

The EVANGEL

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With your unfailing
LOVE
you lead the people
you have
REDEEMED
Exodus 15:13

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Letter From the Editor

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Continuing on our theme for this year on Luther's Small Catechism, we have now arrived at our Second Article of the Creed edition: Redemption.

These themed editions are timed to be in line with our convention's theme this year. The National Convention of The AALC took place on June 26th-29th in Saint Paul, MN, and the theme was "Set Free," based on Galatians 3:13: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (NKJV). At the convention, we heard Dr. Joel Biermann's keynote lectures concerning creation, fall, redemption, and the life of faith, and we also heard sermons on these topics. All of this points to the same redemption we hear of in the second article of the creed:

*[We believe] in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

The Second Article of the Creed is antithetical to the culture we live in today, and the worldview which it promotes. Absolute truth is considered to be mere opinion, so the historical truth claims of the creed are seen as divisive. We believe that Jesus Christ came into the world, into human flesh—true God and true man. He lived the perfect life under the law, suffered torture under a real historical man named Pilate, endured the crucifixion though totally blameless, and died a literal, real, actual, historical death.

But the kicker here is that Jesus did not remain dead. That's a historical reality too. And, if He did not remain dead, every claim He made during His life is vindicated. Jesus wasn't just a man who taught nice things (in fact, He had a lot of harsh things to say to those people who thought they were righteous in themselves like the scribes and pharisees). No. Jesus has the power over death itself. He demonstrated that in His resurrection, and He promises that we too will raise from the dead when He returns.

Another way that this article of the creed challenges our postmodern culture is by claiming that Jesus has the power to judge. Again, Jesus is not merely a teacher (though He certainly teaches), rather, He is the God of the Universe, who holds us to the standard of the Law which He Himself made, and by which He governs all things. There is an objective standard that all people are held to, and Jesus has the right and the power to judge according to that standard. This is terrifying when we look at our lives and see our sin, but God does not leave us

in despair over our inability to abide by the Law perfectly. This is why the second article of the creed is so impactful: salvation has been won through Christ, and that salvation is for all of us.

Therefore, we do not need to fear the coming judgment of Christ when we trust in Him by faith. We know that when Jesus returns, when He looks upon you, His servant, His judgment will be "righteous!" because you indeed have been made righteous by Christ Himself.

In Christ,
Lisa Cooper

*The citation of the *Small Catechism* is from www.catechism.cph.org

The upcoming editions of *The Evangel* continue the theme of Luther's Small Catechism. Next edition will be on the Third Article of the Creed: Sanctification, due on July 15th; then the Lord's Prayer due on September 15th. Please submit to theevangel@taalc.org or mail submissions to 425 E. Lincoln Ave. Watseka, IL 60970. Be sure to include photo and writing credits and contact information. Thank you!

You Can Share

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

I got my hair cut the other day. My barber was a woman in her early 20s. She was extremely excited and began talking as soon as I sat in her chair. "I saw a play last night!" she exclaimed. "It was called *The Passion of the Christ*."

"Well, what did you think?" I asked.

"I don't know," she said in wide-eyed amazement. "It was really confusing! Was Peter paid silver? Why did Jesus die? Is it true that he came back to life? I went to the play with my husband and his mother. They tried to explain it to me, but I just got more confused."

I want to stop here for a moment. Did you know that we now have entered the second generation in this country of those who do not know the story of Jesus? Think of it. There are whole generations of children in our country who have never gone to church, never read the Bible, and never heard the message of the love of God in Jesus Christ! They simply have never heard! I did not know it was possible until an excited young woman stood for 45 minutes asking me questions about Jesus. What was even more amazing was that the woman and man who were cutting hair on each side of her were as interested as she was to hear the answers.

This edition of *The Evangel* focuses our attention on the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed. Luther writes, "Indeed, the entire Gospel that we preach depends on the proper understanding of this article. Upon it all our salvation and blessedness are based, and it is so rich and broad that we can never learn it fully."

There are several fundamental truths that we receive from the Second Article. The first truth is that we are sinners. That may be a shock to some in our modern culture, but a quick look at our consciences will show us our guilt and shame. Jesus has come to forgive our sins and free us from guilt and shame. Luther explains that Jesus is our Redeemer. "It means that he has redeemed me from sin, from the devil, from death, and from all evil. Before this I had no Lord and King but was captive under the power of the devil. I was condemned to death and entangled in sin and blindness."

The second truth has to do with the cost that Jesus paid for us. We were created by God the Father and given wonderful gifts of joy and life. But, the devil led us into sin, selfishness, disobedience, and evil. For that reason, Luther writes: "We lay under God's wrath and displeasure, doomed to eternal damnation," as we deserved. But, Jesus took our punishment upon Himself. Jesus saved us at great cost; He suffered, died, and was buried in order to make satisfaction for our sins.

The third truth is that we receive God's eternal benefits by faith in Jesus. "He has snatched us, poor lost creatures, from the jaws of hell, won us, made us free, and restored us to the Father's favor and grace," says Luther. Jesus has "brought us back from the devil to God, from death to life, from sin to righteousness, and now keeps us safe there." We live under His protection, guarded by His power, and safe in His mercy and love.

The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed contains the message of salvation and blessedness through the Cross of Jesus Christ. This information is well-known to you, but may be unknown to many of the people whom you see every day. Unfortunately, whole generations have never heard this glorious message: 1. I am a sinner, but Jesus redeemed me from sin. 2. Jesus took the punishment that I deserved; He suffered, died, and was buried. 3. On the third day, Jesus rose to life in order to give forgiveness, love, and eternal life, to me and all who believe. Jesus restored us to the Father's favor and grace!

I am keeping in touch with my millennial barber. Her heart is hungry and her faith is growing. How many more are there just like this young woman: your co-worker, physical therapist, auto repairman, or neighbor? The world will never tell them the truth that you know so well. But, You Can Share the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, and it will change their lives FOREVER!



Sure, I Know That. Okay!

By The Rev. Dave Spotts

We all know what it feels like to be told something we already know. I have a relative who always tells me, "Be careful going down the road, now." I always am. And I have my share of things I always tell people. "Don't burn down the house." (She never does.) "Don't be afraid." (She never is.) And my favorite, "Don't go in the water, that snapping turtle will take off your foot." (They never do, and the turtle would.)

What does this have to do with the Christian life? That is, what does it have to do with the Christian life aside from encouraging people not to lose life and limb needlessly? As a historic faith, Christianity spends a lot of time telling us what we already know. The doctrines of the Church are well established. We aren't looking for new insight. For that matter, the Reformation was all about finding historic practices, not anything new. Time and again, the Reformers talked about their practices and tied them directly to the writings of the Church Fathers. We speak the same truth, again and again, because it matters. My relative wants me to be safe. I want my daughters to be safe and unafraid. I want my grandchildren to visit my house and not be attacked by a predatory turtle. And we want the body of Christ to be unified around specific truth, which is summarized in the creeds of the Church.

The Second Article of the Apostles' Creed seems to consist of a whole lot of statistics. It's facts and figures about the historical Jesus. They are well established events. But when they are neglected, as some have been in the last two hundred years, we need to bring them out again. We emphasize them over and over. In fact, the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are strongly established using all traditional historical research methods. The events described in the Second Article were published by numerous authors, along with a robust oral tradition, during the time when many eyewitnesses were alive. There were countless people who would have loved to contradict that testimony but who were never able to offer contrary evidence. When all was said and done, the only plausible explanation for Jesus is that God did something miraculous. It can't be replicated. It can't be explained away. And the miraculous nature of Jesus' life and work leaves us with no reasonable alternative. He is the Lord, just as He said.

We're still left with an important question. Does this Jesus' miraculous incarnation, historical presence and work of teaching and healing, His real death, resurrection, and ascension matter? We can know all the facts and figures. That's good. It's fine. It's important. But our knowledge of the facts might not make a difference. James 2:19 says, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" (NKJV). All our knowledge of the facts about Jesus makes no difference unless we believe that Jesus did this for us. Psalm 139 gives us insight into this. All of God's works are great and wonderful. But what strikes the Psalmist is that God cares for him. There's a personal aspect to the Gospel. Jesus, the savior of the world, is MY Lord. He is the one who knows me. He's the one who loves me. He's the one who gave His life for me. He's the one who rose so I could know that I will rise again one day.

I may know all that, but day after day I see evidence that my life isn't all right. I'm not that careful going down the road. My children may not have set the house on fire, but they've been injured in the home from time to time. The child I remind not to be afraid has grown up and regularly involves herself in mission work which would frankly intimidate most of us. I haven't seen the big snapping turtle for a while, but I also haven't found his empty shell yet. And we are surrounded by trials and dangers every day of our mortal life. What do we need? We need those reminders. We need our friends. We need the Church. We need the confession of faith, which will remind us again and again that Jesus did all that He did for us, and that He is still exactly the same kind of savior in our generation that He was in the first century.

Yes, we believe. And we recite the Creed to remind ourselves time and again. It's what we need. Thanks be to God!

The Nations on Our Doorstep

by Martha Spotts

China, Brazil, Morocco, Japan, Turkey, Haiti—what do these countries have in common? They have all been represented at Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry's international dinners in the past year. Twice weekly during the school year and once a month during the summer, students, visiting scholars, and researchers from all over the globe gather with American friends to experience American culture and to practice English in a welcoming, Christ-centered environment.

Pastor Dave Spotts initially connected with international students by volunteering as an English language partner through the University of Missouri—Columbia. Wanting to deepen friendships and expand ministry opportunities, he began opening his home every other Friday evening to his language partners and their friends and family. He is aware that ninety-five percent of international students studying in the U.S. never visit an American home, and he found that invitations for dinner were eagerly accepted by these people who were far from home and in many cases separated from their families. English conversations between non-native English speakers were sometimes a challenge, but friendships flourished with care and patience. Most importantly, with the help of American friends interested in reaching out in Jesus' name, His love for those of all nations was demonstrated.

Each dinner featured American cuisine. The year began with a typical American cookout with hamburgers, hotdogs, potato salad, corn on the cob, and s'mores. Pancakes and bacon, chili and cornbread, spaghetti, pulled pork sandwiches and fries, and a "meat and potatoes" meal are examples of other menus. One evening in February, the Chinese participants brought food

traditionally served for Chinese New Year and taught everyone how to make dumplings.

After dinner a fun activity followed, including cornhole, scavenger hunts,

and games designed for non-native English speakers. A favorite was Apples to Apples Junior. One of the American friends told of his experience winning gold medals at the Special Olympics in China. Chinese calligraphy was demonstrated and taught. Maps were brought out and hometowns located and discussed, and the Gospel was shared.



Highlights of the year include a Thanksgiving dinner, baby shower, Christmas party, and Easter dinner. The Thanksgiving gathering included a brief telling of the first Thanksgiving and, of course, a traditional turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Gravy proved to be a mystery to the internationals, but once they understood it goes magnificently with mashed potatoes, it was a hit!

A young Haitian couple expecting their first baby was given a surprise shower in October. Most of the internationals had never attended a shower and were intrigued by the special cake, decorations, games, and gifts.



It was a wonderful opportunity to share the love of Christ by ministering to the practical needs of this growing family.

The Christmas party featured Christmas cookies, punch, and lots of finger foods, which proved to be unfamiliar to many of the guests. Festivities included games, Christmas carols, answering questions about the Christmas tree and Santa Claus, and the sharing of Jesus' coming to us to gain our salvation.

The Easter dinner was hosted by Pr. Spotts' daughter and her family. Everyone enjoyed being invited into another American home and eating a traditional ham dinner. The children hunted Easter eggs and were delighted to discover they were filled with candy! Most importantly, Jesus' death and resurrection were shared with all who attended.

Friendships and opportunities for service in the name of Christ grew beyond the boundaries of the dinners. Besides meeting individually for English practice, Pr. Spotts has helped international friends buy and sell cars, locate international grocery stores, practice driving, move furniture, and decipher confusing government documents and financial information, in addition to teaching the basics of fishing, sharing many meals and cups of coffee, and meeting for Bible study and prayer. And then there are the questions: "What is Advent?" "What do rabbits have to do with Easter?" "Are there two Christmases, one for Santa Claus and one for Jesus?" And best of all, from a Chinese undergraduate, "Can you tell me about the Christ thing?"

The answer to that question is always a resounding, "Yes!" These precious people are far from home and seeking connection and friendship. Please pray for Pr. Spotts and Wittenberg Door as he works to point them to Jesus, the Friend of sinners. May the Gospel be proclaimed to the many nations who have come right to the doorstep of mid-Missouri.

Report from the National Home Mission Developer

by The Rev. Dean Stoner

If you go online, you can look up pictures of the Choluteca Bridge in Honduras. This is a state-of-the-art bridge “built by Japanese engineers” that at one time spanned the Choluteca River. I say, “at one time” because in 1998 Hurricane Mitch, a category 5, settled over the country and dumped huge amounts of rain throughout the region. As a result, the Choluteca River changed course, and the well-built bridge no longer stretched across the water. In fact, this bridge is no longer used, and sits adjacent to where the river now flows. The problem, of course, was not in the fact that the engineers built a poorly designed structure, or that this bridge was placed in the wrong spot. No, the problem was that the river moved.¹

This story illustrates much of what we find in our world as it relates to the church today. Our culture is much different than it was even a generation ago. Like the Choluteca River, it has moved, changed direction, and the church finds herself at odds with the culture, rather than being engaged in it. Over the past couple of decades or so, we, the church, have been either unwilling or unable to identify the changes in our world as they relate to ministry, much less adjust for them. We have failed to recognize our need to change, not our theology or doctrine, but our approach to how we “do” church. The basic church model for many years, what I refer to as the “Field of Dreams” model, says that “if you build it”—that is, a church—“they will come.” No, they won’t. The model is out-of-date because our culture has changed. This model assumes the culture to be mostly Christian which is simply no longer the case. In fact, latest research shows that less than 1/3rd of our nation’s population attend church anymore. Simply building a structure will go unnoticed by the community of unchurched today, no matter how much marketing or advertising we can do to sell it.

So, how can we relate to this surrounding culture that seems so foreign to us? We will get into that in a moment. For now, the importance of understanding who we are as the church and where we fit within our world cannot be understated. As a result of such dramatic changes and upheavals in our culture, and the frequency with which they occur, it is easy for the church to not know what to do. In her defense, the church (and clergy) were never trained to expect such seismic shifts in the culture (at

least not in such rapid pace that they now occur), much less know how to respond to them. Are the changes in our culture, for example, contributing to the decline in worship attendance that the church is experiencing these days? Or, are we at fault in our complacency to keep the status quo just because that is easier to do?

The church faces many challenges in this 21st century. For the first time in the history of our country, not one but two generations of children are growing up without a church home! Few could have seen this coming 20 years ago. For most of our nation’s history, the church in the United States proudly sent her missionaries overseas. Today, the reverse is true, as the global church now sends missionaries here. Why? Because, next to India and China, this country is now the mission field. What was once a Christian nation, America in the last 20 years has become a mostly secular, post-Christian society. This is no doubt a result of many things, including post-modernity, which foolishly claims that everything is relative and absolute truth does not exist. Contributing to this, we find many young people, for example Millennials (1984-1998) and Gen-Z-ers (1999-2018) no longer identifying with any particular religion anymore. All the while they proudly profess they are “spiritual but not religious,” whatever that means.

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed a steady stream of people leaving the church, many of whom are men. The Barna Research Group refers to them as the “de-churched” of our country. What has compelled the exodus from the church, and dare I say it, from the faith itself? These and other challenges, arise directly from this shift in our culture, from what once was “one nation under God” to something that looks more like 20th century secular Europe. This is the reality in which we find ourselves. We must recognize, address and counter these challenges with specific attention, intention, and prayer.

Keeping the Fort

As the National Home Mission Developer of The AALC, one of my duties is to help congregations see and understand these cultural changes that are taking place in their local context, and how they are affecting

their particular ministry. This is why the team of five Regional Mission Developers and I provide Revitalization Workshops for our TAALC congregations. Most of our congregations acknowledge that church attendance is dropping, participation is limited to only a small percentage of the congregation, and as a whole, the members of the church are growing older. These are some of the concerns expressed to me when I travel to visit TAALC congregations across the country.

Here are our (5) Regional Mission Developers:

Rev. Joe Christina — Eastern Region

Rev. Bob Snitzer — Greater Heartland Region

Rev. Gary Rokenbrodt — West Great Lakes Region

Rev. John Morley — North Plains Region

Rev. Steve Smeback — Western Region

Still, with the challenges before us come great opportunities! The AALC is committed to walking alongside every congregation in our church body, something we call “Keeping the Fort.” We are committed to bringing revitalization efforts to those congregations anxious to address local concerns, or may be struggling, or may desire to get ahead of these problematic trends I have mentioned. If your congregation would like to host a workshop, please let me know or contact your Regional Home Mission Developer. We can put you on the schedule. Important to note, these workshops cover six areas of ministry:

Community Outreach

Men’s Ministry

Leadership Development

Young Adult Ministry

Worship Life

Christian Education

Usually, the first Workshop begins with an overview of topics to explore. As I remind those congregations who have gone through a workshop already, the first one is just the beginning of an on-going conversation that may take a number of workshops to complete.

Some of the actions that have come from these workshops include:

- Providing opportunities to build congregational identity in local communities
- Developing relationship building imperatives to help with outreach programs
- Sharing Men’s Ministry initiatives such as the Disaster Response Team concept

- Exploring Leadership Development for the enhanced involvement of congregational youth and adults
- Helping the congregation understand the meaning and blessing of our worship life

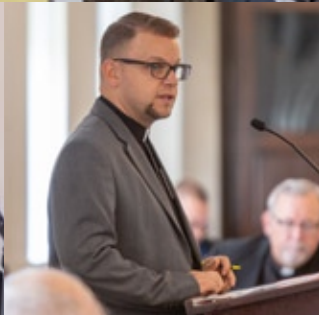
Taking the Frontier

In its historic sweep, Christianity has always been missional. The AALC remains committed to establishing mission starts and church plants over the next few years, and recently has had conversations about that possibility. I am excited to see how the Lord will bless The AALC in this endeavor. I will keep you posted with any developments.

Christ’s command to go and make disciples is seamlessly stitched into the concept of relationship building. As our Creeds confess, God is the great Evangelist (see the explanation of the 3rd Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism). As His disciples, we recognize that this is God’s mission—the *Missio Dei*—and it is accomplished through Word and Sacrament, our ordinary lives of **vocation**, and in our **relationships** with others.

So, one foundation of “Taking the Frontier” must be for our churches to be about the business of relationship building or being socially embedded within the local community. It is what I call being “Intentionally Relational.” This should be the new paradigm for the 21st century church! Being Intentionally Relational is a commitment to relationship building in every aspect of your ministry, both within your congregation and within your community. It is an approach that measures its effectiveness in ministry, *not by attendance* on Sunday morning, but by the transformational effect the Gospel is having on the congregation as well as the community. Being Intentionally Relational is not about trying to be the best church *in* the community, but being the best church *for* the community through relationship building. It is through these new relationships, to the de-churched (those who have left the church) as well as the un-churched (those who have never had a church home), that God can grow His Kingdom and further the Gospel of Jesus Christ through you!

¹Finke, Greg. *Joining Jesus*. Tenth Power Publishing: Elgin, IL, 2014.



Scenes from the 2018 TAALC National Convention

Photos by Shane Cleminson





Women of L.I.F.E. co-chair Laurie O'Brien opened the ladies luncheon with devotions and prayer.

WOMEN OF L.I.F.E.

FELLOWSHIP AT THE NATIONAL CONVENTION

by Gretchen Baker

The AALC Women of L.I.F.E. (Lutherans In Fellowship and Evangelism) met twice during The AALC General Convention in June on the University of Northwestern, St. Paul, campus. On Wednesday, June 27, the Women of L.I.F.E. held their business meeting and luncheon. Co-chair Laurie O'Brien opened the meeting with devotions on Ephesians 4 and prayer.

After a lunch, Co-chair O'Brien shared a report on the last two years of activity. Treasurer Katherine Hofinga shared the financial report from June 1, 2016, to May 31, 2018. Women of L.I.F.E. collected \$12,583.60 from gifts and the sale of the Bible studies.

Locally, Women of L.I.F.E. groups may have different ways they gather together, perhaps as a coffee/social group, or a regional retreat. O'Brien asked, "What would you like to see from the National Women of L.I.F.E.?" Resources are available for local groups with ideas for events and information. O'Brien will look into ways to distribute these resources to local congregations; she asked if each church could select a representative to be a contact for the Women of L.I.F.E. by emailing Bonnie Ohlrich at theaalc@taalc.org.

The Women of L.I.F.E. group can be what each church wants to make it, depending on their needs and their community: fellowship, evangelism, serving and sharing.

Officers for the Women of L.I.F.E. were voted in: Karen Huskamp, second four-year term as co-chair; Mary Dapelo, secretary; Beth Brokenshire, four-year term as Mission Outreach Co-Chair.

O'Brien shared they are looking at options for next year's Bible Study and asked the women to be thinking of someone to write the study for 2020.

The Women of L.I.F.E. met again for a prayer breakfast on Thursday, June 28, at 6:30 a.m. in the Nazareth Great Room. Co-chair O'Brien opened the time with Psalm 5 and encouraged the women to spend time in morning prayer in their personal lives. After the breakfast, the women shared prayer requests individually and then prayed together. Prayers were offered for national TAALC leaders and The AALC as a church body.

The breakfast and prayer time ended on a light note, with the pink Gerbera daisy center pieces being given away to those who had traveled the farthest or the shortest distance to the convention, or been to the most or fewest conventions.



Tables at the ladies luncheon were decorated with scripture cards; ladies were served a lunch of salad with grilled chicken.

Women of L.I.F.E. Update

by Katherine Hofinga

The Women of L.I.F.E. met at Convention on June 28, 2018. As Treasurer, I reported that since the last convention in 2016, the National AALC Women of L.I.F.E. has donated \$1,185 to each of ten mission organizations. Because of local Women of L.I.F.E. groups' donations and Bible Study purchases we have given away almost \$12,000!

Over the past two years we have supported the following missions:

TAALC-ALTS

TAALC-Evangelism Commission

TAALC-Youth

East European Missions Network

Friends of Madagascar Mission

God's Hidden Treasures

Lutherans For Life

Servant Unique Family Ministries

The Sending Place

Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry

100% of all donations sent to the National AALC Women of L.I.F.E. are sent on to these mission organizations; Bible Study income is also used to support our missionaries after expenses are paid.

As Treasurer, I have the privilege of receiving missionary updates and letters of appreciation for our donations, and I thought I should begin sharing some of this news in articles for the Evangel.

For years we have supported Steve Lellelid with Friends of Madagascar Mission. The Rev. David P. Lerseth, Vice President for the Board of Directors of FOMM, wrote:

It has been an exciting year with Friends of Madagascar Mission (FOMM). We have the Bible being printed in the Tandroy dialect, as a result of Steve Lellelid's 16 years of work in translation. The printing of 20,000 Bibles and 72,000 hymnals is being done in Kerala, India, by a Christian printing company, and should be shipped to Madagascar later this summer. A great day for the Gospel to be shared with the Tandroy people.

He also noted that 100% of our gift will be used to support Steve Lellelid, and nothing is taken out of our donation for administrative costs.

At Convention, we also had the joy of meeting and getting better acquainted with three of the missionaries that we support: Rev. Dave Spotts (and wife Martha) with Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry and Paul & Lea Eldred with East European Missions Network.

Please continue to pray for our missionaries!

Katherine Hofinga

PS: Donations to the National AALC Women of L.I.F.E. can be mailed to my home address:

PO Box 102,
Nunda, SD 57050



The Amazon Smile Program

by The Rev. Dean A. Stoner, National Home Mission Developer of The AALC

Offered by the Amazon Foundation, the Amazon Smile Program provides opportunities through online shopping to fund non-profit charities of choice. My hope is that you would consider helping fund The AALC congregations through this online shopping program.

Each time any participant to the Amazon Smile program purchases any qualifying item through Amazon Smile—a division of Amazon—.05% of the total sale (excluding sales tax or shipping) will be forwarded to the charity of choice.

For example: if I purchase a book for \$50 on Amazon Smile, twenty-five cents of that purchase is then sent to The AALC congregation of my choice. If I purchase \$1000 worth of merchandise (not just books) on a yearly basis, then \$50 would be donated to my congregation of choice. If this program can be made known to all our ALTS students, TAALC clergy and laity, and encourage them to do online purchasing through Amazon Smile, a meaningful dollar amount can be raised.

There is no cost to participating in the Amazon Smile program, nor is there any cost to the recipient(s) of the donations, our TAALC congregations. However, each congregation would be required to apply to receive funds, which is a simple application found on the Amazon website. This process would require selecting an administrator and establishing a password for each particular church. Those congregations wanting to participate in receiving donations are also required to provide a church Bank Account number, a Mission Statement, and a church mailing address.

I hope that an awareness campaign can begin through The Evangel, The AALC website, The AALC and congregation Facebook Pages to promote this program. This is an easy and available no-cost resource to help fund TAALC congregations through established means, online purchasing.

On a personal note, I already participate in this program and each purchase I make goes to a particular TAALC congregation. It isn't much, since I am limited in what I can afford and spend, but the Amazon Smile program is completely legitimate and works very well. Should you have any questions, or need further explanation or help with this matter, please don't hesitate to contact me at deanstoner@taalc.org.

See the Amazon Smile website here: <https://smile.amazon.com>

ALTS Graduation



Photo by Suzanne Strong

At the National Convention in Saint Paul, MN, five students graduated from ALTS with their Masters of Divinity: John Morley, Abe McNally, Alex McNally, Chris Rosebrough, and Scott Neumann. One student also graduated with her Masters of Arts in Religion: Lisa Cooper. Members of the Commission on Higher Education were involved with the worship service, including Rev. Dan Dapelo preaching, Rev. Joe Dapelo as liturgist, and Mrs. Emily Gerken presenting diplomas.

TAALC Convention Workshop: Josh Wagner, Lutheran Bible Translators

by Gretchen Baker

Why translate the Bible? Can't people just learn English?

Josh Wagner with Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) posed these questions in his workshop at The AALC General Convention in June.

Josh and his wife Ruthie, along with their four children, Elijah (5 yrs.), Isaiah (3 yrs.), and Josiah (2 yrs.), and Elizabeth (8 mo.), serve with LBT in Sierra Leone, Africa. The Wagners have served one term, working with the local Themne people on a translation of the Old Testament into the Themne language.

Josh shared the mission of LBT: "Making God's Word accessible to those who do not yet have it in the language of their hearts."

Having the Bible available in the "language of their hearts" is what Josh explained as the reason to do Bible translation.

People around the world are learning English.



Josh Wagner shared about Bible translation work in Sierra Leone Africa in a workshop at The AALC General Convention.

But Josh showed the workshop attendees Ephesians 2:4-5 with the basic words in English, except significant words like "mercy" and "trespasses" and "grace" appeared in a foreign language.

He asked the audience to read the verse, making it clear that the verse would not be understandable to people with a basic understanding of English.

Of the 7,000 languages around the world, only 670 have a complete Bible translation. 2,600 languages have a partial Bible translated. Josh asked, "What part of the Bible would you pick if you could only have part of it?" 1,636 languages have no Bible.

In Sierra Leone, the Themne people have the New Testament in Themne, but the language has changed in the fifty years since then. The Themne are a highly oral people group, meaning the language changes over the years.

Josh shared that while many people are bilingual, or speaking two languages, the "heart language" is the one that speaks deeply to you. "God's Word speaks most clearly to us in the language of our hearts." Josh said Bible translation is God's idea. "God wants to be known. Christ came to us and crossed all our barriers."

If people have to learn another language to read the Bible, it makes God harder to reach for those people. But if the people have the Bible in their own language, it connects to their identity and makes people realize, "Wow, God speaks my language?"

In Sierra Leone, Josh works as a Scripture Use Advisor and LBT Representative. His role is to support the local church and is community-based. He works a lot with technology which opens doors to build relationships. Sierra Leone is about ten years behind the USA in technology, but the use is growing fast.

Josh uses off-line digital distribution to give away resources such as an audio Bible, which is a way to reach people who cannot read. He said people love to hear the Bible in their own language.



Only 670 languages have a complete Bible translation 2,600 languages have a partial Bible translated. 1,636 languages have no Bible.

A highlight for Josh was being asked by a conservative Lutheran group in Sierra Leone to help translate Lutheran liturgy into four local languages. They recorded audio versions and are now testing to make sure it is understandable.

Josh's wife Ruthie works as a Translation Advisor on the Themne Old Testament project with a team comprised of educated Themne men.

Translation goes through four stages: 1. Drafting every verse 2. Comparing source text to translated text and making suggestions for different wording 3. Sending text to community-members who have an understanding of the Themne language 4. Reviewing draft by a consultant.

Two books of the OT were recently approved through stage four.

In translation work, they use computer software made for Bible translation. Translators will type in Themne using a conversion keyboard.

Inconsistent electricity and internet is a regular struggle that affects the work in Makeni, the city where they live and work.

Josh shared a story of a "day in the life" from their recent newsletter. They daily hear preaching from nearby mosques over loudspeakers, a reminder of the battle for the hearts and minds of the people of Sierra Leone.

Currently the Wagners are on furlough in the United States with plans to return to Sierra Leone for a second term at the end of 2018.

To receive regular updates on the Wagners and the Themne Bible translation project, email Josh-Ruthie.Wagner@LBT.org or find their closed group on Facebook: "Wagner Updates."

Prayer Bookmark

August

1. The Clergy Commission
2. Rev. Daniel Cloeter
3. Bonnie Ohlrich, Secretary/Coordinator of The AALC/ALTS
4. Abiding Grace Lutheran Church, *Gillette, WY*
5. Rev. David F. Johnson
6. American Lutheran Church, *Mandan, ND*
7. Rev. David M. Johnson
8. Ascension Lutheran Church, *Ames, IA*
9. Emmanuel Lutheran Church, *Kelliher, MN*
10. Your Local community
11. Rev. Dr. James L. Hoefer
12. Ascension Lutheran Church *Waterloo, IA*
13. Dr. Dan Kruger, Treasurer of The AALC
14. Bethel Lutheran Church, *Rowland, PA*
15. Bible Lutheran Church, *Dodge Center, MN*
16. TAALC Online Outreach
17. Rev. Dr. Thomas Stover
18. Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Saint Paul, MN*
19. Rev. Dean Stoner, National Home Mission Developer
20. The Persecuted Church
21. Rev. Edwin Doepel
22. The Commission for Higher Education
23. Rev. Jamie Strickler
24. Hold the Line Conferences
25. Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, Presiding Pastor
26. Rev. Loyd Ginn
27. Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Ellis, KS*
28. The Regional Mission Developers
29. Rev. Irvin Stapf
30. Christ Lutheran Church, *Chippewa Falls, WI*
31. Rev. Michael D. Holsten

Prayer Bookmark

September

1. Christ the King Lutheran Church,
Chesterfield, MI
2. Rev. Paul J. Johansen
3. Rev. Roger Twito, Assistant Presiding Pastor
4. Christ Lutheran Church, *Duluth, MN*
5. Rev. Joe Dapelo, Administrator of The AALC
6. Rev. William P. Moberly
7. TAALC leadership
8. Christ Lutheran Church, *Germantown, MD*
9. The Board of Appeals and Adjudication
10. Rev. David Breidenbach
11. Christ the Ray of Hope Lutheran Church,
Albuquerque, NM
12. Rev. Darrel Deuel
13. Christus Victor Lutheran Church,
Fayetteville, NC
14. ALTS Seminarians
15. Rev. John Hallock
16. Clam Falls Lutheran Church, *Frederic, WI*
17. World Mission Commission
18. The Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry
19. Community Lutheran Church, *Wausaukee, WI*
20. The East European Missions Network
21. Rev. Martins A. Irbe
22. Dr. Adam Francisco, Seminary Professor
23. Board of Trustees
24. Elim Lutheran Church, *Brush Prairie, WA*
25. Rev. Martin Lalthangliana
26. Rev. Dave Spotts, Seminary Professor
27. Rev. Phil Meadows
28. Emmanuel Lutheran Church,
Bremerton, WA
29. Rev. Dr. Craig Henningfield,
Seminary Professor
30. Rev. Richard Sunderlage

Newly Elected Officers

There were new officials elected at the national convention. Here are their names, titles, and terms. Please join with me in praying for our leaders, our commissions, and our whole Association.

Presiding Pastor - Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins (2018-2022)

Secretary - Rev. Joe Marsh (2018-2022)

Clergy Commission - Rev. Rich Shields, Rev. Dave Spotts; Lay Person - Gary Brosamle (terms for all 2018-2022)

Board of Appeals & Adjudication - Rev. Ray Lorthioir (2016-2020)

Rev. Scott Strohkirch, Rev. Harold Johnson, Rev. Tom Jahr and lay persons Doug Stewart and Ted Knutson (2018-2022)

Commission on Doctrine & Church Relations - Rev. Joe Dapelo, Rev. Dr. Dan Schroeder and lay person Don Mathsen - (terms for all 2018-2022)

Commission for Higher Education - Rev. Jerry Storrs and lay persons Deborah Rokenbrodt and Dr. Brett Olsen - (terms for all 2018-2022)

Commission for Commissioned Church Workers - Deaconess Brigitte Gassman and lay person Kathleen Schuhmacher - (terms for both 2018-2022)

TAALC Foundation - Brian Friedrichsen and Doug Taylor - (terms for both 2018-2022)

Women of L.I.F.E. - election results:

Karen Huskamp Co-Chair (2018-2022)

Mary Dapelo - Secretary (2018-2022)

Beth Brokenshire - Mission Outreach Chairman (or Co-Chairman, depending on whether or not Diana Wogen would continue on as Chairman) (2018-2022)

Tree Town, Forest City, Iowa

by The Rev. Bob Snitzer

For the past four years, Forest City has hosted a country music festival on Memorial Day weekend at Heritage Park, located on the South edge of town. Well-known artists such as Eddie Money, Keith Urban, Alabama, Toby Keith, Charlie Daniels, and others, perform live for four days. This event draws four to five thousand people to town for the event. Consequently, it requires a great deal of security—upwards of 110 people. One family, and a few friends have been providing two meals for all security personal.

When we heard this, my wife said, we need to help and support our local law enforcement and security personal by assisting with food. The revitalization committee agreed, and the congregation provided over 114 dozen cookies and bars, and enough salad to feed 130 people each day. The cookies were placed in zip-lock bags with a sticker attached, saying: "Made with love by Pilot Knob Lutheran Church." The sticker was noticed by one of the organizers and would like to work directly with the church and offer a wider opportunity for involvement next year. There are plans to make Tree Town more family-friendly, and to honor a fallen soldier or police officer each year.

It is exciting to be involved in an event that is geared toward families, and open for the church to be involved and supported.



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