Him in the coming year and that we would grow in faith as we cling to our Lord Jesus Christ.†



Women of L.I.F.E.

Women of L.I.F.E. Announces 2026 Bible Study

By Katherine Hofinga

Have you ever heard that the Old Testament points us to Christ? I have. I've wanted to go through a study looking at all the ways this is true, and now I can!

As Co-Chair of the Women of L.I.F.E., it is my pleasure to introduce you to our 2026 Bible Study: "Behold the Man: Finding Christ in the Old Testament." This study was co-authored by Rev. Abraham and Shannon McNally.

Here is the Table of Contents:

- Lesson 1: How to Find Christ in the Old Testament
- Lesson 2: Finding Christ Through Types
- Lesson 3: Finding Christ Through His Genealogy
- Lesson 4: Finding Christ Through the Women of His Genealogy
- Lesson 5: Finding Christ in the Law
- Lesson 6: Finding Christ in Events
- Lesson 7: Finding Christ Through Biblical Motifs (Part I)
- Lesson 8: Finding Christ Through Biblical Motifs (Part II)
- Lesson 9: Finding Christ Through Christophany
- Lesson 10: Finding Christ Through the Psalms
- Lesson 11: Finding Christ Through Prophecy
- Lesson 12: Finding Christ Through Eschatology

Here is a brief excerpt from Lesson 1: "[T]oo often, the Old Testament is viewed as little more than a book of ancient history, repetitive genealogies, and outdated laws. We gravitate our

interest to the Christ-filled New Testament instead. But to read the Old Testament authentically is to read Christ at its center. Christ is not hidden from us within its pages – He is revealed through them!"

The cost for each study or leader's guide is \$6.00. An order form is available online on The AALC Women of L.I.F.E. page. Postage continues to rise, so if your group is able, we would appreciate any donation to help defray expenses (postage is often about \$1.00 per book).

Our Materials Resource Coordinator, Laurie O'Brien, will be printing the study in December and sending out, so that you can begin your study in January.

Also, just a reminder that we do have copies of older studies available to you. I know many groups got off schedule (especially during COVID-19), but don't think that you missed your chance if you didn't order them for the appropriate year! We just filled two orders for Cathy Twito's 2025 Bible study on Ruth.

Studies available:

- From 2025: "Ruth: A Love Story to Us From God's Heart" by Cathy Twito
- From 2024: "The Armor of God: Suiting Up & Standing Firm" by Laurie O'Brien
- From 2023: "Women of The Promise" by Rev. Rich Eddy

May God bless your study of His Word! ✝

Katherine Hofinga serves as Co-Chair for The AALC National Women of L.I.F.E.



November 2025

PRAYER BOOKMARK



Mountain View: A Metamorphosis

Mountain View Lutheran Church in Thornton, CO, has had its challenges in recent years much like many churches across the United States. Congregations age and church attendance dwindles over time, and eventually reality sets in and those who remain must face the reality that for their “church,” things will never be the same.

With that in mind, the congregation of Mountain View recently voted to suspend the ministry that has been in Thornton for years, and turn over the church and its assets to The American Association of Lutheran Churches as per Mountain View’s Constitution and By-laws. After much prayerful consideration and various attempts to keep the congregation viable, they decided that the Lord was closing this chapter of His church, with a hope to see a possible metamorphosis and restart of this ministry with a mission plant.

Our Presiding Pastor, Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, believes that this is an opportunity to hold this valuable outpost of the Gospel and not give it up. As part of this restart, Mountain View Lutheran will be re-named, while still providing the community a confessional Lutheran ministry. This new adventure will be the primary commitment of our Commission for American Missions (CAM) for the foreseeable future.

As much as CAM can help, we can’t do this alone. We will need all of The AALC to pull together to help get this mission plant off the ground and sustained until they can be self-supporting. In conjunction with our Presiding Pastors’ vision for home missions and more church planting, CAM is committed to a three-year plan to make this church plant viable.

You have an opportunity to help and join us in this endeavor. We ask that you prayerfully consider what you can do to assist this reinvigorated ministry and reach the lost for Christ. We are looking for congregational and individual partners who would be willing to walk with us as you are led.

We will have further updates in *The Evangel* as we move forward with this mission opportunity of “Keeping the Fort.” Let us all look forward with great anticipation what our Lord Jesus will do in His faithful work and mission.✠

1. Thanksgiving for all the Saints who have gone before
2. Churches considering joining The AALC
3. Rev. Joseph Adama
4. Regional Chairmen
5. Rev. Clark Brown
6. For peace and comfort that only God can give
7. For your Pastor and Presiding Pastor
8. Women of L.I.F.E. Executive Committee
9. Pastors: pray for your congregations
10. For your local government
11. Rev. Joseph Christina
12. For the families of Christian martyrs
13. Husbands: pray for your wife
14. World Missions Commission
15. Our Redeemer’s Lutheran Church, Williston, ND
16. Rev. Dr. Cary Larson
17. Wives: pray for your husband
18. Rev. Jon Holst, ALTS Administrator
19. Parents: pray for your children
20. For those who volunteer in soup kitchens
21. Rev. Dr. Jordan Cooper
22. Holiday travels
23. The unchurched
24. Rev. Carl Groh
25. Tartu Academy of Theology
26. For National Government
27. Thanksgiving for God’s blessings during the past year
28. Pastors considering joining The AALC
29. Elders of our churches
30. To remember what Advent is all about



December 2025

PRAYER BOOKMARK

1. For children to respect their parents
2. Employees: respect for employers
3. Rev. Loyd Ginn
4. Employers: respect for employees
5. Youth: to obey authority over you
6. Holiday season ministries
7. Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins
8. For all to respect your elders
9. Rev. Dr. Chris Caughey, ALTS Accreditation Coordinator
10. To love your neighbor as yourself
11. The homeless and low income families
12. Rev. Scott Strohkirch
13. Those struggling with disease
14. Doctors and nurses
15. Kristy Jensen, Bookkeeper
16. Holiday stresses
17. Police and other law enforcement
18. The unemployed or underemployed
19. For those unable to be with family
20. Rev. Stephen Unger
21. To humble ourselves
22. For those grieving during the holidays
23. AALC Leadership
24. Rev. Clyde Awtrey
25. To remember what Christmas is all about
26. Rev. Don Ginkel
27. Kids with cancer and other diseases
28. The unborn
29. For all to know Scripture is breathed out by God
30. Rev. Daniel Cloeter
31. For all to repent of sins



Clergy Feature

Rev. Dr. Tom Stover

When/how did God call you into the ministry?

First of all, I'd like to say that being raised in godly Lutheran communities surrounded by strong God-fearing men who believed and taught that the Holy Scriptures are the inerrant and infallible Word of God has been a blessing.

I was born in Minneapolis, MN, and was baptized three months later at First Lutheran Church in Columbia Heights, MN. When I was nine years old, our family became members of the Lutheran Church of the Master in Brooklyn Center, MN, where I remained a member throughout my college years. And it was here, under the shepherding of my spiritual father, Rev. Paul Swedberg, that my love for the ministry began to take root.

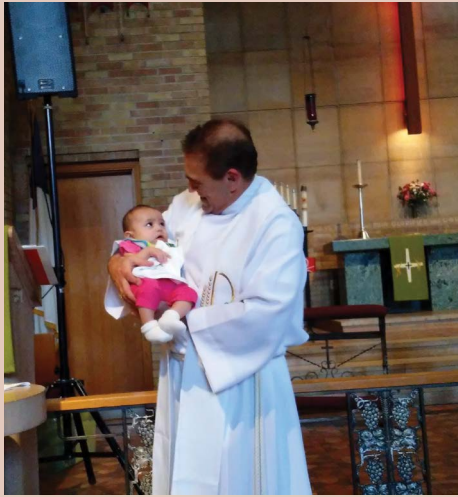
During my confirmation years, I would serve as an acolyte, assisting the pastors at our three services each Communion Sunday: preparing the altar, assisting with Communion, and cleaning up afterwards. As I listened to the sermons preached, heard the Scriptures read, and grew in my understanding of the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, these duties became very familiar and personal, and I knew this was what the Lord was calling me to do. However, what I didn't realize at that time was that He had much more for me to learn before that could happen.

I was very active in our youth ministry and the choirs at the Church. After graduating from High School, I enrolled at Golden Valley Lutheran College/Lutheran Bible Institute, and after graduation, I went on to Augsburg University.

After this, I decided to take some time off before entering the Seminary, and Honeywell hired me. I then spent the next 20 years in the semiconductor industry with the constant thought in the back of my head, "When would I start the Seminary and begin my work in the Church?" And the answer came on a flight coming back from the East Coast. As I was staring out the window of the plane, this thought rang out in my mind: "Now is the time!"

I spent the next six months preparing and then entered the Seminary in August of 2002. I received my Master of Divinity degree in June 2006, was ordained in August of that year, and then entered graduate school.

It had occurred to me a few years later that the wait I encountered to begin Seminary was because the Lord needed me to mature before He would allow me the responsibility required for the office of Holy Ministry. For this, I thank Him every day for the comfort of His rod and His staff.



Left & Right: Rev. Dr. Tom Stover provides pastoral care and counseling at Holy Trinity Mission in South Minneapolis, MN. Submitted photos.

Where are you serving now?

I'm the pastor of Holy Trinity Mission, where we serve the homeless and the poor in South Minneapolis, MN.

What do you most want your congregation/people you serve to know?

That we can trust God's Word; when you read the Holy Bible and you believe what it says, you don't have to wonder who God is, and you learn of His desire to be close to you. His Word creates a connection and relationship that communicates His nature and will and what He has done to redeem us back into His presence through the work and merit of His Son.

When we trust His Word, He can and will lead our lives as we experience His unchanging faithfulness to His promises.

What brings you joy in your tasks as a pastor?

Sharing God's Word in our Bible Studies, walking alongside those who need some form of counseling, and sharing the Sacraments.

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

There have been two things that have stood out. First, I was surprised by the love and respect I have received from individuals, especially those in the inner city, for being a pastor. It is truly humbling.

Second, through the counseling I provide in our ministry, I have come to realize that for many pastors, the ministry can sometimes be a lonely existence. With overwhelming tasks and constant demands, from administrative duties, managing staff, preaching and hospital visits, funerals, and other emergencies, not to mention having time for their families. Navigating these countless responsibilities can lead to a heavy emotional toll and exhaustion.

Please, pray for your pastors.

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

I believe that the low view many in the Church have of Holy Scripture, leading to a lack of biblical knowledge, has caused an ever-growing spiritual apathy and indifference, leaving many vulnerable to cultural and social pressures. Which, in turn, leaves them unarmed to push back against moral standards opposed to biblical teaching, or worse yet, to answer why Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The AALC was born from the pushback against Higher Criticism, also known as the Historical-Critical Method of Biblical Scholarship, where Holy Scripture was no longer viewed as God's Word to man, but rather as man's words about God. Although biblical scholarship today does not consider the historical-critical method the sole or undisputed method, it remains a central and highly influential approach in many Evangelical Seminaries. Therefore, we must be diligent and, with a clear voice, preach the truth always that the Holy Scriptures are the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God.

Where have you seen God working lately?

I was asked to lead a men's Bible study at a local LCMC congregation, and I agreed to do so if they would be willing to study *Luther's Large Catechism*, which they decided to do. We started with six or seven men, all of whom came from different Lutheran churches, and I was pleasantly surprised to see how much they enjoyed going through the questions each week. Over time, the group has grown to 10-15 men each week, with a few of the men raised in different denominations. It has been an absolute pleasure for me to observe how each of the guys has been digging deeper into their Bibles and the meaningful discussions that have come from this. However, they now start the meetings with "Let's stump the Pastor" so it keeps me on my toes!†

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UPCOMING EDITIONS...

Themes for 2026: Six Church Seasons and High Feast Days

Please be in prayer for these upcoming editions:

Jan/Feb: Epiphany (*deadline Nov. 1*)

Mar/Apr: Lent (*deadline Jan. 1*)

May/June: Easter (*deadline March 1*)

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

Sept/Oct: High Feast Days in the Church (*deadline July 1*)

Nov/Dec: Advent & Christmas (*deadline Sept. 1*)

Church News:

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

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