

A man with a beard and mustache, wearing a blue button-down shirt, is sitting outdoors and reading an open Bible. He is looking down at the pages with a focused expression. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green grass and a white tent-like structure.

The
EVANGEL

Men's Ministry Edition

INSIDE *this* ISSUE

- 2 From the Editor
- 3 Presiding Pastor
- 5 Biscuits, Gravy, and the Bible
- 5 Ascension Men's Recharge 2021
- 6 Why Should the Church Care About Men's Ministry?
- 8 Men of Christ!
- 10 Ministering to Men in Our World Today
- 12 Hope Lutheran Church Celebrates 175 Years
- 13-14 Prayer Bookmark
- 14 General Convention Planned for June
- 15 Light of Christ, Williston, ND Extends Letter of Call
- 15 Baker Installation

From the Editor

As I read through the submissions for this edition on Men's Ministry, I was reminded again of how grateful I am for the godly men in our lives who quietly, humbly, gently serve those around them.

In a world where the faults of a few have tainted the view of many, the Lord continues to provide men who are honest, careful, generous, faithful, and more. I have many such men in my life; maybe you can recognize a few in your own?

Men who make the morning coffee, do the grocery shopping, take out the trash, and make sure the gas tank is full. Men who take the kids to library story time every Saturday, work concessions at every game, and have deep conversations with their kids.

Men who clock in and out of a frustrating job, because their family needs the health insurance and the bills need to be paid. Husbands who ask "How was your day?" and then settle in to listen to every detail you're about to unload on them.

Men who fight for truth even at personal cost to themselves. Men who see a need and step in to help, keep an eye out for their neighbor's needs, and stand in the gap for those who lack.

The crazy thing is that these men, probably most of the time, don't even realize how much they are helping us. For them, they are simply doing the task that is in front of them.

These hardworking, deep thinking, loving men are God's good gifts to us.

As you read these pages, I pray you will be encouraged in your Men's Ministry, and may the rest of us see and express our gratitude to the faithful men God places in our lives.

Thank you,
Gretchen Baker
The Editor

Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright ©2007 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission.

All rights reserved.

Editor: Gretchen Baker

Layout & Design: Lynette Macias

Return to the Catechism

by The Rev. Dr. Curtis E. Leins

In early 1529, Martin Luther had just completed a visitation of the congregations of Saxony. He was deeply troubled by the conditions that he found. In an effort to combat the deficiencies of both laity and clergy, Luther wrote *The Small Catechism*. His *Preface* includes his assessment of the state of the Saxon church:

The deplorable, miserable condition that I discovered recently when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare this catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Mercy! Dear God, what great misery I beheld! The common person, especially in the villages, has no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine. And unfortunately, many pastors are completely unable and unqualified to teach. This is so much so, that one is ashamed to speak of it. Yet, everyone says that they are Christians, have been baptized, and receive the holy Sacraments, even though they cannot even recite the Lord's Prayer or the Creed or the Ten Commandments. They live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs.

What was Luther's remedy? What was his plan for the correction of this "miserable condition"? Luther provided the *Small Catechism*, in six parts. Let's look at it closely and take note of the instructions that he gives:

1. Regarding the Ten Commandments, Luther writes: "As the Head of the Family should Teach Them in a Simple Way to His Household." What follows are the Ten Commandments and their clear explanation in a plain and simple form.
2. Regarding The Creed, Luther writes: "As the Head of the Family should Teach it in the Simplest Way to His Household." Luther divides The Creed into three Articles. He provides a statement of meaning for each Article such that any school age child can learn and understand them.
3. Regarding The Lord's Prayer, Luther writes: "As the Head of the Family Should Teach it in the Simplest Way to His Household." The Lord's Prayer is divided into sections with simple teaching following each one.

Continued on Page 4



4. Regarding The Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Luther writes: “As the Head of the Family should Teach it in the Simplest Way to His Household.” By means of uncomplicated questions and answers, the purpose and power of Holy Baptism are explained.
5. Regarding Confession and Forgiveness, Luther provides an explanation and an example of how sins are confessed, and how the pastor pronounces Christ’s forgiveness.
6. Regarding The Sacrament of the Altar, Luther writes: “As the Head of the Family should Teach it in a Simple Way to His Household.” Uncomplicated questions and answers teach the purpose and power of Holy Communion.

Finally, Luther provides a section of practical, daily, spiritual guidelines: How the Head of the Family should teach his household to pray in the morning and in the evening; How the Head of the Family should teach his household to ask blessings and return thanks before and after meals; and Scriptural passages that guide the lives of clergy, parishioners, rulers, subjects, husbands, wives, parents, children, etc.

In short, because most of the heads of households were men, Luther’s *Small Catechism* provided every husband and father with clear guidelines in three essential areas:

1. Husbandry and Fatherhood: The Catechism was a teaching tool that taught men what Christian husbands and fathers did! It provided a curriculum that fathers could learn, and then teach to their families. It also included sample prayers for the beginning and ending of the day, as well as before and after meals. Every portion of the Catechism was based directly upon Holy Scripture, so the husband and father was immersed in God’s Word, even as he led his family in their spiritual life.
2. Christian Doctrine: The Catechism gave Christian men a simple statement of what they believed. It provided heads of households with plain examples of the Law and the Gospel in the form of The Ten Commandments, The Creed, The Sacraments, and Confession and Forgiveness. Armed with the Catechism, virtually any “common person,” as Luther called

him, could be absolutely certain of what he believed and could teach his family what God’s Word promised.

3. Spiritual Discipline: The Catechism provided a structure for spiritual discipline. In addition to daily Scripture reading, heads of households were encouraged to pray regularly, and meditate upon God’s Word and sound doctrine found in the Catechism.

Surely, the congregations of Luther’s day were not the only ones needing a Catechism. My guess is that many in our own congregations today cannot recite the Ten Commandments. Many would have difficulty giving a simple explanation of the three Articles of the Creed. Though we may not be the “dumb brutes” that Luther described, nonetheless, we too need a trustworthy resource to assist us in lifelong spiritual growth. More to the point, how many of our men would value receiving some assistance in Christian husbandry and fatherhood? How many would appreciate a simple course in sound doctrine? How many wish that they were more disciplined in their prayer lives and Bible reading? Were we to ask, the answers would be a resounding male chorus of: “Yes, I need that!” and “Amen!”

When Luther wrote his *Small Catechism* it was an instant best-seller, printed and reprinted many times in Wittenberg, and in other cities throughout Germany. 16th century men wanted to be strong Christian leaders in their homes, congregations, and communities. I believe that men are no less hungry today. Our men want to be good Christian husbands and fathers. They want to know sound biblical doctrine, and desire to improve their personal spiritual lives. Luther not only wrote the Catechism, he taught it and preached it regularly. Our men need pastoral instruction and encouragement. We need our pastors to organize gatherings of men for fun and fellowship, and especially for instruction and education.

This edition of *The Evangel* features the importance of Men’s Ministry. It is not only a record of the many terrific things that the men of The AALC are doing, it also is a challenge to every pastor and every layman, to continue a lifetime of study of Holy Scripture and the Catechism. In this way, every man may be renewed and encouraged in his Christian service to his Lord, his family, and his church!

The Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins is the Presiding Pastor of The AALC.

Biscuits, Gravy, and the Bible

by Rev. Joe Christina

On the first Saturday of every month, Christus Victor hosts our men's Bible breakfast at 0800 hours. This has been going on for a few years now and has only grown in popularity and attendance. And while attended mainly by members of the congregation, it isn't unheard of to have guests and visitors join us for food, fellowship, and a study of Holy Scripture.

When we first began this event, we did a study of the book of Joshua. Our church stands in the shadow of the biggest military installation in the world, so this study was both timely and applicable in many ways. And, as seems most of the time in regards to Joshua, it generated a lot of discussion and thoughtful questions on military ethics as well as God's sovereignty and marching orders for Joshua's army. Most recently, we finished a walkthrough of Luke's book of Acts. On occasion, our discussion over breakfast and fellowship is such that we will often opt to hold off on the lesson altogether simply to enjoy one another's company. Between studies, we will also simply host an "open season" breakfast where any questions regarding church, doctrine, and Scripture can be brought to the table for discussion.

Our menu includes the staples of any red-blooded American male's preferred breakfast: bacon, eggs, and the best biscuits and country gravy in the state of North Carolina (thanks to Miles). This, of course, is washed down with plenty of coffee. Bonds between our male members have noticeably strengthened over these years of gathering around the table over food and Scripture. Years ago, Christus Victor had a similar event that would often morph into tackling building and grounds projects at the church. When we started this, we were adamant that it be strictly food, fellowship, and study. We aim to keep our event limited to an hour so that we all have plenty of Saturday left to get to our own "honey do" lists at home. But sometimes our discussion and fellowship is so spirited, this is simply not possible.

So if you ever find yourself in Fayetteville on the first Saturday of the month, please join us for fellowship, a study of the Word, and the best biscuits and gravy you'll ever eat.

The Rev. Joe Christina serves Christus Victor Ev. Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, NC, and in The AALC as National Home Mission Developer.

Ascension Men's Recharge 2021

by Tom Knight

On October 9, 2021, about 35 men gathered together for the 2021 Ascension Men's Recharge. This event provided a great opportunity for fellowship, worship, and studying of God's Word.

A huge "Thank You" goes out to all of the outstanding volunteers who worked so hard to make this event a success. We were blessed by four wonderful speakers who gave scriptural presentations on being recharged as men who follow Christ in an ever-challenging world. They covered topics such as being recharged in your faith as a man of God (Tom Knight),

being recharged in your finances (Dr. Brett Olsen), being recharged in the different seasons of a man's life (David Dezur), as well as being recharged by the Holy Spirit (Steven Drouillard).

We were also blessed by a fantastic kitchen team who provided a delicious lunch and several snacks. Want to hear more about this exciting event? Find a man with a 2021 Ascension Men's Recharge shirt on and ask them!

Tom Knight is the Director of Men's Ministry of Ascension Lutheran Church, Waterloo, IA.



Photo by Tom Knight

Why Should the Church Care About Men's Ministry?

by The Rev. Dr. Cary G. Larson

Demographic data indicate that men and boys are not coming to corporate worship and actively participating in the church's mission in the United States of America, even prior to the COVID pandemic¹. The church needs to examine the cause of why men and boys don't come to worship and apply the knowledge gained for the sake of their eternal salvation, returning to that which has been handed down by the saints for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel (Jude 1:3).

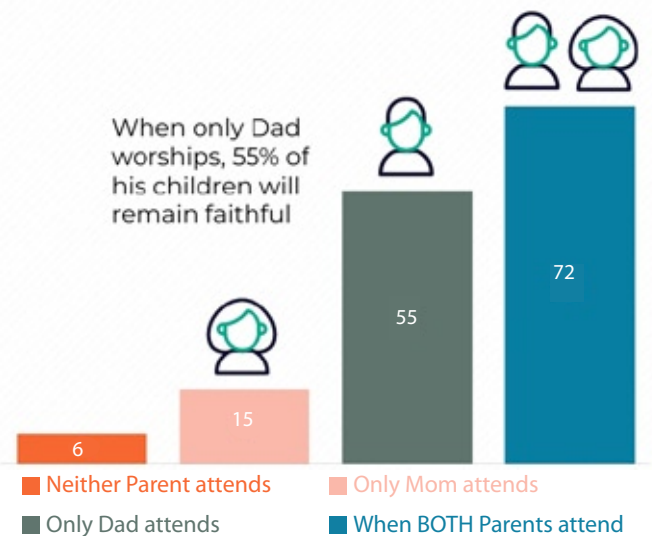
The American culture loves egalitarianism, as "all men have been created equal," and often seeks equality between genders with an almost religious fervor. It may seem counter-cultural to focus on males instead of both males and females in the church and especially concerning worship. Shouldn't the church be more with the times and concentrate evangelizing efforts toward all people, regardless of gender, with equal intensity?

Indeed, the mandate from Jesus Christ to His church is clear. Known as "The Great Commission" in Matthew 28, Jesus Christ sends His church into the world to make disciples of "all people" (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη - v.19). Jesus Christ directs His church to make disciples of all people through the means of Word and Sacrament.

God's desire for all people to be saved appears frequently in the Scriptures (Ez 18:23; Ps 67:2; Is 45:22; John 3:16-17; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9), that Christ died for all (John 3:16-17; Rom 6:23; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 10:10; 1Pet 3:18), who gave Himself a ransom for all (Matt 20:28; 1 Tim 2:6), at the fullness of time (Rom 5:6), that Jesus Christ through His humility would taste death for all people (Heb 2:9), and the way of salvation is through no one else but Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Because saving all people through Jesus Christ is God's highest priority, then undoubtedly, this ought to be the highest priority for the church as well. Therefore, since more boys and men are missing in the church than girls and women, this should be one of the church's most significant concerns.

Beyond the primary concern of boys and men's salvation, studies have presented persuasive evidence that drawing men to church also helps to shape their family's lives and specifically his children's faith, thus providing the means for the church to continue into the following generations. The illustration below is based on the 1996 work of Robert and Deborah Bruce titled, *Becoming Spiritual Soulmates with Your Child*. According to the Bruces, if both parents attend worship, the odds are very likely that their children will grow up as devout Christians. However, their evidence shows that fathers who practice the Christian faith, including worship, have the most significant and undisputed downstream impact on keeping their children engaged in the faith and in the church.²

The Influence of Parent's Worship Attendance on Their Children's Faith



Source: "Becoming Spiritual Soulmates with Your Child," Robert & Debra Bruce, 1996

Chart created by Dr. Cary Larson, based on the survey data.

A Swiss government study published in November of 1999 affirms the work of Robert and Deborah Bruce and finds that in Switzerland the primary means of Christian faith transmission to the next generation is through the father³. This Swiss study found that the father is indisputably the primary influencer of the religious practices of his children. According to Swiss research:

1. If both parents attend worship regularly, 33 percent of their children will end up as regular worshippers, 41 percent will worship irregularly, and 25 percent of their children will not be active participants in the faith.
2. If the mother is faithful and regular in her participation in Christian worship, and yet the father is irregular in his practice, only three percent of the children will successively become regular worshippers themselves, 59 percent will most likely become irregular in their worship practices, and 38 percent will not be practicing the faith.
3. If the father is non-practicing and, at best, is a Christian in name only and the mother is a regular participant in worship, only two percent of their children will become regular worshippers, 37 percent most likely will practice irregular worship participation, and a staggering 60 percent or greater will not be engaged in the Christian faith.
4. Even if the mother is irregular or a non-practicing Christian and yet the father is a faithful and regular worshiper, 38 percent of their children went on to worship regularly, 44 percent worshiped irregularly and 18 percent did not worship as adults.

Another more recent study (2003) echoes the necessity for the church to be intentional in its ministry to men. In a report for the National Study of Youth, American sociologist Christian Smith with Phillip Kim, a Ph.D. graduate student in sociology at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, cites several positive affects upon families if husbands and fathers are engaged in the Christian faith, in comparison to fathers who are nonreligious⁴:

1. Fathers engaged in their faith are perceived by their children to be quick to encourage their mothers in matters that are important to her.
2. Fathers engaged in worship are more likely to be seen by their children expressing love for their mother.
3. Fathers who are engaged in their faith are seen as men who will be fair and willing to compromise with the children's mother.
4. Religious fathers are perceived by their children to be less likely to blame their mother for their own problems.
5. According to the surveyed youth, worshipping fathers are significantly less likely to deride the children's mother.

6. Youth of fathers who are engaged in their faith seldom, if ever, see their fathers verbally abuse their mothers.

The information gained through Smith and Kim's research shows that participation in worship by men also has a measurably positive effect upon other men, allowing them to be more engaged and supportive as husbands and fathers.

There are other Christian authors who state emphatically that the church cannot afford to ignore boys and men regardless of public opinion, inside or outside the church. While there are many reasons for this, perhaps there is nothing more important than the salvation of all men and the need for men to transmit the Christian faith to the following generations. Because God cares, the church should deeply care that boys and men are missing in church and especially in attending the Divine Service. Everything else should be secondary to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His means of grace.

We take comfort in the fact that God has promised that His Word will not return to Him void nor empty but will accomplish that which He intends (Is 55:11), that His Word is eternal (Mark 13:31), and the church of Jesus Christ shall prevail, regardless of the challenges that surround her, until the coming of her Bridegroom (Matt 16:17-19). The writer of Hebrews so adeptly states that Jesus Christ alone is "the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8), thus He alone is constant; therefore, we must fix our eyes upon Jesus Christ in all our endeavors, including evangelizing boys and men and welcome the work of the Holy Spirit to call, gather, enlighten, and keep them in the true faith. Our help is in the name of the Lord!

The Rev. Dr. Cary Larson is the Assistant Presiding Pastor of The AALC and the called pastor to Christ the King Lutheran of Waseca, MN.

Dr. Larson spoke on this topic at the 2021 AALC Pastors' Conference; his presentations are available to read or view via his website: www.carylaron.com.

Endnotes

¹Pew Research Center "Theories Explaining Gender Differences in Religion," accessed June 12, 2020, <http://www.2020.pewforum.org/2016/03/22/theories-explaining-gender-differences-in-religion/>.

²Robert Bruce and Debra Bruce, *Becoming Spiritual Soulmates with Your Child* (Nashville : Broadman and Holman Pub., 1996)

³Council of Europe - Committee of Ministers "The Demographic Characteristics of Linguistic and Religious Groups in Switzerland," in *Ministers' Deputies CM Documents, CM (99)138 Addendum 5*, (November 1999), 38, accessed Aug. 1, 2020. <http://www.rm.coe.int/16804fb7b1>.

⁴Christian Smith and Phillip Kim, "Family Religious Involvement and the Quality of Parental Relationships for Families With Early Adolescents," *National Study of Youth and Religion* (No. 5, 2003), 16-21.

Men of Christ!

by Rev. Gregory Stenzel

What does it mean to be a man, in an era where gender identity is up for grabs and where many families are broken? One single mother was asked, “What are you looking for in a man?” She replied, “emotional stability and support.” We live in crazy times where the question above is left dangling.

I was raised in a home where verbal abuse was common, and my mom and dad divorced when I was 14 years old. Though my dad and I were close, my formative years lacked a godly example from him of what it means to be a Christian man. Thanks be to God, however, that there were other men who poured into my life. One such man was my Pastor, Thomas Allport.

Confusion abounds today. The world now considers gender a fluid category, where one is free to decide for themselves what they want to be—male or female. Back in the 1970s, I remember being in awe over an Olympic athlete named Bruce Jenner; I can still see him crossing the finish-line, and on the Wheaties breakfast cereal box. Now, several decades later Bruce thinks he is Caitlyn. Yet, the difference between a man and woman cannot be determined by a surgeon’s scalpel.

Today, boys are being raised by women (godly and otherwise), without the influence of a godly father. Moreover, women seem to be the predominate educators in the classroom. Even in many Christian congregations, women are the Sunday school and confirmation teachers. We are very grateful to these women, but where are the men?

The world and the Church need godly men influencing others to be godly men. At Christ Lutheran in Chipewewa Falls, Wisconsin, we began a men’s ministry for the purpose of influencing fellow brothers in Christ, to be Men of Christ. We readily recognized the masculinity problem in society and are struck by the stark contrast presented in holy Scripture. A godly man needs to be spiritually mature, as St. Paul outlines in Ephesians 4, and more specifically, verse 13: “This is to continue until we all reach the unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, resulting in a mature man with a stature reaching to the measure of the fullness of Christ” (Evangelical Heritage Version).

A mature man, or masculinity, “is not a single trait. It’s a lifestyle, a discipline, a habit cultivated by practice . . . [it] is not rugged independence. It is sacrificial giving.”¹ It is in recognizing that Almighty God gave all various vocations, and in reality, the vocation of man, husband, father, and brother, is very different than the vocation given to women, wives, mothers, and sisters. One problem we face today is the enemy called apathy. The devil, who prowls around like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8), is constantly tempting everyone, especially men, toward numbness, leading to lives of inaction when it comes to their vocation as men, husbands, fathers, and brothers.

More than two years ago, Christ Lutheran began a simple men’s ministry called “Men of Christ.” We meet every Friday morning over breakfast at a local restaurant, from 6:00 to 7:30 AM. Our format is simple. Each week, a brother is assigned the devotion for the day, which may be a few verses from Scripture or an entire chapter. He reads it through once, then we have someone with a different Bible translation read it again so we can hear the holy text in another way. Then, beginning with the brother who brought the devotion, we go around the table giving each the opportunity to comment on what stands out most, or is meaningful, and why. Each person takes about 60-90 seconds, then they “pass” to the brother on their right. Once everyone has had an opportunity to speak, an open discussion commences between bites of pancakes and eggs (maybe even pecan pie), about the text for the day.

As a group of brothers, we embrace this phrase, “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17 ESV), which guides our time together. Interestingly, as the open discussion takes place, almost every week the conversation turns to blessings, challenges, and questions. There, in the midst of the brotherhood, faithful men, grounded in holy Scripture, listen, enlighten, and support each other, while striving to keep a proper balance between Law and Gospel. Our goal is to sharpen the insight of our brother in Christ toward godliness. This, we are convinced, results in godly men, which will lead to godly husbands, fathers, and brothers.

The Men of Christ gathering is truly a blessing to everyone who participates. Most have commented, “it is the highlight of my week,” as we gather around the Word and prayer. In fact, one

brother even started bringing his young sons (when they are not in school), who participate fully. We even have a couple brothers participating who are from the Roman Catholic and Evangelical communions. And during this age of covid, when Zoom video conferencing has grown in popularity, we make our gathering available to any who wishes to participate (one brother from Russia has chimed in a few times, another from the Virgin Islands, along with San Diego, and Northern Wisconsin). My point: gathering around the Word of Christ changes us and molds us into the men that God has called us to be, and it is contagious.

If anyone would like to join our Zoom study, please email me at pastorstenzel@mac.com. We gather Friday mornings at 6:00 AM central time. Just pop in and leave when you must!

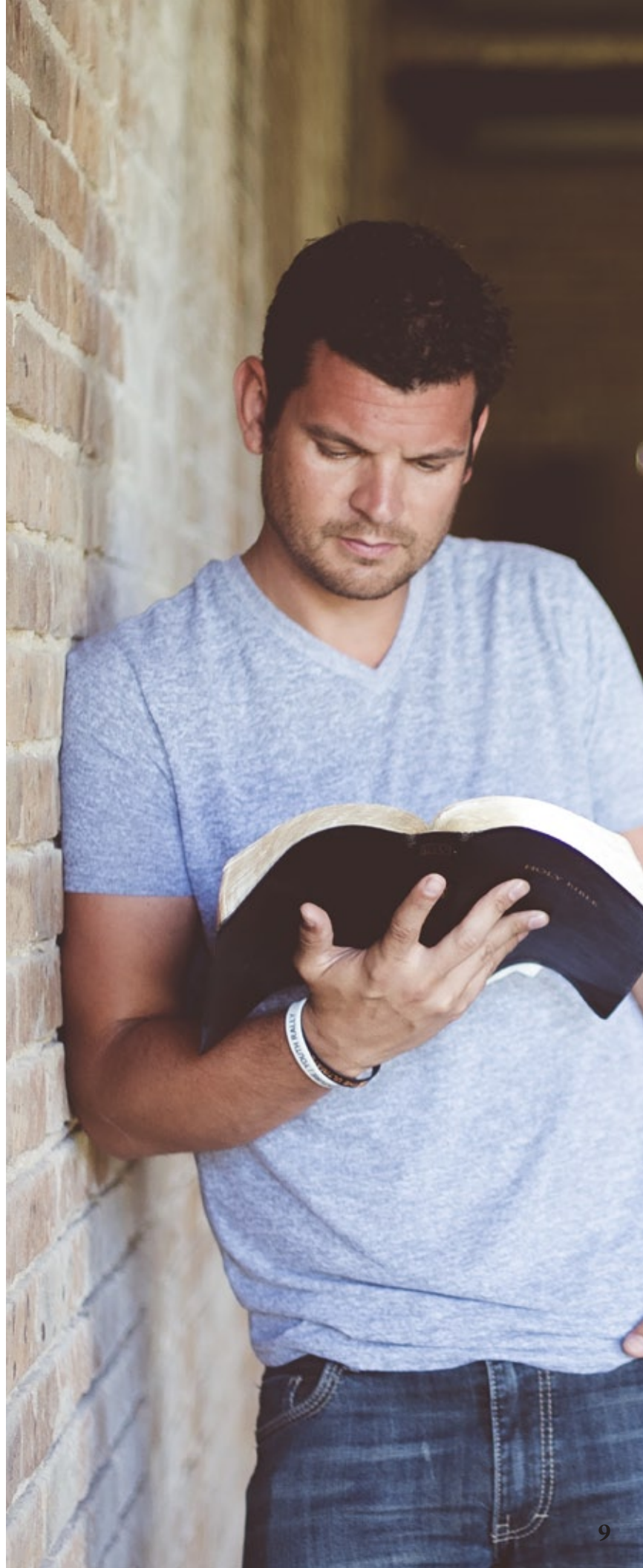
We don't pretend to have the answers, and we fully recognize that we are all broken and sinful, in need of a Savior. We know our Savior, Jesus Christ, is the only cure for what ails us and our society. Truly, faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ (Roman 10:17), because it is here that the Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies every man.

My prayer for men everywhere is: "Blessed Lord, you have caused all holy Scripture to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast to the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

A very special thanks to a couple Brothers—Ron Clutter and Matt Markham—who reviewed, critiqued, and contributed to this article. You are loved and appreciated!

Rev. Gregory Stenzel serves Christ Lutheran Church in Chippewa Falls, WI.

¹Jeffrey Hemmer, *Man Up! The Quest for Masculinity*, (St. Louis, MO, Concordia Publishing, 2017), 8.



Ministering to Men in Our World Today

by Tom Knight

Whether you look around at our current society or within the church itself today, you will see a disturbing trend: less and less men are living out their lives as God intends for them. There are several theories, thoughts, and speculations as to why this is, but the end result is still the same. There is a growing decline of Biblical manhood in America today. Consider some of these alarming nationwide statistics:

For every 10 men in the average church:

- 9 will have kids who leave the church
- 8 will find their jobs dissatisfying
- 6 will pay the minimum monthly payment of their credit cards
- 5 have a major problem with pornography
- 4 will experience divorce which will in turn affect 1,000,000 children per year
- Only 1 will have a biblical world view
- All 10 will struggle to balance family and work¹

While these are “averages” reported from different church organizations across America, I think we can all agree that there is a need to minister to the men of our congregations: men and boys of all ages and all walks of life. I would humbly submit to you that spiritually strong men build strong families, strong families build strong churches, and strong churches influence our communities with the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

So what does an effective Men’s Ministry look like? That is a great question! Let’s take a quick look at what makes up a practical Bible-based Men’s Ministry. First of all, we must teach the Biblical truth of how men are created, what men are created to do, and how they can experience all that God has for them as men no matter what season of life they are in. Dr. Cary Larson has some excellent material on his website (www.carylson.com) that outlines the Biblical vocations of boyhood, manhood, husband, and dad. This is an excellent guide for teaching our men and families the Biblical principles of being a Godly man (Ephesians 5:25, 1 Corinthians 16:13-18, 1 Timothy 6:11).

So how do we minister to men on a regular basis? How do we effectively implement a biblical Men’s Ministry in our local congregations? If you are considering developing or expanding Men’s Ministry at your church, the following three components are important elements that are key to developing and or expanding Men’s Ministry:

#1. Fellowship. Our world does its best to isolate and separate men from one another. A lot of men are suffering from not having bonds with other godly men whom they can trust and depend on. We as the church have a fantastic opportunity to bring men together. Saturday morning breakfasts, golf outings, fishing trips, cookouts, and movie nights all provide opportunities to bring men of all ages together. God desires unity and teamwork for His sons. Men are much more likely to participate in the life of the church if they know other men there as well. It is also critical that our young men see that gathering together with brothers in Christ is “normal.” Seeing young Johnny at a men’s event with his dad and Grandpa always brings a smile to my face! This also shows skeptical men that the church cares about them and doesn’t just “want” something from them.

#2. Study of God’s Word. This is a critical part of Men’s Ministry, as we are building an army not a social club. This is where we answer the “how’s” of everyday life. Men are often drawn to truths that show us how to do things. How do I replace a faucet? How do I change a fuel pump? How do I nail down shingles correctly? Many of these things are taught to men by other men. We need to continue this model in the church as well. Many men actually want to know how to be a Godly man strong in the faith, strong against temptation and sin, but are afraid to ask. Other men have no idea what this looks like in real life and need help understating these scriptural truths. Fortunately, we have the ultimate “how to” guide, the Word of God! There are a multitude of scriptures regarding how to raise Godly children, how to be a faithful employee, how to help others around us, and how to be a servant leader at any age. Studying the Word of God shoulder to shoulder with other men is a very effective discipleship tool.

#3. Service. It is important to give men an opportunity to serve others while serving the Lord. This further increases the bonds of Christian brotherhood among men and boys. Whether it be raking leaves at the church together, painting a house, or some other service project, the goal is still the same: serving others as we serve the Lord. Men often begin to respect and trust other men who are willing to work hard for nothing in return. This also gives men a reminder that it's not all about us! Often I have found that a man who is suspect of other Christian men will begin to participate more in Men's Ministry when he sees these service projects take place.

These are just three common elements that are often seen in active Men's Ministry groups, there are many more elements, but these are what I would consider the top ones. The makeup of your congregation and the area in which you live may require some changes to how you implement these three elements, but the basic principles are the same: fellowship, study and service. Have an idea or concept for Men's Ministry you would like to talk about before launching? Please reach out to me. I would love to discuss and share ideas with you!

Last but not least, make it FUN! Serving God as a single man, married, young, or old is a lot of fun. Sometimes we forget to tell people this. I didn't say it was easy by any means, but it is certainly an exciting way to live. One of the biggest lies our current culture tries to tell men is that living as a man of God is miserable. There are so many things you "can't do." They see it as boring and oppressive. On the contrary, Christ's perfect atoning sacrifice on the cross sets us free from the bondage of sin and death (Romans 8:1-5). Ask a man who has been walking with the Lord for 30 or 40 years if he has any regrets about what God has done in his life. You will most likely hear a resounding NO! May the Lord bless and keep our AALC congregations as we minister to the men and boys around us.

Tom Knight serves part time as the Director of Men's Ministry at Ascension Lutheran Church of Waterloo, IA.

¹Focal Point Ministries "Coaching", accessed January 24, 2022, <https://focalpointministries.net/coaching/>.



Hope Lutheran Church Celebrates 175 Years

by Courtney Burkhalter



“Rooted in the Past - Looking to the Future.” The weekend of September 17-19, 2021, church members, neighbors, and friends gathered to celebrate the 175th anniversary of Hope Lutheran Church in Germanville (Brighton), Iowa.

The church was founded in 1845. A committee of women began planning this anniversary in the fall of 2019, as the church’s 175th anniversary was actually in 2020. In February of 2020, the committee led the church’s annual Valentine’s Day Supper, incorporating pictures of couples married at the church and vintage valentines. We also began taking pictures of those in attendance to put in the church’s directory. The committee members continued to meet each month to plan the anniversary weekend and other events for the year, until March of 2020, at which time they had to pause meeting due to the coronavirus. A few months later, we decided that the anniversary weekend should be postponed to the corresponding weekend for 2021.

One year later, the committee began meeting again. There was a lot of work left to do after a year off, but with support and God’s guidance, we were able to come together to celebrate God’s love for us and our committee over all of these years. Our committee continued to meet, plan, organize, and prepare. Many church members helped to prepare by cleaning and working on various projects outdoors. Church members submitted recipes to add to our church cookbook.

On the Friday night of the anniversary weekend, many gathered at the church to sing hymns and then enjoy ice cream afterwards, with time for socializing and catching up with former pastors and guests. A couple members of our committee gathered pictures and historical items and created a display, which all attendees enjoyed looking through.

Saturday, the celebration occurred at Lake Darling State Park near Brighton. Attendees could gather ahead of time for games and socializing. A local caterer prepared the meal of roast beef, ham balls, chicken, potatoes, green beans, salad, and dinner rolls. We also enjoyed cake and a time of sharing. Former Pastors Wayne Wilken and Steven Estrem shared of their time serving our church. Rhoda Abelman, daughter of former Pastor Abelman, shared of her family's time at the church and parsonage. Many others sent letters which were shared that evening. Current Pastor Ryan Dexter also shared.



On Sunday, donuts were served outdoors before the service. Special organ music was played during the prelude. In addition to Pastor Dexter, our former pastors also shared in the morning service, along with Dr.

Duane Lindberg, who visited that day with his family. After the service, a lunch of loose meat sandwiches, sides, and dessert was served downstairs. To conclude the weekend, Mike Zahs, local historian, led us on a cemetery walk. He was able to share his knowledge of history of local cemeteries, explaining what some of the symbols on stones meant, why certain stones were labeled certain ways, and how to detect unmarked graves. A



church member also spent time creating a large plat of the stones, as well as signs with trivia about the oldest stone, most common name, etc.

We thank God for the opportunity to celebrate this occasion, and it meant even more to us after having to wait an extra year to do so. It was an enjoyable weekend, especially to catch up with former pastors and members, some of whom we have not seen for many years. It was a time of reflection for all the good memories of past years, as well as a time for learning for our younger members. And mostly, it was a reminder of all that God has done for us and how He will continue to lead us in the days and years to come. For many years, a banner hung in the front of the church with this reminder: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever," Hebrews 13:8.



Courtney Burkhalter served on Hope's 175th Anniversary Planning Committee.

PRAYER BOOKMARK

March 2022

1. Eastern Region
2. Rev. Gary Benson
3. American Lutheran Theological Seminary
4. North Plains Region
5. College & University Campus Chaplains
6. Rev. Carl Groh
7. Abiding Grace Lutheran Church
Gillette, WY
8. Rev. Fred Balke
9. Commission for Youth Activities
10. Christ Lutheran Church *Chetek, WI*
11. Carlene Kamradt, Bookkeeper
12. For those who are grieving
13. Rev. Daniel Dapelo
14. Church Plant: Christus Victor Lutheran
Church *Milton, FL*
15. Rev. Joseph Christina
16. For paramedics and firefighters
17. Faith Lutheran Church *Holstein, IA*
18. Rev. Joseph Dapelo
19. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Franklin, NC
20. For law enforcement officers
21. Selbständige Evangelisch-Lutherische
Kirche (SELK)
22. Rev. John Anderson
23. Lutherans For Life
24. Hope Lutheran Church *Brighton, IA*
25. Rev. Kevin Beard
26. Rev. John Morley
27. Kongsvinger Lutheran Church *Oslo, MN*
28. Rev. David Huskamp
29. For those who are ill
30. Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
31. Light of Christ Lutheran Church
Williston, ND

PRAYER BOOKMARK

April 2022

1. Rev. Edwin Mendivelso
2. Regional Pastors
3. Mighty Fortress Evangelical Lutheran Church *Seward, NE*
4. Sunday School Teachers
5. Rev. Dr. Cary Larson, Assistant to the Presiding Pastor
6. Rev. Dean Johansen
7. Christian Education Directors
8. Gretchen Baker, *The Evangel* Editor
9. New Hope Lutheran Church *Newfolden, MN*
10. Military Chaplains
11. Our Savior Lutheran Church *Piqua, OH*
12. International Lutheran Council
13. Women of L.I.F.E. Groups
14. Poplar Lake Lutheran Church *Fosston, MN*
15. Lynette Macias, *The Evangel* Layout Designer
16. Redeemer Lutheran Church *West Union, IA*
17. For doctors and nurses
18. Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church *Sidney, MT*
19. Rev. Clyde Awtrey
20. Your local AALC church
21. St. John's Lutheran Church *Pocahontas, MO*
22. Prison Chaplains
23. Rev. Eric Ishimaru
24. American Lutheran Theological Seminary
25. St. Luke the Evangelist Lutheran Church *Jurupa Valley, CA*
26. National Mediation Board
27. St. Paul Lutheran Congregation *Tripoli, IA*
28. Rev. Harold Johnson
29. Youth Directors
30. St. Paul's Lutheran Church *Napoleon, OH*



The 28th AALC General Convention will be held on the campus of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary in Plymouth, MN. Submitted photo.

General Convention Planned for June

by Rev. Dean Stoner

The 28th General Convention of The American Association of Lutheran Churches will be held this summer, beginning with dinner and opening worship on Tuesday, June 21, and ending Friday morning, June 24. Our Convention will be held at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary in Plymouth, MN, on the shores of Medicine Lake.

The theme of the Convention: "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of Jesus Christ," is based on Colossians 3:12-17.

Our keynote speaker will be the Rev. Stephen Unger. Rev. Unger is a member of The AALC Clergy Roster and serves as the Director of Chaplaincy Services at Stoney Brook Medical Center, Stoney Brook, NY, as well as the chaplain of the FBI, Stoney Brook, NY, office.

The AALC National Office will be booking rooms at our host hotel, The Country Inn & Suites, 210 Carlson Parkway North, Plymouth, MN, for all who are coming to the Convention from out of town. Our General Convention is open to all who would like to attend, but only those official delegates of the Convention will be permitted to vote.

There will be a Zoom component to the Convention this year, as registered attendees may join any or all of the broadcasts on-line. Registered delegates of the Convention will be able to vote by way of your smart phone through the new AALC voting app.

Zoom broadcasts will begin with our opening worship service (Tuesday, 7:00 PM Central Time), followed by all day Zoom broadcasts both Wednesday and Thursday (8:30 AM – 5:00 PM Central Time). We will also Zoom our Thursday evening worship service (7:00 PM Central Time), where our Association will install our newly elected Presiding Pastor. And finally, we will broadcast the remaining business of The AALC on Friday morning beginning at 8:30 AM.

The Convention Registration form is available on our website for downloading. Should you have any questions, please contact Bonnie or myself at any time. Bonnie can be reached at theaalc@taalc.org or myself at deanstoner@taalc.org.

Rev. Dean Stoner serves as the Administrative Assistant to The AALC.

Light of Christ, Williston, ND, Extends Letter of Call

In November 2020, The Rev. Kevin R. Beard was asked to serve as a Pulpit Supply Pastor at Light of Christ Lutheran Church (AALC) in Williston, ND. He was accepted onto The AALC Clergy Roster in November 2021, and in December 2021, the congregation of Light of Christ issued a formal Letter of Call to Pr. Beard. He has accepted the Call and will be installed on February 27, 2022.

Pastor Beard grew up in Williston, ND. He and his wife, Marilee, have been married for 37 years and have two grown children. He served as a teacher at Staples Technical College in Minnesota for many years before attending Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. He graduated from seminary in 2007 and was ordained that same year.

He served in two ELCA congregations until 2010 and left to form Mission Lutheran Church (LCMC) in Williston, ND. He was soon asked to also serve Trinity Lutheran in Alexander, ND, and assisted them as they left the ELCA.

Light of Christ Lutheran Church and Mission Lutheran Church will be voting at their next annual meeting to formalize their merger. Pastor Kevin is very happy to be serving the people of God in these and many other ways.



Photos by Gretchen Baker

Baker Installed at St. Paul's Lutheran Congregation

Rev. Ben Baker was installed at St. Paul Lutheran Congregation Tripoli, IA, on Sunday, December 12, 2021. The Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins served as officiant for the installation. Also in attendance were two former pastors of the St. Paul congregation: Rev. Robert Salge and Rev. John Block.

Rev. Baker also serves the parish of St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church in Traer, IA; members of St. Luke were in attendance for the installation service at St. Paul. Following the service, the Women of L.I.F.E. served a delicious lasagna lunch.



The American Association of Lutheran Churches

921 East Dupont Road, #920

Fort Wayne, IN 46825-1551

Address Service Requested



The
American Association
of Lutheran Churches

The Evangel — Issue 204

March/April 2022

The American Association of Lutheran Churches

Phone: (260) 452-3213

Email: theaalc@taalc.org

Visit Us On The Web
www.taalc.org

Please be in prayer for and consider contributing to these upcoming editions:

July/Aug theme: 35th Anniversary of The Evangel (deadline May 1)

Sept/Oct theme: AALC Biennial Convention (deadline July 1)

Church News: *The Evangel* welcomes submissions of what's happening in your congregation, such as:

- Anniversaries of clergy ordination or installations
- Church activities or celebrations
- Men's and women's events
- Youth and children's activities
- Outreach or community events
- AALC clergy obituaries

To submit content, email the editor Gretchen Baker:
theevangel@taalc.org

Or mail: St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church, Attn: Gretchen Baker,
207 Taylor St., Traer, IA 50675