



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 Lord's prayer in Luther's *Small Catechism*. There are quite a few articles on the topic of prayer, and many other articles that show us how God has indeed answered our prayers.

The Lord's Prayer may seem like a given in the church: rote words that you say every service. Our culture, too, treats the Lord's prayer much like a nursery rhyme, or a stylish saying—depicting it on throw pillows, adding glitter to the lettering. But this is profound: God has given us a way to pray, and he has made himself accessible to us through prayer. All of the barriers to God have been bridged in Jesus. We can, like Old Testament priests, speak to him and petition him.

What's more, this is not complex. God calls us to pray in a way that our children can learn and understand:

God is our Father. He loves us.

God is in heaven. He is holy.

We ask that God's name be made holy by us, by the whole world.

We ask that what God's wants to happen would happen on earth as it does in heaven.

We trust God for everything we need, and we ask Him to provide.

We ask for forgiveness for ourselves, and for those who sin against us.

We ask to be preserved from temptation and evil.

All of this can be asked for because the kingdom and the power and the glory are God's forever.

Amen.

Whether spoken, sung, stated, or read, the Lord's Prayer is for all Christians—children and grown-ups alike. God provides a framework for prayer to help us identify our needs in this life, and to know where to find the solutions to those needs.

In Christ,
Lisa Cooper

PS: I would like to apologize for the prayer bookmark. It has been difficult to time it properly so that you receive the prayer requests at the proper time so you can pray along for a specific month. In light of this, for this edition, I am removing months from the bookmark. This way, you can still use the bookmark, but it will not be contingent upon a specific month. I am open to suggestions going forward if you would like to email me.

TO SUBMIT TO *THE EVANGEL*: Please send your article and any pictures to theevangel@taalc.org or to 600 Warren Road Apt 6-1A, Ithaca, NY 14850. It is very important that all aspects of your submission are credited to the right people, so please be sure to include who took the pictures, and who wrote the article. Also, if you cite any other resource, you *must* include where it came from; it also should be noted if the article is published elsewhere. I desperately want to make *The Evangel* complete for bi-monthly editions, but it cannot happen if you do not send in articles! If you regularly send me your newsletter, please update my address as well. Thanks so much!

The Lord's Prayer

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

It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1)

Our Father

The disciples of the Lord asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. This was a perfectly understandable request. How were they supposed to talk to God? Were their prayers too selfish? Were their concerns too petty? Was there a certain way that they were to phrase their prayers? Was there a minimum amount of faith or holiness that was required before a prayer could be offered and answered?

In response, the first words that the Lord taught them were extremely instructive. "When you pray, say: 'Our Father.'" Jesus invited His disciples into a loving relationship with the Lord God Almighty. In the same way that Jesus called God, "Father," Jesus told His disciples that they were to call God, "Father" too. From this point on, all of their prayers and their entire lives could exist in the certainty of their Heavenly Father's love. God was their loving Father and they were His beloved children. They could come before Him with absolute certainty of His affection. Soon, their prayers would be based upon the knowledge that God loved them so much that He gave His only begotten Son, so that all who believed in Him would be God's beloved children forever.

Our Promises

Luther explained that it is our duty and obligation to pray to God because He has commanded it (*Large Catechism*, Third Part: The Lord's Prayer). In the Second Commandment, which demands that we not take God's name in vain, Luther taught that we are required to praise His holy name, pray, and call upon His name in every need. Because God has commanded this, we are not left to wonder if we should pray; we are required to pray. In this, we see clearly that God is not driving us away, but drawing us to Himself that we might daily request of Him all of our needs. Therefore, God's call to pray is not received as another law; it is a gift that is the inherited birthright of every child of God.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus gave His disciples a sure way of pleasing God. The Lord's Prayer taught His disciples how to pray according to God's will. With these words, and this understanding, they could come boldly to God their Father.

The Lord's Prayer contains a number of assurances or promises. It is God's desire that we would ask for His help, and it is God's delight to supply our needs. Jesus taught His disciples to pray that they would keep the name of God holy in words and actions, and that God's kingdom would come to them now and eternally. He taught them to pray that the will of the devil would be suppressed, and that they would remain faithful to do God's will. Jesus taught His disciples to ask God daily to give them everything that they needed, and to protect them from everything that would harm them. He taught them to recognize and accept God's forgiveness, and to receive God's grace to forgive others. Jesus taught His disciples to ask God to preserve them from the temptations of the devil, the world, and their own flesh, and to expect God's help in all circumstances.

Our Conflict

The Lord's Prayer recognizes the battle that takes place in every Christian life. Luther wrote in his *Large Catechism*, Lord's Prayer, The Third Petition:

Therefore we who would be Christians must surely count on having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies and must count on their inflicting every possible misfortune and grief upon us. For where God's Word is preached, accepted, or believed, and bears fruit, there the blessed holy cross will not be far away. Let nobody think that he will have peace; he must sacrifice all he has on earth—possessions, honor, house and home, wife and children, body and life. Now, this grieves our flesh and the old Adam, for it means that we must remain steadfast, suffer patiently whatever befalls us, and let go whatever is taken from us.

Therefore, there is just as much need in this case as in every other case to pray without ceasing.

In so great a battle, with forces far superior to ourselves in cunning and power, our weapons need to be strong indeed. Luther suggests that prayer is our

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protection and defense. Prayer has the power to defeat the devil's assaults, repulse the world's attack, and subdue the flesh's temptations.

As long as we remain in this vile life in which we are attacked, hunted, and harried on all sides, we are constrained to cry out and pray every hour that God may not allow us to become faint and weary and to fall back into sin, shame, and unbelief. Otherwise it is impossible to overcome even the least temptation. (*Large Catechism, Lord's Prayer, The Sixth Petition*)

Our Connection

To pray the Lord's Prayer is to be joined with Christians around the world, all of whom pray the prayer Our Lord taught us. We are united in our petitions. Not only are we united in the words that we offer, we are united in our state of sin, our need for a Savior, and our status as God's children:

To pray "our Father" is to be drawn out of one's self-enclosed life, a "me and God" existence, to make intercession for the household of the Father and extending outward to include the whole world. "Think," says Luther, "that the whole of Christendom, all devout

Christians, are standing there beside you and you are standing among them in a common, united petition which God cannot disdain." (John T. Pless, *Praying Luther's Small Catechism. Concordia, St. Louis, 2016, p. 56.*)

We are united with Christ, each one of us, by grace through faith. Luther reminds us that through our unity with Christ, we are united with one another. Our prayer is with the whole Church, and it is for the whole world. Our supplication is for God's will to be done in the lives of those who live in the bondage of the devil and the flesh, that they may be brought to salvation through faith in Christ. Also, our supplication is for God's will to be done in the lives of those who live by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, that even though they may know the fellowship of His suffering, that they also may know the power of His resurrection.

Like the first disciples of Jesus and all of His followers until today, we too have been taught to pray the Lord's Prayer. When we pray it, we have the certainty of Our Father's love, the assurance of His many promises, the assistance of His power in our conflicts, and the connection of our lives with His whole Church and with His only Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord.

So, as Jesus taught us, Let Us Pray!

**All Catechism references are taken from www.bookofconcord.com*

Pray, Pray, Pray

by The Rev. Dave Spotts

"Father, will you pray for me?" It isn't that rare for a conversation to start that way where I work. The clericals identify me as some sort of Christian minister on duty. And I work around a lot of people who are facing challenges in their lives. They may not know much about Christianity, but they have an idea that Christian pastors pray for people. But what is going to guide the content of my prayers? I'm always glad to hear the trouble someone has, but how should I pray? This question brings me back to a conversation I had quite a few yers ago with an elderly lady we'll call "Faith."

Faith wanted to go to our church as often as she could. But she didn't drive and her son was not always available to go with her. So she was sitting in our van that day. The sermon in the broadly evangelical church we were attending was related to "the sample prayer" that Jesus taught his disciples about. Faith said, "When I was growing up, and all my life, we prayed the Lord's Prayer. But now we just use it as a sample of how to pray. Why is it we talk about it instead of praying it?"

Wow, Faith. Your upbringing in a confessional church body just spoke volumes. You identified so many of the reasons I departed from this form of evangelicalism so as to be rooted in the Reformation. And you are suffering from a memory problem and are under the care of your son, who is a solidly faithful Christian

but is wholeheartedly engaged in the movement which led to this preaching. What kind of answer can I give you?

"Faith, you should pray the Lord's prayer. He gave it to you. And meanwhile, as you pray, feel free to interrupt it and pray for the different elements more specifically. When you ask that the Lord's kingdom would come, pray for your grandchildren and their friends, for your pastor, for your church. When you pray the Lord's will would be done, pray for your home country where people are in rebellion against the Lord. Does that help?"

I delivered Faith to her home and made sure she got inside all right. The discussion was over. But that conversation informs my prayers all the time. When a stranger asks me to pray I look at the framework of the Lord's Prayer. What's the root of the problem? We can find it in this simple prayer. And, most of the time, if a person recognizes me as a pastor on duty the person has some knowledge of the Lord's prayer. We pray it, pausing for the specific troubles, and then we go on.

When Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, he gives them a prayer. We want to remember that Jesus did tell his disciples, "Pray this way." It's a prayer which can and should be prayed, regularly, fervently. But we also want to see that in the prayer he walks us through all sorts of trials which are common to man. We pray, knowing the Lord has taught us. Let us pray.



Pastors Assemble for Teaching and Worship

by The Rev. Dave Spotts

On a cold, rainy afternoon in October, I sat with a handful of pastors and a couple of laymen around the table in the little church's fellowship hall. The meeting was assembled to identify and plan a mission activity in the region. The pastors, all from another church body, were speaking of their frustrations. "It's really hard to do something as one congregation. We wish we could work together."

The conversation paused. I mentioned the fact that the AALC church closest to my mission work is 217 miles away. The others in the room had some 20 churches within about a 40 mile radius.

"Guess we *are* together. Let's see how we can make it work."

Bringing pastors and church congregations together is essential as we encourage the saints and build up the body of Christ. In a small church body such as The AALC, we need to be especially purposeful about gathering together. Many of our pastors are far away from their brother servants of

churches. Few of our churches can participate in joint activities with one another.

For these reasons, gatherings like our recent Pastors' Conference are precious. We were blessed as 42 of our pastors, along with several guests, assembled in St. Louis on the campus of Concordia Seminary.

The theme of the conference was use of Luther's Catechism. How does each part transfer into preaching and teaching? We may think of catechesis in terms of teenagers, but the great

themes of the Christian life—sin and salvation, Law and Gospel, works and grace, permeate the Catechism. It's good for people of every age and all types of experience.

We rejoiced in the presenters, mostly among those who have recently joined our roster. Life-giving and powerful times of worship served to gather us in unity and peace. Additionally, the Clergy Commission met with several men who wished to be included on our ministry roster. The Lord is continuing to draw godly and gifted people together in The AALC.

Healthy pastors are a key to growing healthy churches. We are privileged to participate in gatherings which will strengthen our pastors and further the work of God's Kingdom. Together we can make a tremendous difference as we pray the Lord's name would be hallowed, his kingdom would come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.



The ILC Gathering

by *The Rev. Joe Dapelo*

Representatives from the International Lutheran Council (ILC) gathered in Antwerp, Belgium on September 25-28th. The AALC was represented by Dr. Leins and myself. The best part of these conferences is that we connect with numerous brothers from around the world and begin to discuss how we can partner with them. Through the last conference, we established a relationship with Norway and Germany. We have hopes of establishing a relationship with bodies in Africa and Asia in the near future.



This is a note from Dr. Leins when I asked him what he wanted me to highlight. He wrote: "The unity that we share in our common subscription to the Lutheran Confessions and how we are all standing in faith in a world that is decidedly against Christ and the Bible; the need for more theologically trained pastors all around the world; and the joy and blessing that we received in Christ as we worshipped together and prayed for one another."

We were especially blessed to spend time with our new partner church, SELK, and their Bishop, Hans-Jorg Voigt. He welcomed us into his home where we were treated like family, including their family devotion time. We received a wonderful tour of Hanover, including the headquarters for SELK and Bishop Voigt's congregation. The highlight of the weekend, though, was worshipping with the people of Bethlehemsgemeinde in Bremen, Germany. We celebrated the Lord's Supper with them and enjoyed a wonderful service in which we celebrated Erntedankfest (Thanksgiving or Harvest Festival). We also were present as Bishop Voigt pastorally cared for a congregation that has been without a pastor for two years. We truly were blessed to see his care, his love for them, and to see a congregation that is not much different from many of ours. It was good to be there.



To read more about the 2018 ILC Conference, you can go to <https://ilc-online.org/2018/10/04/the-2018-world-conference-in-brief>. There you can find an article by Mathew Block (the communications manager of the ILC) where he includes more pictures, an explanation of conference motions, and detailed lists of every country and church body present.

Notes on the pictures:

Some of those pictures are from the ILC Conference in Antwerp, and some of them are from our weekend trip to Germany with Bishop Voigt. In those pictures you will see Dr. Leins and me in front of the Luther statue at the Market Church in Hanover, Leins and Voigt in front of the SELK offices, Leins and Voigt simply on the streets of Hanover, and our pictures from Divine Service at Bethlehem Church in Bremen where Bishop Voigt preached that morning in a SELK congregation without a pastor.

The ILC pictures include a picture of Leins and Tsegahun Assefa (Director of Youth Ministry for Mekana Yesus in Ethiopia); Leins and Bishop Modise Maragelo from the Lutheran Church in South Africa; me and my seminary classmate, Rev. Isaiah Obare from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya; President Matt Harrison preparing to preach in a Evensong service at the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp.

All photos were submitted by Joe Dapelo.





Pastor David Gensch Retires

Saint Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church

By Steven L Rash

It is with mixed feelings that we announce the retirement of our beloved and much appreciated Pastor David Gensch and wife Judy. He will always be remembered as the devoted, hardworking, committed, and friendly servant of the Lord: a true example to look up to and emulate. Well done good and faithful servant. Enjoy this next phase in life's journey.

In his 49 years of Service to The Lord, Pastor Gensch served the following churches:

- St. Paul's Lutheran - Gilman, IL 1970-1976
- St. Paul's Lutheran - Napoleon, OH 1976-2005
- Lucky Mound & First Lutheran - Parshall, ND 2005-2010
- St. Luke's - Traer, IA 2010-2018

Correspondence can be sent to the following address, if you so desire:

St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church
 207 Taylor St.
 Traer, Iowa 50675

We will make sure Pastor receives all correspondence. Thank, you.

Lake Madison Lutheran Church Through the Years

by Leann Stratton

The year 1872 found several families of Norwegian descent gathering on the prairies near Madison to plan for ways to meet their spiritual needs. Gathering in homes in the community to conduct services led by the Rev. O. O. Sando, the group made plans to organize into a congregation. In the fall of 1878, Pastor Peter Lobben who had continued the work of Rev. Sando, was instrumental in organizing the Lake Madison Lutheran congregation. The Lars Johnson home provided the setting for the drawing up of a temporary constitution. A permanent constitution was adopted in April 1879, the new church joining the Norwegian Synod. The following were among the original voting members of the congregation: Lars Johnson (Gamme), Hans Kvenvold, John Patterson, Ole Moger, Armo Hill, John O. Johnson, Ole Merager, Nils Molstad, Peder E. Holvick, Ole Overskei, Hemming Gudaa, Knut Nelson, Jacob Halseth, Anders Halseth, Martin Olson Lovlien, and Lars Sunde.

The newly organized congregation called the Rev. Erick Ruste, who served the congregation from 1879-1883 while he also served the Medary Congregation in Brookings County. A new working relationship came into being in 1883 when Lake Madison Lutheran Congregation affiliated with the Bellevue congregation in Miner County. Rev. M. Shirley served the congregation until 1887 when theological differences ended this association. Pastor E.T. Rogne served temporarily until 1888 when Rev. Mads Andenaes answered a call to serve the congregation.

It was during the tenure of Rev. Andenaes that the congregation began to build a home to use for a place of worship. The land for the building site and cemetery plot was donated to the congregation by Lars Johnson. The cornerstone was laid on November 11, 1890. It took eight years to complete the church and it was dedicated on May 22, 1898. A basement was then added in 1926, and the annex was added in 1957. The kitchen and basement walls were refurbished in 2011.

Ill health abbreviated the services of Rev. Andenaes in 1899 and the Rev. M. K. Aaberg of Volga served the congregation for nearly two years. A new alignment came into existence in 1901 when Trinity Church in Madison formed a parish with Lake Madison, calling Rev. M. K. Aaberg as their

Pastors who have served the congregation are:

O. Sando 1872 – 1878	O. M. Severseike 1930 – 1936
Peter Lobben 1878 – 1879	Oliver Bergeland 1936 – 1941
Erick Ruste 1879 – 1883	A. P. Nelson 1941 – 1950
M. Shirley 1883 – 1887	Ralph Christopherson 1950 – 1959
E. T. Rogne 1888 – 1889	Walter Evenson 1960 – 1967
Mads Andenaes 1889 – 1899	Jasper Swenson 1967 – 1988
M. Aaberg 1901 – 1909	Dale Zastrow 1988 – 1996
Martin Anderson 1909 – 1914	Paul Hueter 1996 – 2003
O. S. Reigstad 1914 – 1918	Gary Lissy 2005 – 2009
C. K. Solberg 1918 – 1922	Paul Johansen 2010 – 2015
C. E. Sybilrud 1922 – 1927	Phillip Hofinga 2015 – pres.

pastor. He served until 1909 when Rev. Martin Anderson assumed duties of the parish. The Norwegian language was used in Sunday services until 1914. After that, Norwegian and the English language were used alternately. In 1914, the Rev. O. S. Reigstad began serving the parish during the difficult days of World War I. He served until 1918 when the Rev. C. K. Solberg continued the ministry to the parish until 1922. The Rev. C. E. Sybilrud took up the work in 1922.

The growth of Trinity Church in Madison led to the calling of a full-time pastor of its own. During the transitional period from 1927 to 1930, Rev. O. F. Johnson of Sinai served the congregation on a temporary basis for two years and the Rev. N. Boe served about a year. 1930 saw the beginning of a new arrangement of congregations. St. Peter congregation entered into agreement with the Lake Madison congregation and Rev. O. M. Severseike was called from the seminary. He began serving the newly aligned parish in 1930, when the congregation aligned with St. Peter of Orland. This affiliation continued until 1988, when Lake Madison Lutheran Church, holding fast to the historic Lutheran confession of faith, chose not to join the merger that formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Instead the congregation joined the reorganized continuation of the American Lutheran Church, now called The American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC), along with Grace Lutheran in Nunda. Pastor Dale Zastrow was called to be the pastor. Lake Madison Lutheran Church and Grace Lutheran Church of Nunda still share a pastor, Rev. Phillip Hofinga.

The Lake Madison Lutheran Church currently has 125 members and 50 family units. The Luther League group consists of youth from the Lake Madison and Grace churches. The Confirmation class consists of youth in the 8th and 9th grades. The ladies of the church belong to the Women of L.I.F.E. (Lutherans in Fellowship and Evangelism). They meet once a month for Bible Study.

For 140 years, Lake Madison Lutheran has been blessed by God with faithful pastors and congregational members who have served our church in many ways. With God's grace and blessing, we will continue into the future.





Lake Madison Lutheran Church 140th Anniversary

By Bonnie Stratton

On August 12th, 2018, Lake Madison Lutheran Church of rural Madison, South Dakota celebrated the 140th anniversary of the congregation. We began the day with the Divine Service with Holy Communion. This was a joint service with Grace Lutheran Church in Nunda, South Dakota, with whom Lake Madison Lutheran Church has shared a pastor since 1988. The joint choir of Grace and Lake Madison Lutheran Churches sang "He Will Be My God," and "Are You Washed in the Blood" directed by Melissa Miller. Current pastor, Rev. Phillip Hofinga, was joined by former pastors Rev. Paul Hueter and Rev. Paul Johansen in conducting the service while the Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins brought the preaching of the Word.

A dinner was catered and served in a large tent on the church grounds following the Divine Service. An afternoon program followed the dinner in the tent. Our congregation's president, Mr. Eric Miller, welcomed guests with opening comments, and the Rev. Dr. Lines brought greetings from the American Association of Lutheran Churches. The choir sang "The Young Man" accompanied by Melissa Miller on the keyboard and Maddy Eich on the ukulele. Former pastors, the Reverend Paul Hueter and the Reverend Paul Johansen, brought greetings in person, while letters from former pastors, the Rev. Dale Zastrow, and the Rev. Gary Lissy were read.

Pastor Hofinga read the history of the congregation and recognized long-time members as well as special guests Norman and Mads Andenas, grandsons of one of Lake Madison Lutheran Church's earliest pastors, The Reverend Mads Andenaes.

Melissa Miller, our choir director, sang "Ancient Words," accompanied by our organist, Judy Johnson and Pastor Hofinga. There was also a reception of nine new members into the congregation, in celebration of the fact that Lake Madison Lutheran Church continues to grow after 140 years. The afternoon program closed with the singing of "Beautiful Savior."

Thank God for the early settlers who saw the importance of a place to worship God and to all the faithful who followed. May God Continue to bless the congregation of Lake Madison Luther Church as we move forward following the infallible, inerrant Word of God.



Prayer Bookmark

1. Pilot Knob Lutheran Church
Pilot Knob/Forest City, IA
2. Rev. Jay Eberth
3. Hope Lutheran Church *Brighton, IA*
4. Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, Presiding Pastor of
TAALC
5. Rev. John A. Anderson
6. Poplar Lake Lutheran Church *Fosston, MN*
7. Dee Parsons, Seminary student
8. Rev. Larry Juergensen
9. For 12 Affiliated Churches in 5 years
10. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Evansdale, IA
11. Redeemer Lutheran Church
West Union, IA
12. John Linch, Seminary student
13. Rev. Leon L. Knitt
14. Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran
Church *Frazier Park, CA*
15. Commission for American Missions
16. Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church
Galt, CA
17. Rev. LeRoy Holmes
18. Rev. Morris M. Kirchof
19. For all the Seminary students
20. Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church
Sidney, MT
21. Rev. Norman D. Olson
22. Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church
Yuba City, CA
23. Chris Tasma, Seminary student
24. Rev. Orlando K. Hash
25. For unity in the church
26. Rev. Paul H. Hansen
27. Sonland Lutheran Church *Casa Grande, AZ*
28. Karl Tervo, Seminary student
29. Rev. Rich A. Eddy
30. St. John's Lutheran Church *Pocahontas, MO*

Prayer Bookmark

1. Rev. Richard G. Hueter
2. St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church *Traer, IA*
3. Rev. Richard T. Day
4. Charles Upole, Seminary student
5. St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church
Augusta, KY
6. Rev. Robert M. Dennis
7. Commission for Evangelism
8. St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church *Otis, CO*
9. Your Local TAALC church
10. St. Paul Lutheran Congregation *Tripoli, IA*
11. Rev. Robert Ross
12. Andrew Virkus, Seminary student
13. St. Paul's Lutheran Church *Napoleon, OH*
14. Rev. Robert Salge
15. Protection for the unborn
16. Rev. Thomas Baumgarten
17. St. Peter's Lutheran Church *Elk Grove, CA*
18. Abraham McNally, as he will be ordained
and installed in March
19. Rev. Wayne E. Bohling
20. The Barn Again Lutheran Church
Tijeras/Cedar Crest, NM
21. Local community
22. Trinity Lutheran Church *Galata, MT*
23. For the Youth
24. Rev. Wayne Wilken
25. Protection for our military
26. Trinity Lutheran Church *San Pedro, CA*
27. Rev. Alexander McNally
28. Rev. William Dreikorn
29. Trinity Lutheran Church *West Hempstead, NY*
30. Rev. William H. Van Duzer
31. Chad Zimmerman, Seminary student

The Evangel



Abiding Grace Gets a Cross

By the Rev. Scott L. Strohkirch

In February 2010, Abiding Grace Lutheran Church in Gillette, Wyoming became a Lutheran Church body. They joined The American Association of Lutheran Churches in June of that year. In 2014, they took up residence in their current church home at 707 Bridger Street in Gillette, WY. This address had once been home to the Boys and Girls Club in Gillette, donated to them by St. Matthew's Catholic Church. Before that, it had been the Community Center for the Foothills Mobile home park which still surrounds the building.

Before moving here Abiding Grace Lutheran had been located in a storefront property on Lakeway Rd in Gillette for about two years and for one year were holding services in an old Kingdom Hall. Only now do we have a cross to tell the community surrounding them that we are a Church. Neil Grundman took the idea for the cross from the Logo of The AALC off my business card and for the next 6 months worked to complete the cross.

Next, we had to coordinate schedules to find a time when we could get enough men to get it up on the roof of the building. This was done late in the day of November 9th. They came back on November 10th and finished the job. We now have a spectacular cross on our building which will be a beacon to our community that we are a church. Hopefully we will attract more people to come and worship with us. We want to thank all who made it possible: Neil Grundman, Terry Pettigrew, Thayne Hardy, Steve Eberle, Mark Jacobson and Gary Pettigrew.

Soli Deo Gloria.



Shown above (L to R): Neil Grundman, Terry Pettigrew and Thayne Hardy

Keeping a Quiet Heart

by Shanda Knight

"Kee a Quiet Heart" was the theme of the Women of Life Brunch at Ascension Lutheran in Waterloo, IA on December first. This brunch is an annual event the women of our church look forward to throughout the year, and planning often begins in October for this special event!

We begin with a theme—what is the Lord calling us to focus on this year? Our theme is always a theme that reminds those gathered to keep our focus on Jesus and not get caught up in the trappings of the season. This year our theme, "Keep a Quiet Heart" was based on Elizabeth Elliot's book by the same name. Elizabeth Elliot is the wife of a martyred missionary, Jim Elliot. Her husband was brutally speared to death by a violent tribe in Ecuador. Later, the Lord called Elizabeth (taking her 3-year-old daughter with her) to go as a missionary to the same tribe who killed her husband.

Beth Brokenshire put together the program focusing on 3 key points of keeping a quiet heart: Trust in His Presence, Trust in his Sovereignty, and Trust in His Love. The **"Trust in His Presence"** section of our program featured a testimony of one of our sisters in Christ who has struggled with depression, Traci McNally. She courageously shared her battle of depression, but how in the midst of the deep struggle God's presence was so very clear and is so very clear. Many struggle with depression for seasons of life or longer, and women were so encouraged by her testimony, but more-so of the Lord's work in her life through depression that she (and the Lord) received a standing ovation. **"Trust in His Sovereignty"** featured a video clip of Elizabeth Elliot herself speaking. One key point she made was: "Our enemy delights in disquieting us. Our Savior and Helper delights in quieting us." "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you" is His promise. (Isaiah 66:13) **"Trust in His Love"**, the final segment of our program was again more video of Elizabeth Elliot reminding us God loves us with an everlast-

ing love. She said: "But I am sure, no flood can sweep us out of the everlasting arms. No disaster can take you out of His arms." The message was rich, and filled with

God's Word brought to us through Elizabeth's writings and audio recording. We concluded our program with a short "missions update" from our Ascension WOL treasurer, an offering time when we had some of our musicians sing "In the Bleak Mid-Winter," and ended with a joyous and not-so-quiet rendition of "Joy to the World!"

The WOL Brunch was filled with a great message, but also wonderful food: egg bakes, pastries, and fruit, all prepared and served in beautiful ways that make the morning seem extra special by our Women of Life planning team and additional volunteers. Adding to the fine touches of the morning, many more women of our church brought their "pretties" to decorate our tables festively. Fine China, pretty tablecloths and carefully thought-out centerpieces made each table special and involved many women in preparing for this special event.

Around 100 women were encouraged this morning of the Advent Brunch, many women brought a guest or several, and one woman brings much of her extended family every year! We pray those who attended are continuing their journey to "Keep a Quiet Heart" as they walk through their lives this Advent season.



Photo by Beth Brokenshire



Photo by Beth Brokenshire



Photo by Capi Lewis

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