

# The EVANGEL

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THE LORD THY GOD  
THOU SHALT HAVE  
GODS BUT ME

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## Letter From the Editor

**G**reetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! This edition of *The Evangel* focuses on the Ten Commandments portion of Luther's Small Catechism. I encourage you, as we delve deeper into formative Lutheran teachings, to read along with our topics in the catechism. I promise that there isn't a lot of reading to be done, in fact, the catechism is called "small" for good reason. And don't worry. The catechism was not meant to be a heady, out-of-touch theological treatise—rather, it was meant for parents to teach their children the basics of the faith. Moreover, we as Christians are called to be "like children," so it is important that we return to these teachings of our church, and learn from them. We will never arrive at a point where these truths are not applicable in our daily lives.

We have many exciting events coming up this year for our Association: our "Hold The Line!" conferences throughout the year, our National Convention in June, our Pastors' Retreat, and various other regional conferences. If you find yourself at one of these events, please consider submitting a picture, and/or a short article. If you are unfamiliar with these events, I encourage you to go to [www.taalc.org](http://www.taalc.org) to look up more information under "Event Calendar."

To submit articles for upcoming editions of *The Evangel*, please email them to me at [theevangel@taalc.org](mailto:theevangel@taalc.org), or mail them to 425 E Lincoln Ave. Watseka, IL, 60970. Please include the author's name and photo credit, along with a way to contact you (either a phone number or email address). The May/June edition theme is the First Article of the Creed: Creation, due March 15. If you wish to submit to the July/August edition, the due date is May 15, and the topic is the Second Article of the Creed: Redemption.

In Christ,  
Lisa Cooper

# Passion for the Catechism

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

**M**artin Luther was passionate about the catechism. His was a life-long commitment to the reading and study, memorization and recitation of the catechism. Luther knew that some people thought the catechism was of little value. They said that it was infantile or simplistic. Luther thought just the opposite. As he wrote in the “Longer Preface” to the *Large Catechism*:

But for myself I say this: I am also a doctor and preacher; yes, as learned and experienced as all the people who have such assumptions. Yet I act as a child who is being taught the catechism. Every morning—and whenever I have time—I read and say, word for word, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Psalms, and such. I must still read and study them daily. Yet I cannot master the catechism as I wish. But I must remain a child and pupil of the catechism, and am glad to remain so.

Dr. Luther was adamant in his insistence that pastors should continually study the catechism for their own edification. However, he found that many pastors neither prayed the Lord’s Prayer, nor read the catechism, nor the Bible. Indeed, Luther rebuked such lazy pastors and preachers because they were not only lax in their own spiritual discipline, but they were negligent in providing for the spiritual care of their congregational members. They did not teach and preach the catechism and the Bible. For this reason, they were remiss in their duty to properly instruct the people.



What was lost through this pastoral neglect? On the one hand, the people were without right understanding of the fundamentals of the faith. Without proper understanding of the catechism and God’s Word, they were without basic truths that guide, correct, encourage, and console the Christian heart. On the other hand, the people were without the necessary weapons to withstand the assaults of “the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts.” Luther declared that there was no stronger power to repel the devil than to speak, sing, and meditate on God’s commandments (Longer Preface, *Large Catechism*).

It is clear that Martin Luther was committed to daily study and recitation of the catechism and the Bible. They were the source of his spiritual strength and the weapons of his spiritual warfare. With that in mind, during the year 2018, *The Evangel* will focus attention on the various parts of the catechism. This issue focuses our attention on the Ten Commandments. Future editions will discuss the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Sacraments.

Dr. Luther would remind us to study and memorize our catechism and Bible. He would urge pastors today to use the catechism and Bible for their personal devotions and spiritual disciplines, and to preach and teach them regularly. He would exhort every member of the body of Christ to receive the precious treasures of the catechism and Bible daily, from childhood through adult life. In the catechism and the Holy Bible, we are given the fundamentals of our most holy faith. To them, we must return each new day!

# Letter from The Rev. Shields

## Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing to you about a major change in my life and my service in The AALC. I submitted my resignation as President of the American Lutheran Theological Seminary, effective January 1, 2018. The Commission on Higher Education has extended me a contract for 18 months as Professor of Exegetical Theology; I will begin this work January 1, 2018.

This past July while at the Youth Gathering I fell and broke my shoulder. The immediate impact limited my abilities in the first five weeks. Over the past five months, while the bone has healed, it wasn't long before I discovered how much the fall affected me beyond the broken bone. In the past three months it has become evident that I will never be the same in abilities, and therefore unable to faithfully fulfill all the duties required of the Seminary President. This is even more critical as the seminary continues to grow and expand beyond immediate responsibilities.

On the one hand, I am saddened by these diminished changes; on the other hand, I have realized that this is my new normal. And I am at peace with the changes in my life and with my decision.

I began serving as President ProTem of ALTS in June 2007, then I was elected as President in convention in 2008, 2012, and 2016. Over that ten plus year period many people have supported, encouraged, and taught me much about the seminary, service, and ministry. At each point of forward movement their advice was critical. I thank all of you.

When I first was appointed, the Rev. Dr. Lindberg took me aside and said that he and Mardell would pray for me every day. Over the past 10½



years, every time I see him, he repeats that refrain. I so appreciated those prayers especially on the toughest days. Thank you both. May that be a heritage we all follow for the new seminary President.

The Seminary President serves on many commissions: Clergy Commission, Commission on Doctrine and Church Relations, Commission on Church Workers. It has been a pleasure to work with all who have served faithfully in these roles. In addition, Commission on Higher Education works closely with the Seminary President. I thank them for their work over the years, and especially in the last two years under the leadership of Emily Gerken. I had the privilege of participating in National Staff meetings, being a frequent guest for Executive Committee, Association Council, and Joint Council meetings. The growing relationships in each situation is a treasured part of my experience as President.

One of my weaker areas of service is administrative responsibilities. Two men, Rev. Greg Stenzel and Rev. Joe Dapelo, have served as Administrators of The AALC. They have been gifted and proved beneficial to me over the past 10 years. Thank you for your work, support, and encouragement. You are blessings to many, and to me in particular. And a third is Bonnie Ohlrich, who has served faithfully for the seminary. Her experience, perseverance, and attention to detail have particularly benefitted me and the seminary. Thank you, Bonnie.

I extend my thanks and blessings to our seminarians. You have committed yourselves to study the Bible, our confessions and doctrine, church history, pastoral and ministry service, and more. Thank you for your dedication. You have made my time as Seminary President worthwhile, and I consider each of you brothers and sisters in Christ. Also, I have appreciated the men who have stepped up to teach in our seminary: the Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, the Rev. Jordan Cooper, the Rev. Dr. Craig Henningfield, the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Pulse (CTSFW), Dr. Adam Francisco (Concordia, Irvine), the Rev. Dave Spotts, and the Rev. Dr. Tim Dost (CSL). Your dedication to shaping our future pastors and church workers is commended; you have made ALTS what it is. Thank you.

I first met Dr. Leins during his clergy interview in 2010. Over the years we became close friends. And in the last four years we have become prayer partners, brothers who encourage and support each other. On a personal level, I pray that all pastors and seminarians could find a friend like him. Our pattern is openness, discussion, and prayer. Many times our conversations were not scheduled, but happened at just the right time. Further, Dr. Leins exhibits what it means to be a true churchman; by that I do not mean a politician, but a man commit-

ted to the church overall, and for faithfulness in our confession of the faith in all relationships. God raised him up at the right time for me in service to our church body. Thank you, Dr. Leins for all you have done for and with me.

I would like to extend my thanks to the members of Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran Church over the past 6½ years. You have prayed for me, taught me about prayer in practice, and have been a constant source of Christian encouragement. Especially in the past six months you have gone out of your way to help me and Cindy. Finally I am thankful for my wife, Cindy. Soon we will celebrate 47 years as husband and wife. We have been through so much, and she has consistently supported me, during the years of extended travel, and stepped into roles in so many ways. In my recent recovery, she was my nurse, therapist, and caregiver, far beyond the call of duty. May her tribe be multiplied

Ultimately all this happened because of God's mercy and grace working in many people together as the Body of Christ. I offer praise to Him for His faithfulness throughout the years. The following Scriptures have informed and formed me in teaching and service:

For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. (1 Cor. 2:2)

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)

Thank you for the privilege of serving God and our church body.

In Christ,

Rev. Richard Shields

# Uses or Functions of the Law

*by The Rev. Richard Shields*

## Three Functions of the Law

As Lutherans we have historically looked at the Law as applied in three ways (uses or functions).

### 1<sup>st</sup> Use (Order in Society):

According to this first category, Law functions to maintain order in society. In this use the Law applies to everyone. For instance, there is not one speed limit for Christians and another speed limit for non-Christians. Rather, the speed limit of 65 mph on the highway is enforced for everyone: Christian, and non-Christian.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Use (Demand and Punishment):

The Law is specifically applied to show people their sin(s). This use also applies to everyone. The Law is the standard for all behavior of all people. As a summary of the Law, the 10 Commandments speak what is right and wrong with thoughts, acts, and words. When God uses the Law in this way, the Law only demands performance and compliance. The Law further threatens punishments when sin occurs.

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God... (Romans 3:19, NAS)

### Gospel:

After the demanding, relentless application of the 2<sup>nd</sup> use, devastated by the Law, the person finds no escape from its judgment. But, God provides the solution to this dilemma by sending His Son, Jesus. Jesus fulfilled all demands of the Law for all people. This involves two aspects:

- 1) Positively, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the demands of the Law. As a result, in faith the divine exchange occurs. Paul wrote about it this way:  
He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:21, NAS)
- 2) Negatively, Jesus suffered the consequences of our sin. His death on the cross became the death every person deserved. Peter wrote about this:

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18, NAS)

Thus, faith in Jesus receives both the positive declaration of God's righteousness as its own, and avoids the eternal consequences of failing under the Law. At this point, the person is totally free from the accusations and punishments of the Law. And many want to stop there. But does Scripture stop there?

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Use (Inform and Form):

How does the Law function for someone who receives all these blessings from Christ in the Gospel? In essence, the person says, "God, how can I please You? I know that in Jesus You are completely and fully pleased with me because of what He has done for me. But I am so thankful I want to live for You, serve You, and please You." God then points to the Law in a different way. At this point, the Law describes how a delivered/saved person lives.

Of course, the minute someone sins, then the Law is used to point out that sin and demand punishment (2<sup>nd</sup> use). This continues throughout the life of the Christian.

### Mosaic Law: Exodus 20

So often the listing of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 (and in Deuteronomy 5) is categorized as 2<sup>nd</sup> use of the Law (demands and punishments). But is that how the text presents it? No, it isn't. Let's look at the passage in context.

Exodus 20:1-2 Then God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

Notice that the prelude to the commandments is as statement of Gospel: "I brought you out," so the context of the ten commandments is really 3<sup>rd</sup> use: "This is how My delivered people live."

Sadly, some translations give a false understanding of the 3<sup>rd</sup> use of the Law in Exodus 20. For example, notice how God's Word translation of Ex. 20:13-15 allows only a 2<sup>nd</sup> use of the Law (CSB leans this direction also).

"Never murder.

Never commit adultery.

Never steal." (GW)

Compare how NAS uses "shall" in the historic double sense of command and description.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal." (NAS)

Thus, the context shows that the Law in its 3<sup>rd</sup> use is not threatening or demanding. Rather it informs and forms the ones who have been delivered. Instead of the Law being a burden, it is a delight. The Psalms give us numerous examples of such an attitude toward the Law.

But his delight is in the law of the LORD,

and in His law he meditates day and night. (Ps. 1:2)

I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart." (Ps. 40:8)

I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word. (Ps 119:16)

Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors. (Ps 119:24)

Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it. (Ps 119:35)

I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love. (Ps 119:47)

And the list continues. So, throughout the Old Testament we find the 3<sup>rd</sup> use of the Law. It is not oppressive, but a delight to the redeemed/saved/delivered people.

### Three Uses in the New Testament

When we turn to the New Testament we find the 3<sup>rd</sup> use frequently. Romans is probably the clearest because Paul writes with all three functions:

**1<sup>st</sup> Use: Romans 1:18-32 (Law to prevent outbreaks of sin in society)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Use: Romans 3:19-20 (and many other places)**

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and **all the world may become accountable to God**; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

### Gospel: Romans 3:21-2

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God [2<sup>nd</sup> function again] being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Function: Romans 12:1-2

Usually you can detect the 3<sup>rd</sup> use when you see the word "therefore."

*Therefore* I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

### Ephesians 2:1-10

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Use of Law: Ephesians 2:1-3

#### Gospel: Ephesians 2:8-9

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Use of Law: Ephesians 2:10

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

### Conclusion

From this cursory perspective, we see that God uses the Law in three ways: to maintain order in society; to condemn sin and bring punishment to the sinner; and to inform and form the one who receives by faith all that Jesus has done. The Law no longer is a burden, but a delight. We do a disservice to Scriptures when we claim that the Law no longer speaks to the one who believes in Jesus Christ. In fact, we set the Christian adrift because of the inner struggle of pleasing God and self (Romans 7:14-20).

I encourage you to read carefully the Biblical texts and see whether the statement of Law is 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> use. You might be surprised. You might be delighted. You might be encouraged.

# The Eighth Commandment

## *A Call to Honest Humility*

By The Rev. Dave Spotts

I've got a confession to make. It's not pleasant. But please bear with me. I work in an environment where I am provoked to violate the eighth commandment. And this happens just about every day. I bet I'm not alone.

Let's have a quick review. From [www.bookofconcord.org](http://www.bookofconcord.org) we can find Luther's small catechism discussing the commandment. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but defend him, [think and] speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything."

So why is this so difficult? I'm an academic, ministering to academic communities. I hang out with many people who have multiple college degrees. You can probably picture me engaging in intellectual discourses about philosophy, history, world events, and research projects. No, we don't walk around in our academic robes. That's Cambridge.

Here's why we fight so hard with the eighth commandment. At least it's why I fight so hard with it. I think I know what's right. I like things to make sense. And there are only particular ways that any situation will make sense. When we add up the facts and reach a different conclusion than someone else, our first reaction is simple. "I'm right and you're stupid."

What does the catechism tell us again? "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but defend him, [think and] speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything."

**Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**

***What does this mean?***

**We should fear and love God that we may not deceitfully belie, betray, slander, or defame our neighbor, but defend him, [think and] speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything."**

[www.bookofconcord.org](http://www.bookofconcord.org)

I was reading a book not long ago. It should be able to illustrate the process, a progression of repentance. Here's what happened as I moved from my initial thoughts to my actual statements in light of the commandment.

"What in the world is he saying? He must live in a fairyland. First off, nobody in the world actually writes a paragraph by lifting nonsense phrases and sentences from other sources and pasting them together. Second, he seems to think the person who pasted the sentences together didn't have a brain in his head because it's such a bad cut and paste job. I know third grad-

ers who write more coherent paragraphs than that. And the author's view of slavery, women's issues, and period economy is patently false. What a moron!"

Yes, that was my real reaction to a page in a book which will remain nameless. I'm also avoiding mention of the author's name here.

If I were to say all that, it wouldn't really count as deceitful speech. But it does defame the person. He does have a Ph.D. from a prestigious institution. He has a lot of publications on his record, many more than I do. He's more of an expert than I, which is why I am reading the book.

How can I put the best construction on what he said? I can't say he is right. He isn't. Is he stupid? No, I'd better assume he is mistaken and didn't take all the available evidence into account. I'd be open to that charge as well. It's fair to make it against anyone. What can I actually say then?



“This author assumes that the document in question was a collage of different sources, assembled to promote a particular viewpoint. The document, seen this way, may have been used as a means of persuading people in the community to think more highly of women and of enslaved people than they might have otherwise. In such a community there could have been greater upward mobility than in the larger society, thus making it an attractive sect of Christianity. The author fails to compare different Christian communities in this regard, but only makes comparison to secular communities, often at very different times and places. Therefore, we can’t immediately read too much into his conclusions.”

I’ve gone from assuming that I’m right and the other guy is stupid to assuming that I’m right and the other guy is neglecting some important factors in his argument. I’m treating him fairly. I still think I’m right. But I’ve been able to change my focus to his actual use of information rather than his character.

We face this battle in other areas of our lives as well. “That mechanic cheated me. He didn’t figure out what was wrong with my car but he charged me \$600 anyway.” Then again, he worked at finding a solution, and he worked on it for a long time, using the training that he had and the specialized knowledge he could come up with. It might take longer, or maybe someone else would think of the actual solution.

“My elected officials are all crooks. They only think about other people.” Then again, maybe they are thinking about ways to be fair to all people and you happen to be in a group that won’t have as much to gain this time. Maybe you will next time. Maybe your elected officials are doing the best they can under the circumstances to make policy that will be helpful, at least as well as they understand it.

“My boss is just mean.” Yep. You are too. I wonder what developed that characteristic? Maybe you’d better pray for your boss, and for yourself as well.

No matter our walk in life, no matter the kind of people we deal with, we all run afoul of God’s commands. We fail to love and serve our neighbor. Thanks be to God that in Christ we can receive forgiveness for all our sin and guilt. We repent and seek the good after all.

*Pastor Spotts is a missionary campus pastor, caring for students, faculty, staff, and administration of the collegiate communities in Columbia Missouri. He also serves as an instructor at the American Lutheran Theological Seminary.*



# Worship Matters

by *The Rev. Nathan Hoff*

According to Church researcher and consultant, Carey Nieuwhof,

“People who attend church are attending less often. People who used to attend every week are attending 3 times a month. People who were around twice a month often now show up once a month. And attenders who used to come once a month are showing up half a dozen times a year.” ([www.careynieuwhof.com](http://www.careynieuwhof.com))

We don't track an individual's attendance at Trinity, but since each service has between 50-100 in worship, we usually notice when someone is missing. My sense is that we have more attenders attending less often. This is not meant to be a guilt-inducing article that reintroduces “days of obligation” or any other kind of legalism. It is also not aimed at inquirers who are checking out the Christian faith or life in the church. This article is intended for people who are following Jesus, who are members of his body, and who seek to live as his disciple. Here are some reasons why regular worship matters.

## Worship Matters to Others

A few weeks before Harry Nelson went home to be with the Lord, as he lay in his rehabilitation room, he grabbed my shirt and brought me close to his face, as if I was hard of hearing, and said, “Tell the people at Trinity I miss them. I really do.” He hadn't been able to hear for a few years. It wasn't the preaching, music, nor was it the programs that made Harry consider coming to worship valuable. He came because he was a member of the body of Christ, and therefore connected to every other member. He needed us, and we needed him. Someone was missing when Harry was missing.



Someone is missing when you are missing!

The writer to the Hebrews addresses this. “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24-25, ESV). When we show up to worship with other believers, the writer calls it an encouragement. What kind of encouragement happens when a deaf man comes to worship? There are some common old lingering questions and doubts. “What am I getting out of this?” “I have nothing valuable to

bring.” “Nobody notices when I'm there or not.” Those old questions or doubts are not true! When we show up to worship with others, we are, among other important things, valuing others.

Who knows the divine appointment God has for you on a Sunday morning when you are walking in or out. Or, maybe an unexpected encounter when you are sitting next to someone during prayer time. Or, maybe it is as simple as a gift or a job, recognized or unrecognized, that you have been given by the Lord of the Church.

## Worship Matters to You!

Recently, I (Nathan) have been engrossed in two books that introduced me to a new word: habitus. Alan Kreider writes in [The Patient Ferment of the Early Church](#),

“The ongoing energizing center of Christian communal life...was worship. Christians claimed that week after week they encountered God in wor-

ship—from the heart (affective) as well as from the head (mental). Further, their worship was from the body. Their encounter of God in worship involved bodily gestures and rites that become habitual, repetitive, reflexive ways of being” (185).

The other author is James K.A. Smith in [You Are What You Love](#). He makes the point that we have been formed, disciplined, habituated as a citizen of this culture, and as he puts it, “The practices of Christian worship train our love—they are practice for the coming kingdom, habituating us a citizens of the kingdom of God” (25). Basically, we don’t so much form habits as habits form us! And the habit of regular worship with the body of Christ is incredibly powerful over time. In fact, I am convinced that we have high expectations for one-time-events, and low expectations for long term habits. Lets raise our expectation for long term habits. I bet we don’t even realize the transformational power those habits have. The habit of regular worship has benefits beyond these. Do a simple search of “benefits of going to church” on the internet and you will find articles and videos from unlikely sources like the New York Times, Washington Post, and CNN making claims and giving statistics about regular church attendance that would sound like exaggeration if I or an overtly Christian source made them. Regular worship matters for you!

### **Worship Matters to God**

God has made clear that corporate worship matters to him. He wants to meet with us together. God has something to say to us: a common word. God has something to give to us at a common table. God has something to do to us: to forgive and equip and fill us! God made us for relationship with him. In Genesis 3 it says of Adam and Eve, “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord called to the man and said, “Where are you?” Imagine that the God who created you shows up for the connection he has planned with us, but we are missing. I can hear his voice again, “Where are you?”

It is certainly possible to meet with the Lord individually any day and any where, and we should! But God has given the means of grace, an open heaven, to his church, the communal body of his Son, Jesus Christ (John 20.22; Matthew 28.19-20; 1 Corinthians 10.16). He has attached this promise to the congregation, “For where two or three

are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” (Matthew 18:20, ESV). And after our hands, hearts, and minds are open to receive they are ready to respond in unified praise and thanksgiving.

Worshipping God even made the top ten suggestions commandments. The first command to “have no other gods” and the second command’s meaning to “call upon him, pray to him, praise him, and give him thanks” speak to the primacy of God’s place in our hearts. The third commandment speaks to the primacy of God’s place in our time. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” The Catechism’s meaning says, “We should fear and love God, and so we should not despise his Word and the preaching of the same, but deem it holy and gladly hear and learn it.” Worship matters to God!

### **Worship Matters to the Movement**

This point will take some sanctified imagination. Do you know that feeling when we are all together at one service? We try it sometimes in August or after Christmas. There is something in the atmosphere when the room is full and everyone is singing or even confessing! If all of us showed up nearly every week (excepting sickness or travel, of course), the dynamic would change in our community. Instead of dreaming of church planting out of possibility, we would have to do it out of necessity! If a local congregation invited us to help them revitalize, we would be ready!

You could scale down this point as well. I have had a few conversations with young adults who say, “I love Trinity, but it would be great if there were a more vital young adult group.” I couldn’t agree more! We actually have a pretty good sized young adult group, but they are scattered across three services. What if someone in that young adult group (we have some great mature young adults), emailed everyone else and said, “Hey, lets all meet at Trinity at the 10am worship service, then have a picnic at the Korean Bell. Someone bring a frisbee.” A simple movement begins. Ministry happens!

C. S. Lewis recognized how important regular worship is for the agenda of God in this world.

“Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. When you go to church you are really listening-in to the secret wireless from our friends: that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going” (Mere Christianity, 51).

# Operation Christmas Child

by Vicki Wilhelm

This past summer, members of Bible Lutheran Church in Dodge Center, Minnesota were a part of packing shoe box gifts for Operation Christmas Child. Operation Christmas Child is a project of Samaritan's Purse, a Christian worldwide ministry. In Operation Christmas Child, people pack shoeboxes full of gifts: fun toys, school supplies and hygiene items, and they are hand delivered to children in need around the world to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way. For many of these children, the gift filled shoebox is the first gift they have ever received. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child, the world's largest Christmas project of its kind, has collected and delivered more than 146 million shoebox gifts to children in more than 160 countries and territories.



Anyone can pack a shoebox. Bible Lutheran Church has helped pack many shoe box gifts, filling them with basic hygiene items, school supplies and fun toys. Each box includes a "wow" item like a doll, a stuffed animal, or a flashlight, so when the child opens this precious gift and sees what's inside, they say, "Wow!" Our goal is to have a quality shoebox gift and a full shoebox gift. We want our gift to be God's best. A standard size shoe box may have more than 40 items so that there is plenty of variety.

An example of one of the boxes that Bible Lutheran church packed contained the following for an older boy: paper, a sudoku book, pencils, markers, crayons, glue sticks, shoe laces, pens, wash cloth, comb, puzzle, toothbrushes, screw drivers, lunch balloon, deodorant, toy car, pliers, dominoes, scissor, erasers, pencil sharpener, ball, floss, nail clipper, checkers game, T-shirt, tissues, wood shop construction toy, with a 'wow' gift of a flashlight and batteries.

Every gift-filled shoebox is a powerful tool for evangelism and discipleship, transforming the lives of children and their families through the Good News of Jesus Christ. Each child who receives a shoebox gift hears the Good News of Jesus: that He loves them, He died for their sins on the cross, and that they can come to know Him in a personal way when they put their trust in Him.

For the first time, Bible Lutheran Church was one of the five thousand drop off locations during National Collection Week; November 13th to 20th. The church was a beacon in the community for people to drop off their gift filled shoeboxes during National Collection Week, and then the shoebox gifts were transported to the Processing Center in Minneapolis, which sends them to the children around the world. The church members packed 400 boxes, and the community and surrounding area packed a grand total of 1702 boxes.

Thank you for your partnership in sharing the Gospel around the world through a simple shoe box gift!



# Job Opportunity:

## St. Peter's Lutheran School

### Position: School Administrator/Principal

St. Peter's Lutheran School in Elk Grove, California is seeking a full-time school administrator/principal with a mature and vibrant faith who strongly values Christian education and is committed to integrating a Christian worldview into all classroom instruction.

The school administrator is expected to be a capable leader, articulate communicator, and have strong interpersonal relationship skills. The position will begin on August 1, 2018.

### Candidates should also meet the following minimum job qualifications:

Be Lutheran, and a member of St. Peter's Lutheran School, or be willing to become a member.

Previous teaching experience, preferably in a Christian school.

Previous administration experience.

B.A. or B.S. with a teaching credential. An administrative credential is desirable.

St. Peter's Lutheran School is a Christian school, preschool-eighth grade, with approximately 200 students. It is a ministry of St. Peter's Lutheran Church.

To apply, please call the school office at 916.689.3050 to request an employment application. Additional information will be provided with the application.

All completed applications must be submitted via email to [applications@splseagles.org](mailto:applications@splseagles.org).

# Prayer Bookmark

## March

1. Faith Lutheran *Columbus, ND*
2. Rev. Jordan Cooper
3. Commission on Higher Education
4. Faith Lutheran Church *Holstein, IA*
5. Rev. Joseph Christina
6. The Women of LIFE
7. Faith Lutheran Church *Watseka, IL*
8. Rev. Joseph Marsh
9. Dss. Brigitte Gassman
10. First Evangelical Lutheran Church  
*Parshall, ND*
11. Rev. Len Brokenshire
12. Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church  
*San Diego, CA*
13. Dss. Kathy Awtrey
14. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
*Franklin, NC*
15. Todd Baio, Seminary Student
16. Prison Chaplains
17. Rev. Mark Homp
18. Hospital Chaplains
19. Grace Ev. Lutheran Church of  
*Deephaven Wayzata, MN*
20. Rev. Michael Badenhop
21. Nigel Brown, Seminary Student
22. Grace Lutheran Church *Nunda, SD*
23. Rev. Michael 'Myke' Main
24. Nathan Rinne, Seminary Student
25. Lutheran Church of Myanmar
26. Rev. Nathan Hoff
27. Hope Lutheran Church *Brighton, IA*
28. Rev. Norman C. Hoffeld
29. Dss. Susan Scott
30. Seminary Professors
31. Hope Lutheran Church *Hampton, VA*

# Prayer Bookmark

April

1. Rev. Norman R. Beighley
2. The AALC Foundation
3. Kongsvinger Lutheran Church *Oslo, MN*
4. Angie Wagner, Master of Arts Student
5. Rev. Paul Hueter
6. That God would raise up church leaders
7. Lake Madison Lutheran Church  
*Rutland/Nunda, SD*
8. Michael Callahan, Seminary Student
9. Rev. Phillip Hofinga
10. Light of Christ Lutheran Church  
*Williston, ND*
11. The Association Council
12. Lucky Mound Lutheran Church  
*Parshall, ND*
13. Rev. Poul Erik Norgaard
14. Faith Rosebrough, Master of Arts Student
15. Mighty Fortress Ev. Lutheran Church  
*Seward, NE*
16. Kris Johnson, Seminary Student
17. Rev. Ray E. Lorthioir, Jr.
18. Mountain View Lutheran Church  
*Thornton, CO*
19. Parish Education Commission
20. New Hope Lutheran Church  
*Newfolden, MN*
21. Rev. Robert G. Snitzer
22. Rev. Scott Neumann
23. Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church  
*Williston, ND*
24. Janet Price, Master of Arts Student
25. Rev. Rusty Phillips
26. Those who are grieving
27. Our Savior Lutheran Church *Piqua, OH*
28. Matthew Kolden, Seminary Student
29. Peace Lutheran Church *Defiance, OH*
30. Rev. Rich Shields



AALC

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of The American Association of Lutheran Churches

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*Galatians 3:13*

**June 26-29, 2018**

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Double Room Occupancy: \$300 per person  
Single Room Occupancy: \$330 per person

*Mark your calendar and plan to attend!*

# An Occasion & An Opportunity

## The 12th Night Dinner at Christ Lutheran, Germantown, MD

By The Rev. Irvin Stapf

Christmas is preceded by many necessary preparations, and frantic shopping. The Christmas Eve service is wonderful, but Christmas Day comes quickly, and then it is over. People then look for after Christmas bargains, and where to exchange unneeded gifts. But between Christmas and Epiphany on January 6th there are the traditional twelve days of Christmas. At Christ Lutheran we have tried to emphasize those twelve days in a number of ways over past years. This year we used the Pastor's fictional account of the Wise Men on their thousand mile journey from the east, broken up into twelve segments with a family devotion for each day. The remembrance culminated with the Twelfth Night Dinner for congregation and friends.

As always, there was good food and fellowship; Bob Petersen provided some special music—some serious, but also with a lot of good humor and laughs.



There was a gift exchange. A \$5 maximum-per-gift, and the ability to exchange (steal) someone else's gift if you liked it better. Everyone went home with something, and young Stephen especially enjoyed the gift wrapping. The Pastor had a brief reading and comments from his devotional book. There was even time for a quick birthday celebration. Fortunately, there were only four candles available. The evening was concluded with carol singing.

Mrs. Jeane Flesch, and a few other willing hands made this evening possible. With some creative imagination a few of our annual days can be made meaningful gatherings.



The American Association of Lutheran Churches

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