

The EVANGEL

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Letter From the Editor

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This edition of *The Evangel* focuses on the theme of personal prayer and worship. However, with the spread of COVID-19, we halted the winter edition, reordered it, and added articles concerning this topic as well. It seems appropriate in the midst of this pandemic that we meditate on the importance of prayer. As Christians, we are called to pray to God our Father. This is a gift that we can often neglect or take for granted. So for my letter to you all, I would like to focus on *why* and *how* it is that we can pray to God.

In the Old Testament, it is made clear that in the presence of God, people die. God Himself tells Moses that, "You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live," (Ex. 33:20). Likewise, when Uzzah reaches out to catch the Ark of the Covenant—where God's presence dwelt among the people—even though it was falling to the ground, he is promptly struck dead by God (2 Sam. 6:7). Another example: in the temple on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would tie a rope around his waist so that the people could retrieve him if he were to die in God's presence as he entered the Holy of Holies. So why is this the case? Is God evil that he should kill people who come before Him? Certainly not! The problem here is that God is too good. He, being perfect, cannot abide sin in his presence.

So, if approaching God as a sinful person causes instantaneous death, how is it that we can now pray to God without fear? Here's the token Sunday school answer: Jesus! The author of Hebrews writes:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. (Heb. 10:19-23)

Through the sacrifice of Jesus, the "curtain was torn," meaning, the literal curtain in the temple that separated the Holy of Holies with the rest of the temple was split in two. This physical act indicates that God has made himself accessible to all people, not only to the high priest on the day of Atonement. The author of Hebrews identifies the torn curtain with Jesus' torn flesh. Jesus has set us *at one* with himself ("atonement"), and has settled our sin-debt through his bodily death. In addition to this, we are presented pure and holy before God through Jesus, and declared righteous for his sake. For this reason, we can now stand before God and pray to Him.

Jesus' disciple asked him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples," and Jesus answered: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation. (Luke 11:1b-4) Following this, Jesus exhorts his disciples that God not only hears their prayers, but that God is a loving father who desires to give them good things. It is not simply that Jesus gave a pattern or rubric to his disciples for prayer, but he also encourages him that God hears and loves them.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do not fear in approaching God our father in prayer. And because you no longer need to fear, you can come to the Lord daily with your petitions, your thanksgiving, your struggles, your joys. Especially in this time of uncertainty, fear, and frustration, it is so important that we join together, petitioning God to deliver us.

In Christ,
Lisa Cooper

To submit to *The Evangel*, please send articles and pictures to theevangel@taal.org, or mail them to 600 Warren Rd. Apt 6-1A, Ithaca, NY 14850. Please be sure to indicate who wrote the article and who took the pictures. Include your contact information as well.

Fight the Winter Chill

The Warmth of Personal Prayer and Worship

by TAALC Presiding Pastor, The Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins

Martin Luther lived only 63 years on this earth. He was 24 when he was ordained a priest. His pastoral ministry lasted only 39 years. He surely made the most of every minute. The volume of his life's work was incredible, 56 volumes in English translation. The weight of his emotional pressure was incalculable, including personal battles with the Emperor, the Pope, and the devil. The discipline of his spiritual life was exemplary, facing emotional, physical, and spiritual overload on a daily basis. Yet, in response to the constant stress and demand of the Reformation, Luther is quoted as having said: "I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." The Great Reformer is one whose daily discipline can teach us much about coping with life's demands and restoring emotional, physical, and spiritual health to a Christian life.

In 1535, Luther wrote a booklet, *"A Simple Way to Pray."* It was his response to a request from Peter Beskendorf, his barber, who wanted a simple guide for the ordinary man. Luther summarized his own personal devotions, providing two important suggestions:

First, there were times when tasks, thoughts, the devil, or his own sin troubled him. Luther recognized his own sense of joylessness or what he called being "cool" in his prayer life. He felt obstructed or impeded in his prayers. Then, Luther would recite word for word, The Ten Commandments, The Apostles' Creed, The Lord's Prayer, something from the Psalter, and memorized verses from Christ or Paul. I understand this to have been a response that Luther developed for his own spiritual strength, or when threatened by emotional or spiritual depletion. This is a wonderful tool and a helpful suggestion. I encourage you to try it!

Second, Luther was emphatic about keeping regular prayer times as the first appointment of the morning and the last visit at night. He urged Peter not to allow this to be violated by the intrusion of other thoughts or deeds. They are designed to keep the Christian away from prayer. They tempt one by claiming to be of great-

er importance or urgency, but they are not. In the end, they only lead one to become what Luther called, "lax and lazy, cool and listless." The devil is neither lazy nor careless, Luther cautioned his barber. In addition, our own flesh is eager to sin and disinclined to the discipline of prayer. Regular times of prayer in morning and evening are Luther's second suggestion.

Luther's 34 page booklet followed his own personal prayer life, childlike in form and faithfulness. We are given examples of Luther's actual prayers. He prays each petition of the Lord's Prayer using a four-fold way of praying: as *instruction*, as *thanksgiving*, as *confession*, and as *petition*. This same pattern also is used when praying each of The Ten Commandments and each Article of the Creed.

Pastor Martin Luther included two more important admonitions. The attentive barber must keep his thoughts clearly focused on the one whose hair he is cutting. Otherwise, the barber may forget how far he has gotten in his shaving and cutting. If his mind wonders, the customer may be cut on the mouth, or the nose, or even the throat! Similarly, the Christian must be an attentive prayer. Good prayer requires acuteness of concentration and singleness of heart! Stay faithfully focused on God!

Second, the Christian must never think of him or herself as standing alone. He or she is not alone. The devout Christian is surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. All of Christendom is standing with Luther, with the barber, and with you. They pray in common and in united petition with you.

To this, the praying Christian must add the word, "Amen," meaning, "Very well, God has heard my prayer; this I know as a certainty and a truth."

Taking Luther's guidance to heart, may each of us stave off the winter chill with the warmth of personal prayer and worship. May we be comforted by the presence of Jesus and enlivened by the fire of the Holy Spirit!

Good Friday Service of Prayer

by The Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins

Behold, the life-giving cross on which was hung the salvation of the world.

Oh, Come! Let us worship Him!

On Good Friday, April 10, 2020, at 3:00 PM, The AALC will hold a Good Friday Service of Prayer. This will be our first effort to host a live video Worship Service for every pastor and congregation of our church body. A video link will be sent to each TAALC pastor and congregation. All will be invited to join a virtual congregation as we worship Our Lord Jesus Christ. We will offer prayers for our world that is facing the pandemic of COVID-19, and for our nation that is enduring both a health emergency and a financial crisis.

In addition to the sermon that will be given during the Good Friday Service of Prayer, Sunday Sermons will be given by The Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins on the 5th Sunday of Lent, March 29; Palm/Passion Sunday, April 5; and Easter Sunday, April 12. These messages are presented especially for TAALC congregations that are currently without pastors. However, anyone is invited to view these sermons. They may be accessed by means of a video link found on The AALC website, taalc.org, or on The AALC Facebook site.

We are about to celebrate the most holy events in the life of the Christian Church, the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Even though we are restricted from gathering in our churches and must remain in our homes, we can still be spiritually connected and fed through video prayers and sermons.

Behold, the life-giving cross on which was hung the salvation of the world.

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Wisdom from Luther in the time of COVID-19

by Lisa Cooper

With the onset of the COVID-19 virus, it seems timely and important to mention that Martin Luther lived through a deadly plague too. Similar to our pastors, he too had to wrestle with the implications of putting himself and his family at risk in order to care for the sick and minister to his people. In a letter written to the Rev. Johann Hess, Luther answers the most pressing question of his time: is it appropriate for a Christian to run away from a deadly plague? At Luther's time, it was common for rulers and church authorities to leave their community if any sickness came through. Instead of tending to the people in their care, they would leave to preserve their own lives.

Luther urges pastors to remain steadfast in the faith, trusting that God will preserve their lives as they minister, especially to those who are dying. He does, however, make provisions for those pastors who must flee to preserve their own health if spiritual care is still available to the people that they serve. Likewise, rulers should remain and govern their people, lest governmental upheaval happen. For parents or other caregivers, the obligation to fellow people should override the propensity to preserve their own lives instead of the other. He writes, "According to this passage [Matt. 25:41-46] we are bound to each other in such a way that no one may forsake the other in his distress but is obliged to assist and help him as he himself would like to be helped" (2). It is not, according to Luther, evil to flee from death. In fact, many places in scripture show that God's people fled from harm and danger. What is evil, however, is the act of forsaking those in need.

The opposite error is just as evil, that is, when people act "too rash and reckless, tempting God and disregarding everything which might counteract death and the plague. They disdain the use of medicines; they do not avoid places and persons infected by the plague, but lightheartedly make sport of it and wish to prove how independent they are" (6). As much as the first error rings true today, this second error seems uncanny. Against all reason and medical advice, people today are still acting in such a way—traveling for Spring break, hosting parties, gathering with large groups, and the like. Luther says is no way to trust God, but rather tempts him.

Luther then offers some advice for how to minister to those who are dying from the plague. First, he says, "One must admonish the people to attend church and listen to the sermon so that they learn through God's word how to live and how to die" (7). Secondly, because death was a very immanent threat, Luther urges everyone to confess to their pastor and take the sacrament as frequently as they can before falling ill. Third, while ill and nearing death, they must call for the pastor to come and minister to them, preferably while they can still confess and receive the sacrament.

All of these admonitions of Luther become more complex in our time with COVID-19. Our churches are no longer allowed to gather in person. We have to remain six feet away from others, which makes receiving communion nearly impossible. Complicating this further, we know that people can spread this virus without having any symptoms. Although these factors complicate things, they do not remove God's promises for us. If it is possible, and you can make an in-person confession, you should! If it is possible, and you can see your pastor and receive the sacrament, you should! But where this is impossible, God's grace and mercy and promises are still true: we do not need to fear death. Through death, we gain our inheritance with Christ and we will live eternally with him.

How Churches Can Use Technology Well During a Pandemic

by The Rev. Jordan Cooper

Without the invention of the printing press in 1440 by Johannes Gutenberg, it is likely that the Reformation would not have happened. It was the popularity and accessibility of printed materials which allowed Luther's ideas to spread far beyond the academy into the public sphere. Technology, with all of its faults (and there are plenty), has always been a means that God himself uses to spread his Word. He is doing something similar with the technological advances of the present age.

We live in an era which has seen an unprecedented shift in forms of media and communication. Within a century, this has gone from a single radio at the home to a near infinite amount of data and information at one's fingertips with the smartphone. Because of the rapid nature of such changes, it has often been difficult for the church to adapt, especially as generational gaps in the use of technologies become increasingly more pronounced. Despite these difficulties, we, as a church, need to move forward in using these advancements in a way that spreads the proclamation of God's law and gospel, while recognizing the limitations of these mediums. The present pandemic has brought us into a position where the good use of such technologies has become evident.

Some Specific Resources

There are many resources that pastors and congregations can use to minister at a time when meeting in-person is a health risk. The amount of options may make this all seem overwhelming, so I will here present just a few helpful resources:

1. **YouTube.com** The platform is free to sign up, and it is easy to use. Tutorials can be found online.
2. **ChurchOnlinePlatform.com** This is also a free resource which allows you to stream live services while also accepting prayer requests as well as a live chat.
3. **Zoom.com** This is probably the most popular website at the moment, as it is being used for college classes, business meetings, and Bible studies. A pro-account is \$15/month. It allows for multiple participants to be on video or phone. It can be used for church council or elders meetings, along with small groups or Bible studies.

Plenty of other options are available as well, but these three should cover your basic needs. A lot of people are also using Facebook Live for those who have an account on the platform.

General Tips

Most pastors are probably not that well-versed in these technologies. However, it is almost guaranteed that there is someone either directly in your congregation, or the relative of a congregant who is. Reach out for help. Most younger people have a working knowledge of these websites, and they may have usable video or audio equipment. If you have no working camera, find someone with an iPhone.

Use this as an opportunity to do something new with your ministry. There are many hindrances to technology, but also many benefits. Take this time to grow with your congregation in these areas, and when this crisis is over, many of the lessons learned here will continue to benefit you. The internet will never and can never replace the local church. However, it can be an asset and a tool for the church to use. In this time, we are all figuring out how it can be, and doing that together.



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Learn More

If you want to explore these things further, I hosted a webinar with some pastors in The AALC in which I discussed these things in some more detail. You can find that here: <https://www.justandsinner.org/home/technology-in-the-church>

National Convention Announcement

Pastors and Laity of The AALC:

As the Administrative Assistant to The AALC (*pro tem*), it is my job to coordinate the planning for our biennial TAALC General Convention. As you may be aware, The AALC has scheduled the General Convention this year for Tuesday, June 16th through Friday, June 19th, 2020.

Given the situation with the COVID-19 outbreak now before us, our Presiding Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, the National Office Staff, and the Executive Committee, have begun to consider contingency plans in the event that we must cancel or postpone the Convention in June. We have already taken steps to allow for several possibilities. However, due to the fluidity of the situation, no final decision has yet been made.

At this point, we anticipate that the AALC Joint Council will be asked to meet shortly after Easter in order to discuss the pandemic situation and to make a final decision regarding the General Convention dates, locations, etc.. We will keep you informed throughout this process and let you know what decisions are made.

Yours in Christ,
The Rev. Dean A. Stoner
Administrative Assistant to The AALC (*pro tem*)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We are currently witnessing the spread of the COVID-19 virus, and it has just recently been named a pandemic. The likes of this virus we have not seen so far in our lifetimes. Although as I write this, there is still much left unknown about this virus, one thing is for certain: there is fear and uncertainty spreading throughout our world. As this edition of The Evangel goes to print, it seemed timely and important to offer special prayers for the current state of our nation, our communities, our churches, our pastors, our neighbors, and ourselves. Please join me in praying.

For the Sick: Heavenly Father, have mercy on those who are sick. Bring healing and attend to every need of those who have fallen ill. You, Lord, are sovereign over all things, over all disease, discomfort, and ailment. You who created our bodies can most certainly heal our bodies when they become ill. Bring healing, restoration, and preserve our hope according to your unfailing mercy.

For the Dying: Lord, bring those who are dying into your kingdom, and give peace to those whom they leave behind. It is only through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, that we can trust that death has been conquered, that through physical death we enter into eternal life with You, most loving Father of all. Let this promise bring us hope and steadfast faith.

For our Country: Ruler of All Nations, guide and protect our rulers, give them Your wisdom, that they might serve the people of our country with right guidance, making decisions that preserve the wellbeing of all people.

For Those Most at Risk: Our Father, you know and love each one of your children. We trust that you will protect us, and those among us who are most at risk. For the elderly, for the immunocompromised, for those who have no immediate help or support, Lord protect them, raise up help, and guard them.

For our Pastors: Heavenly King, guide and keep our ministers. Protect them from all ailment, all sadness, and all suffering as they seek to minister during this pandemic. Dear God, give them wisdom to serve their congregations in spite of rising regulations that inhibit our gathering. Send your Holy Spirit, our Comforter to bring comfort and peace to them.

For our Churches: Most Merciful God, miraculously attend to every congregation's needs as they may cease meeting in person. Make it possible that Word and Sacrament ministry may continue. Guard our church communities, knit us together in steadfast love, and protect us from isolation.

For our Communities: God Almighty, only You have the power to shield us from this virus. Only You have the power to protect our communities from its impact. Go before us, Lord, and protect all people in our communities.



For Medical Professionals: Thank you, Dear Lord, for medical professionals. Thank you that they are willing to put themselves in harm's way to bring healing to others. They are truly doing Your work, as You are the source of all healing. Protect them, Lord, from harm, from sickness, and from despair.

For Scientists and Researchers: Lord of all Creation, please give guidance to all scientists and researchers as they seek to understand this virus. Help them find courses of treatment that help those who have fallen ill, and protect the healthy against infection.

For Those Serving in Essential Critical Capacities: Protect Your people, Dear God, who serve our communities in essential ways. For those who must continue in their work for the benefit of their neighbor during this pandemic, give them peace and all help. Protect them from disease. Guard them and their families from all danger.

For Those Whose Livelihood is at Stake: Father in Heaven, hear our prayer for mercy. Bring those who have lost their jobs back into gainful employment quickly. Protect affected businesses, employers, and employees from all affliction. And for those who are fearful, Lord, attend to their needs, provide for them, and comfort them.

James 2

by The Rev. Dave Spotts

Are we saved by grace through faith? What about works? How do we deal with James 2:14-18? It's a passage that is challenging and which some have used to require works for salvation. Let's take a look at the issue and see what the Scripture is actually telling us here!

One of the important principles of interpretation to remember is that James, along with 2 Peter, Hebrews, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation were a little slower to be recognized as authoritative than the rest of the New Testament. This does not mean that they have less authority, but it does mean that we want to interpret them through the lens of the Gospels and the Pauline Epistles.

With that said, what's the idea of James 2:14-18? It's about faith and works. That's at the beginning and the end, like bookends. The section in the middle about caring for the poor is an illustration which will help us see the issue of faith and works clearly.

The Gospels and Paul clearly show that we are saved by grace, through faith, without any dependence on works for salvation. Our good works, though they are good, will not create or replace saving faith. On the contrary, our good works are to come from a faithful heart which recognizes how Jesus has given us his grace and mercy apart from any good that we have. Our good works reflect that work of Jesus. This implies that we do good for others even though they have not earned it and cannot repay us.

How does this relate to James 2:14-18? The text says that a faith without works cannot save us. The problem is that we have already established from the Gospels and Paul that faith does save us, entirely apart from works. The key to the passage in James, then, is not at the beginning, but at the end. It says we show our faith by works, since we don't have any other way to show our faith. It doesn't go on display for anyone's benefit until we actually do something. When we consider that, the central concept of verse 18, we find it pulls us in line with the rest of the New Testament context.

In short, faith that will not result in living that faith out is a questionable faith. It's a little like the person who is qualified as a surgeon but whose hands are shaky or unable to hold the tools needed for surgery. We question whether the person is really a surgeon or not. James is pointing out that the proof of faith is not whether we say we have faith but whether we act on it or not.

The remainder of the passage, which is often used to argue that everybody who is experiencing physical need is our direct responsibility, also needs to be seen in its context. It's an illustration of faith with or without works. Again, if we put caring for the poor into its New Testament context, we will find that we are called to care for the poor and needy. There's really no question about it. We are to love and serve our neighbor. We are to feed and clothe the poor, visit those who are sick and in prison, and, in general, to provide help and comfort to others.

With that in mind, we can turn our attention back to the passage in James. We have been confronted with a need. It seems an immediate need. There are plenty of those around every one of us. In some parts of the world there is so much need that even the wealthiest person could never care for all the needs, even with an unlimited amount of time to help. James is surely aware of this. He has a history of dealing with people who have been persecuted for their faith. He knows the stories of refugees up close and personal. We keep in mind, though, that James is not giving us a general principle. He is illustrating what living faith looks like. Living faith which has resources to love and serve the neighbor who is hungry and otherwise in need will attempt to help, at least through the crisis. We don't say, "Oh, yes, you are in need, I pray that you will be abundantly provided for." We share the resources we have at hand as a way of demonstrating that we are willing to live as Christians, laying down our life for others even as Christ laid down His life for us.

Can we meet all the needs of those around us? Not at all. But before our Lord Jesus we who claim to have faith in Christ will do what we can as stewards of God's promises and provision.

Once again, the narrative of the person in need is not teaching us a principle that we care for all the poor around us in such a way that all are equally poor. The passage is an illustration that we who say we care for someone will make an effort to show it. Our faith is evidenced in works.

James 2:14-18 teaches us that we have some skin in the game of living in our world. It doesn't propose a sweeping welfare plan. It doesn't require works salvation. It says that we all need to try to live out our confession of faith. It's a message we all need to hear, and hear frequently.

A First for The AALC

by Kathy Gleason of Ascension Lutheran Church

Sunday, August 18 was a special day for The AALC and for the Ascension Lutheran Congregation in Waterloo, Iowa. It was the happy occasion when Mrs. Martha Stone, teacher at The AALC's only K-12 school, was commissioned as a Called Teacher. Martha was also installed as the first full-time Science teacher at Valley Lutheran School.

In a commissioning service at Ascension conducted by Associate Pastor, Rev. Michael Badenhop, Mrs. Stone was "declared ready to undertake the sacred responsibility as a Called Teacher" at Valley Lutheran School, Cedar Falls Iowa. Her commissioning was in recognition of much prayer and study in preparation for the examination by The AALC.

In the presence of family, members of Ascension, Valley Lutheran teachers and staff, representatives of the Eastern Iowa Lutheran High School Association Administration and Board, Martha Stone was asked to confess her commitment to the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God.

Martha also confessed her belief in the Christian Faith as set forth in the three Ecumenical Creeds and the Lutheran Confessions; because they are in accord with the Word of God. On the basis of her commitment, Mrs. Stone was commissioned to the office of Teacher and installed at Valley Lutheran School.

During the service, a second teacher (previously commissioned), Emily Woodall, was installed as "teacher of Valley Lutheran School." Also, 15 other Valley Lutheran teachers were recognized as they stepped to the altar rail for prayer. What a blessing it was to see these faithful Christian teachers gather in commitment to sharing and caring for the youth of Valley Lutheran School.

Following the service, all were invited to celebrate with Mrs. Stone and the other Valley teachers and staff in thanksgiving for "our Christ-centered school, where faith and knowledge grow as one."



Mission Start:

Christus Victor Lutheran Church, Charlotte, NC

by *The Rev. Robert Wallace*

Their journey began twenty-five years ago. From small churches in Eastern North Carolina to the Mission Field of Ukraine, Robert and Shelley Wallace worked together to spread the love of God to others through teaching, preaching, church planting, and church revitalization.

In 2018 Robert went through Colloquy and became a rostered pastor with The AALC. He and Shelley attended Christus Victor Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina. During this time, Robert was mentored by Pastor Joe Christina as he and Shelley were active servants within the church.

As the year progressed, Robert and Pastor Joe met together and prayed weekly to seek guidance from our Lord and Savior. It was through this time of meetings and prayer that the idea of planting a TAALC Lutheran Church in Charlotte, North Carolina became a reality...a mission. The only thing left to do was to share this idea with National Home Mission Developer Rev. Dean Stoner and get his input.

After sharing this idea with Pastor Dean Stoner and the Commission on American Missions (CAM), Robert and Shelley put together a Ministry Proposal. This proposal was voted on and accepted by CAM. The ministry begins...

In June of 2019, Shelley resigned from her teaching position, and she and Robert stored most of their furniture and moved into a one bedroom apartment in Charlotte. Immediately after settling into their apartment, getting to know their new community was their top priority. As a means to reach out into the community, new ministries such as "Coffee 4 Commuters," "Pencils and Paper with Prayer," Bible Study, "Chicken and Theology," was formed. As Robert and Shelley reached out to the community, one question was asked consistently. "Where is your church?"

There was no church building—not yet anyway. Bible Study and Catechism has been held every Sunday evening in a home where an average of 12 people attended each week. Wednesday night Bible Studies at Chick-fil-A has offered food for the soul and the belly. Members of the community have appreciated kind words, Biblical advice, prayers, coffee, school supplies, and food. But, here is no church building. Although Robert has searched for a building to hold services in, every-



thing available in the area cost a minimum of \$1,500 a month. Robert and Shelley prayed for an answer to the question: "Where is your church?"

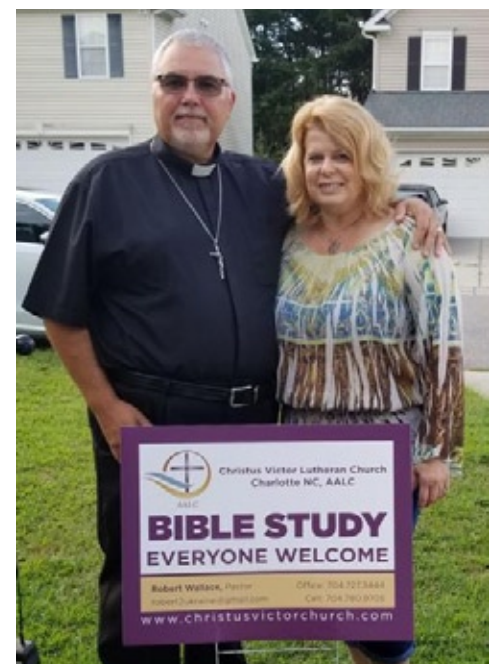
The answer was right there. Every foundation begins at ground level before it can be built up. The building next to Robert and Shelley had a Carriage Apartment for rent. One large room was on the bottom floor, and a two bedroom apartment was directly above it. There was plenty of parking, and access to public parking on the main highway. With the right seats, forty people could gather in the downstairs room for worship.

Could this be our church?

Robert and Shelley prayed diligently and asked the Lord to lead them in the right direction, the direction that He wanted for his church. They stepped out in faith with peace in their hearts. During the Thanksgiving holiday, Robert and Shelley moved to the Carriage Apartment.

They began with an empty space. During the month of December, funds are needed to buy building materials to build the altar and pulpit area. CAM will be bringing in some furnishings for this space. Robert and Shelley currently have 10 Hymnals and 1/2 of a Communion set. They are so appreciative for those who have already contributed to the ministry. If this had not happened, there would be no space for their church at this time.

Robert and Shelley, CAM, and The AALC have stepped out in faith to create this ministry to the greater Charlotte N.C. area.



Kongsvinger Lutheran Church Women Serve

by The Rev. Chris Rosebrough

Every year, for the past 20 or more years, Kongsvinger Lutheran Church Women (K.L.C.W.) provide hot meals to local truck drivers at the Alvarado, MN beet piling station during the annual Beet Sugar Harvest. In return, K.L.C.W. asks only for a free will offering. For many years we set a price for our meals, however Pr. Dean Stoner, AALC, convinced us to stop that practice and simply ask for a free will offering. We were skeptical at first, but the very first year we were incredibly surprised at the blessings we received. Our Lord is gracious indeed. All costs associated with this event are paid through donations. 100% of the proceeds from our hot meal program support various local charities. This year the Oslo and Alvarado Fire Departments and the Grand Forks Community Violence and Intervention Center (CVIC) were the benefactors of our Hot Meals for Drivers program. Our Hot Meals for Drivers program is also a Thrivent Action Team Project.

What is normally a two-week effort to bring in the annual beet sugar harvest lasted more than a month, due to extreme weather from heavy rains and wet heavy snow—the worst in decades. American Crystal Sugar Company who contracts for the harvest and provides the temporary workers who support the piling stations, requested K.L.C.W. cater a special event. A dinner for the 100+ employees who support the local stations. The purpose of the event was to thank the employees who stayed well beyond the normal harvest. K.L.C.W. used the proceeds from this event to buy new hymnals for the church.

We thank the Lord for all his blessings and pray for the wellbeing of our local farmers who will struggle, for the many months to come, as result of their loss. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.



Good News for Every Nation

by Martha Spotts

When we think of missionaries, we usually think of Christians who go to other countries to share the good news of Jesus with its inhabitants. But in some situations, the nations come to the missionary. That's the case with Pr. Dave Spotts and Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry. For three years, Pr. Spotts has been ministering to the students, faculty, staff, and administration at the University of Missouri-Columbia and Stephens College, encouraging fellow Christians and evangelizing those of other faiths or no faith at all. Through his work with the International Center and the Center for English Language Learning at Mizzou, Pr. Spotts has developed relationships with students and visiting scholars from several countries. Through these friendships, God has opened many doors for ministry.

Internationals possess an avid interest in Thanksgiving and Christmas. They want to know how Americans celebrate and they have questions about the foods and customs. How big is a turkey? What's cranberry sauce? Who is Santa Claus? What does Christmas have to do with Jesus? So each year Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry hosts a traditional Thanksgiving dinner and a Christmas party to answer these questions and create opportunities to talk about Jesus. International as well as American friends come together to learn about and partake in American holiday traditions.



A few days before Thanksgiving, twenty-four people gathered in the Spotts home to feast on turkey, stuffing, and all the fixings. It took four tables, four pies, and two turkeys to ensure there were



seats and food enough for everyone. The traditional Thanksgiving fare was a new experience for the international students, with the turkeys eliciting the most interest. Pr. Spotts talked about the history of Thanksgiving, emphasizing its Christian origins. At the first Thanksgiving, members of two people groups—native Americans and English—were present. At this year's Thanksgiving feast, four nations were represented—the US, South Korea, Nigeria, and China. It was truly an international gathering for this most American of holidays!

The Christmas party followed two weeks later on the Friday prior to final exams. Thirty-three people attended from four different countries—the US, Egypt, Haiti, and South Korea. In addition to the treats and punch provided by the Spotts family, guests contributed finger foods. Together, the various goodies made a delicious feast. Christmas I Spy and a fast-paced game involving a gift, forty layers of wrapping paper, and thick, insulated gloves inspired lots of laughter.

Most internationals who come to this country to study or teach want to experience as much American culture as they can, and events such as these are wonderful opportunities to invite them into an American home and share the love of Jesus with them. Friendships are strengthened and doors opened to the Gospel. If you'd like to learn more about Pr. Spotts and Wittenberg Door, please visit <https://www.wittenbergcomo.com/> or contact Pr. Spotts at wittenbergcomo@gmail.com. And please—pray for Pr. Spotts as he reaches out in Jesus' name!

Opportunity to Audit Classes

with The American Lutheran Theological Seminary

If you are a rostered Pastor in the American Association of Lutheran Churches, or a Commissioned church worker, it only costs \$50 to audit classes with the American Lutheran Theological Seminary. To sign up for a course, contact the Registrar Office (registrar@alts.edu).

All others interested in Christian Education, or in enrolling in the Seminary program, please visit us at: <https://www.alts.edu/connect-with-alts>, and complete the form on the webpage.

Upcoming Classes:

Spring 2020 [April 13]

Mondays – EN105 Synoptic Gospel w/ Pr. Rich Shields
 Tuesdays – H101 Church History Overview w/ Dr. Curtis Leins
 Tuesdays – P102 Pastoral Theology and Life w/ Dr. Craig Henningfield
 Wednesdays – S124 Lutheran Confessions I w/ Dr. Craig Henningfield
 Thursdays – Greek II w/ Pr. Dave Spotts

Summer 2020 [July 7]

Tuesdays – P120 Teaching the Faith w/ Dr. Craig Henningfield

Fall 2020 [September 21]

Mondays – E102 Hermeneutics w/ Pr. Rich Shields
 Tuesdays – S125 Lutheran Confessions II w/Dr. Jordan Cooper
 H130 Reformation History – Day and Instructor TBD
 EN107 Pauline Letters – Day and Instructor TBD
 S415 Law and Gospel – Day and Instructor TBD

Women of LIFE Update

by Katherine Hofinga

Greetings from the Treasurer of the National Women of LIFE!

This is a quick update to inform you about your donations to WOL.

At the end of our fiscal year (May 2019), I wrote checks to each of our designated missions (listed below) for \$446.71:

AALC-ALTS	God's Hidden Treasures
AALC-Evangelism Commission	Lutherans For Life
AALC-Youth	Servant Unique Family Ministries
East European Missions Network	The Sending Place
Friends of Madagascar Mission	Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry

Thank you for your generous donations! Please continue to pray for and support these worthy endeavors!

PS: Donations to the National AALC Women of LIFE can be mailed to my home address: PO Box 102, Nunda, SD 57050.

The American Association of Lutheran Churches

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