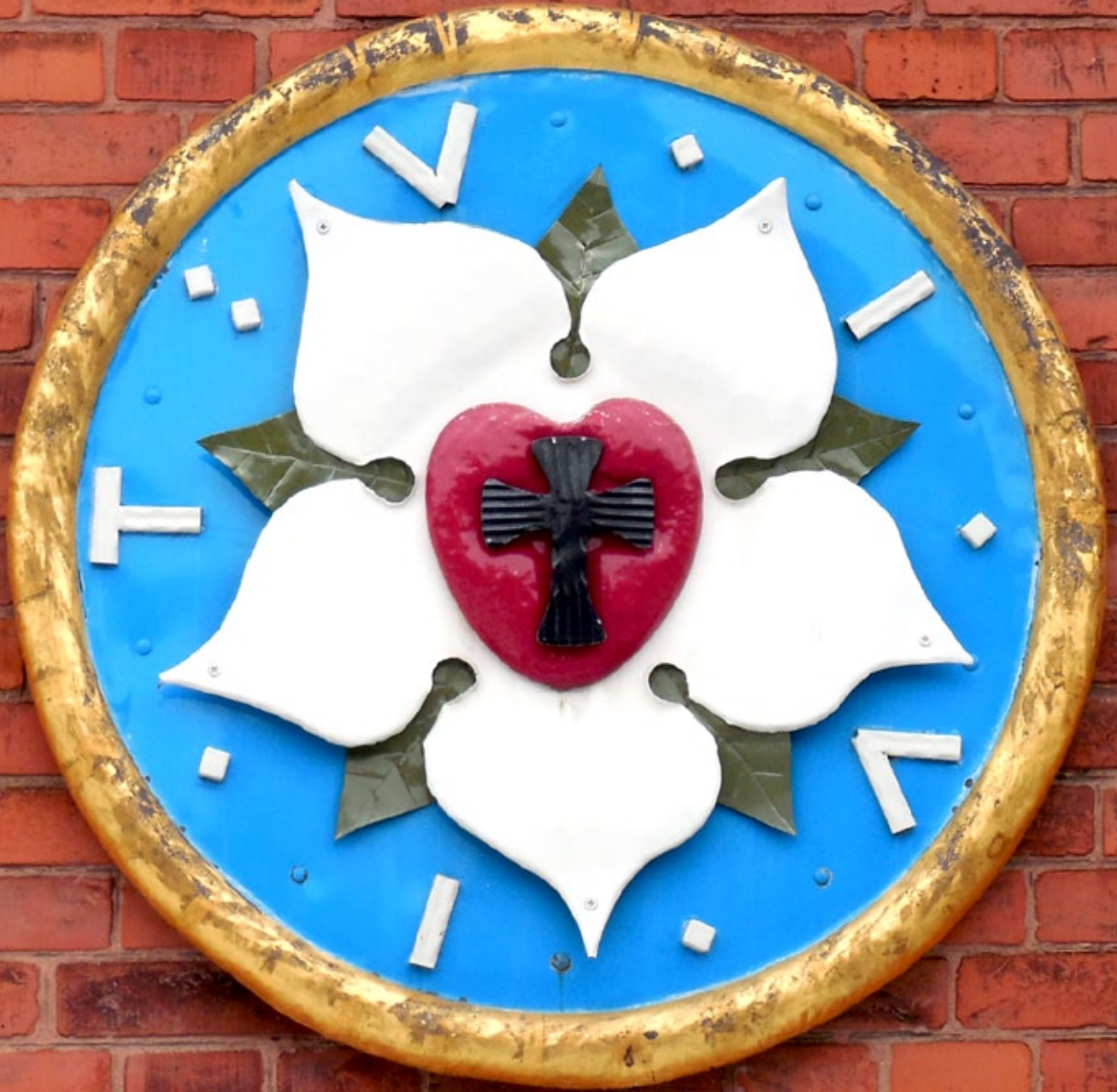


The EVANGEL

Issue No. 180—November/December 2016

A Publication of The American Association of Lutheran Churches



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Editor: Lisa Cooper

Layout & Design: Lynette Macias

Letter From the Editor

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and savior! I am pleased to present to you this edition of The Evangel. The theme of this issue is faith and Lutheran identity. I thought it applicable with the coming of Reformation Day to focus on the distinctive nature of Lutheran belief and practice. This is the beginning of a three-part series of The Evangel on faith, hope, and love.

My hope is that by focusing on the joint identity we have—that we are indeed saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone—we will be edified and strengthened in our confession, and in our unity. As you will notice, our prayer bookmark in this edition focuses on praying for specific churches in our association. Because we are a small association, we can pray for one another by name. What a blessing that is!

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1-2, NKJV). We have received pardon for our transgressions, peace with God, a righteous standing before Him, and innumerable other gifts of God through Christ Jesus. God continues to bless us through his Word and Sacraments, bringing us to repentance and strengthening our faith in Him. This is the good news that unites us as Christians.

In Christ,
Lisa Cooper

I will be accepting submissions for the next edition of The Evangel on the topic of hope and the season of Advent. Of course, I am always interested in publishing articles about the ministries and events happening at your churches as well. Please send submissions, complete with the title, the author’s name, and picture credit to me at theevangel@taalc.org or for snail mail, send to Attn: Lisa Cooper 425 E. Lincoln Avenue, Watseka IL 60970.

Reformation Celebration

by TAALC Presiding Pastor Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins

A Clear Voice

For almost 200 years, voices in the church had been clamoring for religious reform. John Wycliffe (1320 c.-1384), seminary professor and Bible translator, opposed the opulent wealth of the clergy and called for them to give up their property. His conflict with the church continued even after his death. Wycliffe was posthumously declared a heretic; his remains were exhumed from sacred ground and burned. John Huss (1373-1415), university professor and priest, cried out against the church's sale of indulgences. He was burned at the stake. Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), Dominican friar and preacher, also denounced the corruption of the church. When he was summoned to Rome by the Pope, Savonarola refused. After excommunication, he was hanged and burned. These were the predecessor voices to the Reformation. They denounced the church's practices and criticized the church's leaders. They condemned ecclesiastical exorbitance and the sale of indulgences. They supported Scriptural authority and Biblical translation into the vernacular. But, these faithful voices were muted and muzzled by ecclesiastical hierarchs, regional nobility, and the momentum of cultural tradition.

On October 31st, 1517, a new voice rang out. It was clear and strong, scriptural and specific. It articulated a list of grievances with the church, 95 Theses for debate. Throughout the country and across the continent, Dr. Martin Luther's Theses denounced the impious practices of a sinful church. Luther abhorred

the indulgence industry that terrorized God's children with the fires of purgatory until they paid the church for the release of their souls. He railed against the false theology that claimed that the sacrifice of



Christ and the benefits of the Cross could be purchased with money. He vilified those who used their churchly positions to defraud the poor and deceive the biblically uneducated. With the posting of his 95 Theses on the Wittenberg Church door, Luther began a career that would last almost 40 years, as the great reformer of the Christian church.

There are many things for which Luther is famous and many positive results of the Reformation. For the sake of brevity, let us focus on three. Luther taught that:

We are **justified by grace through faith** in Jesus Christ, apart from any works of our own. All of the work that is necessary for salvation has been accomplished by Jesus Christ on the Cross and there is nothing that should be or can be added to it. There is nothing lacking in His all-sufficient work of atonement. By faith in Christ, God conducts "the great exchange." God imputes to Christ all of our sin; God imputes to us the complete righteousness of Christ.

Every baptized believer is a member of the **priesthood of all believers**. As such, we each have a holy vocation or calling. The first vocation of every believer is faith. This is our first and greatest calling. But, God has not only called us to Himself, He has placed us in the world. There, we have multiple vocations. Luther spoke of three institutions: 1) the

pastoral office or holy orders, 2) the household or family, and 3) society or civil government. A pastor is given a vocation from God, but so are a father, mother, sister, brother, husband and wife. These are holy vocations too. They are established by God and lived out through God. A third holy vocation involves servants and maids, builders and workers, judges and mayors. God has established and blesses these vocations as well. Instead of our faith removing us from the world, Luther proclaimed that our faith places us in the world, as the hands and heart of Christ.

The Holy Bible is **God's true and living Word**, a personal Word to each one of us. It tells the story of God's love and the truth of our disobedience. Most especially, it declares the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life to all believers through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God desires that none should perish, but that all should come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. For this reason, the Bible should be available to all people in a language that they can understand. God's Word is inspired, infallible, and inerrant, and the highest authority in all matters of faith and life.

500th Anniversary of the Reformation

October 31, 2017 will mark the 500th Anniversary of Luther's posting of the 95 Theses. We are grateful to God and to His faithful servant, Martin Luther, for reforming the church according to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. Surely, every TAALC pastor and congregation will be mindful of the significance of this celebration throughout the year. However, October 31st, Reformation Day and November 1st, All Saints' Day, will be days of extraordinary thanksgiving and celebration!

The AALC has planned special festivities for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation. Every pastor and every congregational member of our church body is invited! We will hold a two-day Festival Celebration: Tuesday, October 31st and Wednesday, November 1st, 2017. The event will take place at Grace Lutheran Church in Deephaven, Minnesota. Pr. Dan Sollie and the people of Grace Lutheran Church will host the event!

Though our plans are not fully formulated, this is the beginning of what we have in mind:

Each day will begin with Coffee and Fellowship from 9:00-9:30 AM.

Beginning at 9:30 AM, we will have two presentations.

A luncheon will be provided.

In the early afternoon, a third presentation will be given.

The first day, the presentations will focus on justification, the ministry, and the church. The second day, the presentations will focus on the beginning of the Christian life, living the Christian life, and the completion of the Christian life.

During the middle and late afternoon, folks will have free time to socialize or visit area locations.

A choir practice will be held at 2:00 PM to prepare for the evening worship.

Pr. Eric Ishimaru will be our Choir Master. Special music is being selected and will be sent to every TAALC congregation and choir. Any and all choristers are welcome to attend, rehearse, and sing with the Association Choir!

A Special Entertainment Surprise is being planned! Also, a Commemorative Gift will be given to every participant!

Each evening will conclude with a Service of Worship at 7:00 PM, featuring a Brass Ensemble, the Association Choir, and your favorite Lutheran hymns.

Our hope is that this will be one of the largest gatherings of The AALC in all of its history. Information about registration, overnight accommodations, and cost soon will be forthcoming!

Make plans now to attend! Registration will be limited to the first 330 people!

Pastoral Training in the Reformation Heritage

by The Rev. President Richard P. Shields

As Lutherans, we look back to the Reformation heritage, not just as a historical connection. Rather, the look back is faith based and faith shaped. That means we don't imitate the forms because the reformers used the forms. Nor do we simply repeat.

The world has changed in so many ways since the 16th century. But sin (in its many manifestations) has not changed. Nor has God's solution to unholy three: sin, death, and the devil. God forever dealt with them by having His Son, Jesus, live a perfect life, die for the sins of the whole world, and rise victorious over the unholy three. Our seminary follows the Reformation heritage because the message of salvation needs to be proclaimed in every age.

Note: The following comments have reference to the online Master of Theological Studies (MTS) degree, but concepts and principles apply as well to the on-campus Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (see <http://www.ctsfw.edu/about/student-consumer-information/academic-catalog/>)

The Base of the Reformation Heritage

Living in the Reformation heritage means to confess the same faith. We start with the Scriptures even as Luther and the other reformers did, and not church tradition. We study in four major areas of theology: Biblical, doctrinal, historical, and practical.

Biblical

For pastoral training in the Reformation Heritage, we ground our pastors in the study of the Scriptures. For that we train our seminarians in the original languages. For on-campus seminary training (Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne), our students receive both Hebrew and Greek instruction. For our online students they study Greek, but also are strongly encouraged to seek out Hebrew instruction.

Our goal is not just to teach books of the Bible but to give the seminarian the tools to grow throughout his life in that study. Thus, we begin with Hermeneutics, studying the principles of interpretation. The students expand their preparation to surveys of Old Testament and New Testament. After that, the students study specific books in both testaments. While they do not study every book, the learned processes of interpretation and

application in these books can be used in the further study of other books for continued growth and service as pastors.

Courses: Hermeneutics, Old Testament Survey, New Testament Survey, Pentateuch, Prophet, Synoptic Gospel, Pauline letter.

Doctrinal

A second priority for pastoral training is doctrinal examination and presentation of the Christian faith. For Lutherans, the Book of Concord (BoC) contains our formal statements of the Christian faith. The BoC was compiled in 1580, but they reach back to the earliest period of Christianity. The BoC includes the three Ecumenical Creeds (Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian). These three set our doctrinal heritage back to the beginning of the apostolic period and show the consistency of what we "believe, teach, and confess."

The BoC, also, includes documents from the Reformation era that deal with false teachings based on a thorough examination of the Biblical texts regarding each teaching. These documents include: Augsburg Confession (1530), Apology [defense] of the Augsburg Confession (1531), Luther's Small Catechism (1529), Luther's Large Catechism (1529), Smalcald Articles (1537), The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537), Formula of Concord (1577) (two parts: Epitome and Solid Declaration).

The clear center and focus of these confessional documents is: justification by grace (alone) through faith (alone) in Jesus Christ (alone), based on Scripture (alone). The word "alone" translates the Latin word *sola/solus*.

Courses: Theological Prolegomena, Law and Gospel, Confessions 1 & 2, Doctrine 1 & 2, Apologetics, Catechesis.

Historical

The Christian Church has existed for almost 2,000 years. The historical focus helps us to look at church movements, major theologians, major heresies, and Christian responses to each. This provides the students with the broad perspective of knowing why Church teaching is critical, and how that has opened the negative side (false

(Continued on Page 14)

Scripture Alone

by Angie Wagner

I've always been Lutheran. I've always known faith alone, Scripture alone, grace alone. I've always believed. But growing up in a small, rural, anabaptist community obscured the truth. When the majority of your friends maintain the proof is in the pudding, it's easy to get mixed up about the details of salvation. Today's global culture means all of us have easy access to all sorts of ideas about who Christ is and what it means to have faith. Without the solid foundation of the three *solas*, any of us might find ourselves wondering where to turn for the truth.

Despite the good foundation that had been laid, the arminian influences on my childhood were profound. I entered high school quite sure a personal relationship with my savior had to be established by a milestone prayer, maintained by my enthusiasm, and proven with the fruit that would surely fall as I grew in Christian devotion.

As I slogged through the muddy waters of temptation and regret that are high school, I began to doubt the sincerity of my 11 year old self asking Jesus into my heart. I certainly wasn't doing a good job of resisting the asteroid shower of sin and temptation that came with high school. It must not have worked. There must have been a glitch. I prayed God would change my heart and make me the holy child I wanted to be. I tried again and again.

My efforts continued through college, and even after my high school sweetheart and I married right after I turned 21. While working in a Christian bookstore, I shared my endless search for a church that would "feed" me; where I would really find God. An acquaintance swooped right in and reassured me she would "disciple" me in the way of Christian faith. I enthusiastically agreed.

My appetite for God's word had been ferocious my entire life. I had been reading, studying, and journaling for years. So, when I got to the discipleship meetings and was given a list of things to do to secure my salvation, I was both intrigued and confused. It seemed this girl thought that part of salvation was earning points by discipling other people. She was quite confident she and her church had cracked the code. But I knew for sure that there were no 'points,' and I came home from meetings with a list of questions a mile long.

Luther was my hero and like him, I felt there was nothing I could DO that would be enough. But for that very same reason, I just couldn't be sure of my salvation. I poured out my confusion to my husband—a Lutheran-educated boy who was tired of me dragging him around to churches that had no liturgy. He's a quiet man, but found the words: "Faith alone." Having the Scripture beat into him for 8 years was paying off and he knew right where to point me. Jesus died for us. It is finished. You only have to believe.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

Ephesians 2:8

My entire life I had been combing the Bible for the truth. Conflicting "interpretations" had misdirected and confused me, but I was looking in the right place. As I learned more about the Lutheran scholarship tradition, I was relieved and overjoyed to find a tradition that points back to

the Bible with every question, with every turn. Not to the self. Not to the world. But to the holy Word of God alone.

It is the Lutheran study of the Scriptures that taught me to check understanding of one passage with other passages. We use God's word to understand God's word. We recognize our human limitations to understand God's plan, we embrace the truth of the paradox of a rescued wretched life, and we always fall back on Scripture.

I want to do good things for Jesus. I always have. I want to prove my love to Him; to be a model of Christian love and a light for the world. But I'm not. Jesus is. And the only way the world is really going to know the saving Grace of God is if we are straight about what Jesus does: He rescues. He Saves. His love covers a multitude of sins and drags me up out of the mud to be with Him through no effort of my own. What the world needs isn't my example. What the world needs is the grace of Christ. Grace alone.

I think the Lutheran church I grew up in (going through it's own set of transitions in the 80's), did manage to teach me what might be the most important of the three solas. If we can't look confidently to the Scriptures, we have no knowledge or assurance of God's grace. What brought me back to the Lutheran tradition again and again has been the authority of the Scriptures. The path that Luther forged for me to have access to God's Word, is what has given me confident assurance of the truth about God's and mercy and grace.

"So that we might there read and see for ourselves....It is there that people like us should read and study, drill ourselves, and see what Christ is, for what purpose he has been given, how he was promised, and how all Scripture tends toward him."

Martin Luther, A Brief Instruction on What to Look for and Expect in the Gospels

A version of this piece was previously posted on www.theLutheranKnuckleheads.wordpress.com, and was reprinted with permission.

Angie Wagner is a new deaconess student at the American Lutheran Theological Seminary. She writes for www.shefindstruth.com, and hosts a podcast for Lutheran women with the same name. You can find her on Facebook and on Twitter by searching "She Finds Truth."



Making a Case for the Faith

By Lisa Cooper

Twice a year, Faith Lutheran Church in Wateska, IL hosts a "Mission Sunday" where we have a guest speaker and take extra donations for the various missions that we support. This last mission celebration, our church hosted the Rev. Stoner, our AALC National Mission Developer. He encouraged us to look at the needs of our community, and to reach out to fulfill that need.

After this talk, a young man in our congregation came up with the idea to host a young adult group. This group would meet once a week in a more informal setting than a Bible study, and address the "big questions" about the faith. We ended up agreeing on a time and place for this group to meet: Wednesday nights at the parsonage. The idea was that if we met in a less formal setting, and allowed for questions, many of his friends who weren't necessarily ready to come to visit the church would come.

Our kick-off was at the beginning of the summer, and eighteen people ages 18-29 came. Each week after, we have consistently had ten people in attendance, many of whom are not members of our congregation.

Each person was encouraged to write their questions about Christianity on slips of paper so that those asking could remain anonymous, and every week Pastor Cooper answers one question. These questions range in intensity. Some examples are: "How is God above sin?" "How do we know that the Bible is true?" "Why is Christianity right over other religions?" "What is the Lord's Supper?" We spend time socializing, time answering one question, and then play a game together.



Kickoff Meeting on June 1



Playing Quelf

Our young adult group has become one of my favorite things each week. We have great discussion, and great fellowship.

We as Lutherans, as Christians, as brothers and sisters in Christ, are called to "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15, NKJV). This group is a practical way to do just that.

The college and early career-aged people in our churches are often left out. Frankly, there is so much noise in our culture against Christianity—especially in our colleges—that is often not taken seriously by the church. This is the age group that is trying to decide if they want to remain in the church. This is the infamous "millennial" generation that we see so many articles about online: "Why are millennials leaving the church?" "How do we get millennials back into the church?" In my experience in the Lutheran church, the answers to these "big questions" are often taken for granted. But, by spending time addressing these concerns, and doing so with care, relationships with those who are questioning can be fostered.

Removing the Mask from Grace

By The Rev. Joe Christina

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. – Hebrews 13:8

Costumes. There are a billion of them. From Iron Man to Elsa, most of us will see more than a few running around the neighborhood later this month, shaking us down for candy. But that's not the way it used to be.

The earliest tradition of costuming during the end of October wasn't supposed to be a "cute" or fun event at all. Pre-Christian pagans, especially in the British Isles, believed that it was during that time of the year when the so-called veil between the realm of the living and the netherworld was at its thinnest. So thin, in fact, that it was on that last night of October that all kinds of unsavory ghosts, devils and ghouls could pass through that veil and roam the earth. People were understandably afraid. To avoid being harassed by these spirits (or worse), it became customary to dress in a costume that resembled one so as not to be noticed when venturing out. The logic was that the monsters would simply think you were one of them and would leave you well enough alone.

The church of Rome had placed quite the scary costume on God. Not literally, of course. But doctrinally. Over its many centuries their official dogma burdened the hearts and consciences of its people by telling them they must participate in their own salvation. While many relatable doctrines could be addressed, the overall distortion was that man needed to have faith in the atonement of Christ *as well as* add his or her own works to the mix. This added a level of pressure on Christians that made many seriously question whether they could ever do enough on their part to enter heaven's gates. It was an ugly costume that made God look at best demanding and at worst downright frightening. It was the same terrifying costume that led a young Martin Luther to spend many a cold night in self-inflicted penitence agonizing over his own sins.

Yet it was the same Martin whom God would use to remove the costume Rome had placed on him. Through a study of the Holy Scriptures, Luther came to understand the central teaching to true Christianity: justification by grace through faith. He learned from the likes of Saint Paul that works played no part in his right standing with God. Christ alone paid the full and sufficient price for his sins as well as the sins of the world. It was this very message that prompted the reformer to want to translate the Scriptures into German so his own countrymen could learn this same refreshing truth.

Christ does not change nor does he costume himself to terrorize sinful human beings to despair. Salvation by grace through faith is the same for the Old and the New Testament believer. The former looked ahead to the coming Messiah. The latter looks back at God's promises kept. Jesus Christ is indeed the same yesterday and today and forever. The One who graciously gave his perfectly lived life as payment for our sin stands unchanged. And thankfully for us, he used his servant Martin to reaffirm that truth. A comforting truth that has come all the way to us too in 2016. Next year we will celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. But may we celebrate it every year as a reminder that in Christ, God is not terrifying but graciously forgiving. He wears no such costume.

And he never has.

Fellowship in the Gospel

by The Rev. Irvin Stapf

We all know the importance of the Christian fellowship and support we share in our local congregations. Paul has taught us that we are a part of one another in the Body of Christ. We pray for one another, work and worship together, and if one has a need we are there to help. We also know that this fellowship is extended throughout our AALC. Churches pray for one another, and sister congregations stand together to provide various needs. Even further, we are aware that this fellowship is extended beyond our nations borders through our World Missions, and programs like the Sending Place. We stand together in the truth of God's Word, and the rich grace of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This fellowship in the Gospel is our joy and our strength.

My wife Audrey and I had the privilege of sharing in that extended fellowship as we worshiped in a Lutheran congregation in Germany. We were able to bring greetings to them from our local congregation, Christ Lutheran in Maryland, and from all of you in The AALC.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Hanover, Germany is a part of The SELK, The Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church in Germany. The SELK was formed in 1972 by a group of confessional Lutheran Church bodies for reasons not unlike those for which The AALC was formed. The SELK is separate from the state supported Lutheran Church, and receives no funds from the government as state churches do.

The SELK is a confessional Lutheran Church believing in the Holy Scriptures as the revealed and inspired Word of God. They also believe that the Lutheran Confessions are the true explanation of God's Word. The AALC is a partner church body with The SELK along with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and other confessional



The Rt. Rev. Hans-Jörg Voigt D.D. SELK Bishop, Pastor Stapf, Pastor Gottfried Heym

Lutheran Church bodies in The International Lutheran Council. So you see that our fellowship in the Gospel is truly world wide. This is vitally important in our day when there are so many forces seeking to compromise with God's truth.

Our time in Germany was for visiting dear friends, Thomas and Ursula Schrader whom we have known for more than 20 years. Thomas and Ulla faced the same decision that all of us have face.

They had been a part of the German Lutheran Church for many years, active, serving, caring, and praying. But they came to a time a few years back when they could no longer support the direction of their state church congregation. They sought out a congregation of The SELK, and have worshiped there, finding the support and fellowship they need.

It was a privilege to worship with them on the last Sunday of May, and be able to bring our greetings. It was also an honor to have The SELK bishop, The Rt. Rev Hans-Joerg Voigt, also attending wor-

ship that day. Bishop Voigt is a very gracious man, and it was a pleasure to meet him, and share greetings from Dr. Leins.

Jesus spoke of the Gospel and the pearl of great price, and as a treasure hidden in a field. The truth of God's saving grace through faith in Jesus Christ is truly our treasure. It is the power of God that joins us together across all boundaries or conditions of life. It is the bond manifest first in Christian families, then congregations, and throughout the world. Further, it is a fellowship that seeks to draw

all people into a relationship with their Lord.

The Psalmist wrote, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Let us do all we can to strengthen that unity. We have a precious treasure in fellowship in the Gospel.



Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Hanover, Germany
From left: Ursula & Thomas Schrader, The Bishop & his wife, Audrey & Pastor Stapf, and Pastor Heym

The Importance of Social Media in Ministry

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

In our 21st century world, most people under the age of 55 now engage in social media, whether that is Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or any number of other online sites. As a nation, it is what we do. Just stop and look at folks on their smart phones: observe them at the movies, or at dinner, perhaps at sports events, or even while at the local mall. Most are looking at their phones and engaged in social media. Society is texting, tweeting, or posting away, intent on multi tasking in every sense of the word!

People have become preoccupied with such things, as immediate information and communication has become a necessity in our world today. I just read where young Facebook users, for example, check their page the minute they wake up in the morning. With the delivery of the smart phone, a revolution has taken place, as millions of people have now joined in to what can only be defined as the new marketplace, a marketplace of both ideas and dialogue. But do not assume that this phenomenon is just with the youth, such as the "Gen X ers" or the "Millennials." No, this encompasses large swaths of our nations' older demographic as well. Quite simply, it is where most age groups can be found these days.

Whether we realize it or not, and whether we want to admit it or not, this is where the world lives: in cyber space. But the world is not just anywhere in cyber space, but specifically on the aforementioned social media sites. This is where many of our friends and family resides, and where our neighbors are often seen. It is here on these social media sites that communication happens, at least to some degree, but also where information is shared, information about one's life and the lives of others.

It is also here on social media where the hurting are found, where many of the broken congregate. It is here where much of the unchurched are gathered, where the post-moderns find relevance. For many of these media sites have become an altar by which many bow. But in spite of this, it is precisely where the church should also be found. If we agree that the church must go where the people are, rather than wrongly assuming they will come to us, then our focus must be to engage the world here. For the potential of reaching the

lost in this new marketplace is astronomical, to say the least.

Facebook, for example, has over a billion subscribers, who each day can be found logging in to their specific on-line communities. Each day those between the ages of 18 to 35 check their Facebook page when they wake up in the morning! Every 20 minutes, one million "links" are shared on Facebook ... two million "friend requests" are made! And although 10 years ago it once was considered only for the 18 and under crowd, in recent years those much older have taken to Facebook as well as the new consumer. It is familiar and comfortable and has become THE vehicle by which this older demographic has chosen to engage and share.

So what about the church? Christian author Thom Rainer once wrote, "When a church ceases to have a heart and ministry for its community, it is on the path toward death."

Clearly Rainer understands the importance of the church engaging her world right outside her church doors. It is my contention that a way to begin this work of ministry within the local community, (i.e. embracing a missional perspective) is with Facebook.

Here is an already established audience to reach for the sake of Jesus Christ and His gospel. Here is a vehicle by which congregations can establish (or sometimes re-establish) community identity. Facebook will serve as the platform by which additional social media sites can be entertained by the church and her ministry.

For example: Like most congregations of the church catholic today, we cry out to see children and young adults in the church, for we understand that they are our future. Yet more often than not, kids and young people are not active in or a part of your congregation. Imagine, then, as a congregation, engaging with the youth of this country on Snapchat or Instagram. It is there that not only will you find young people, but you will find many who are longing for both relationships and meaning to their lives, something that only Jesus can adequately provide (and which we can share). And more than likely, few of this young crowd has experienced God's grace in any tangible expression. So here's both our opportunity and venue to bring Christ and His grace to them! And it can start with social media!

Jesus for the Big Things – And the Little Things

by The Rev. Dave Spotts

People. People all around. Every size, every shape, every nation. Every tribe, every tongue, every age, every level of education. All the skills of humanity, none of the skills of humanity. Happy, sad, alert, exhausted. Emotions running high, at a fever pace. Emotions crashing, becoming cold, caloused, unresponsive.

The University community which I serve as a missionary has come back to life. Classes began a week before I sat in the student center to write this. What's happening there? What are we going to see this year? Last year in this community saw a hunger striker, demonstrations, and the ouster of high level administration members. Leaders came, leaders went, faculty members came and went. Some students were attracted by the activism. At the same time, student enrollment is down by over two thousand this year, mostly freshmen. The community is definitely alive.

Speaking with Zaccheus, in Luke chapter 19, Jesus describes his work as seeking and saving the lost. We need to realize that Zaccheus spent a long time unaware that he was lost. He was successful. He apparently had friends. Yet the purposes he had pursued in life were vain. In the end, they were somehow empty.

In the same way, on a campus full of people, going here, going there, working, learning, talking, living, and growing, without Jesus there is no ultimate hope. We are lost. We have hopes, dreams, and challenges. Yet we ourselves may be unequipped to rise to the challenge. "My dog is dying. I wish I could do something for him." "I have no idea how to do this lab project. It's a group project and I don't know who my lab partners were." And other challenges. "I have about 3,000 international students and faculty members on campus from 120 nations. I'd like them to know about American culture and customs. I want them to make friends with people in the community. But that isn't something a University is good at doing." "I really wish the demonstrators and reporters wouldn't catch my boss this afternoon, I wonder if there's a way to distract them or him?" "I'd like to have a Bible study with some of the other people I work with here on campus." Once we open our eyes to the struggles others around



us have, we start seeing that they are real people. They have real hopes. They have real fears. In the end, there is only one savior, Jesus, who has been able to meet this world, who has gone beyond the end of our abilities, who has shown that he is the one who is able to keep us to the final day.

It's a great honor to live in this community. It's an honor to be called as a missionary pastor to try to reach the people here, students, faculty, staff, and administration members. My community, like so many others in this world, is thriving in its own way, but is ultimately perishing for lack of the clear witness of the Gospel.

As I look forward to being installed formally nine days from now, I'll ask our Evangel readers to help move this ministry along. Join with me in prayer for this community. Give faithfully to your church congregation and, when you can, contribute to the needs of mission works seeking to bring Jesus' help and hope to our world. Study the Scripture with other believers, and pray that there will always be more people with a hunger for God's Word. Welcome the visits and prayers of other Christians, especially those whom God has given oversight over you. Together, we can continue Jesus' work to seek and save the lost. They are people. People like you, people like me. People in need of God's grace and mercy.



Dave Spotts is a campus missionary pastor. He is the founder of Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry, www.wittenbergcomo.com. He teaches Greek at the American Lutheran Theological Seminary and at The Potter's School, as well as a Great Books course at Wittenberg Academy. He lives and works in Columbia, Missouri.

Meet a Seminarian

Karl Tervo

As an introduction of sorts, I am Karl Tervo. I'm married to my lovely wife Jena for almost 12 years now, and we have two children, Madison (10) and Hudson (6). I grew up in Washington state, but I left there shortly after I turned 18 and I've been living in South Carolina for the last 14 years. For work I am the owner/operator of a new residential/service plumbing company that I started about 13 years ago.

There was once a time that I didn't know that other Lutherans aside from the branch that I grew up in even existed. In fact, at about the same time, when people used the term "American Evangelicalism" I thought it was a denomination. This is how oblivious I was to anything outside of what I grew up in or was familiar with. Certain circumstances about 3 or so years ago that transpired in the church body in my state of South Carolina forced me to do some studying and I was able to confirm that I was in fact a Lutheran and believed the things that I was taught from the Small Catechism all throughout Sunday School and in Confirmation. This finally led me to leave the non-denominational church that we were attending and we started attending a Missouri Synod church that we are members at now. This was no easy decision as it was really tough for my wife, but over the course of the last two years, she can now say that this was unequivocally the correct decision.

I've always thought that I wanted to be a pastor, but I knew that wasn't going to be an option in the church body that I grew up in, and apart from the Concordia seminaries, I didn't know of any other confessional Lutheran church body that had a seminary that also had an online option. It so happens that one day I was listening to the radio podcast "Fighting for the Faith" and Pr. Chris Rosebrough was talking about the AALC and the online seminary that is available. A couple of emails later and a phone call with Pr. Rich Shields, the seminary president, and I enrolled in my first class.

I've thoroughly enjoyed my time in the classes thus far. The two professors that I've had, Pr. Rich Shields and Dr. Curtis Leins, are two of the godliest men that I've ever met and the AALC should be proud of these two men. Although it's quite a length of time away, I look forward to completing my studies and hopefully, God willing, being ordained as a pastor.



Prayer Bookmark

November

1. Local TAALC church
2. Christ Evangelical Lutheran *Ellis, KS*
3. St. John's Lutheran *Pocahontas, MO*
4. Mighty Fortress Evangelical Lutheran
Seward, NE
5. Online Ministries
6. Unity in the Church
7. Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, Presiding Pastor
8. Lake Madison Lutheran *Nunda, SD*
9. Grace Lutheran *Nunda, SD*
10. Rev. Roger Twito, Assistant Presiding
Pastor
11. TAALC Foundation
12. Poplar Lake Lutheran *Fosston, MN*
13. Ailing Pastors
14. New Hope Lutheran *Newfolden, NM*
15. Commission for commissioned church
workers
16. Kongsvinger Lutheran *Oslo, MN*
17. Trinity Lutheran *Galata, MT*
18. Rev. Rich Shields, Seminary President
19. Christian Martyrs
20. Families of Christian Martyrs
21. Emmanuel Lutheran *Kelliher, MN*
22. New Hope Fellowship Lutheran *Laurel, MT*
23. Rev. Irvin Stapf, Secretary of TAALC
24. Rev. Dean Stoner, National Mission
Developer
25. Local community
26. Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran *Sidney, MT*
27. Our nation's leaders
28. Faith Evangelical Lutheran *Columbus, ND*
29. American Lutheran *Mandan, ND*
30. Dr. Dan Kruger, Treasurer of TAALC

Prayer Bookmark

December

1. All the saints who have gone before
2. Lucky Mound Lutheran *Parshall, ND*
3. Unity in the Church
4. Light of Christ Lutheran *Williston, ND*
5. Reverend Joe Dapelo, Administrator of TAALC
6. Our Redeemer's Lutheran *Williston, ND*
7. Abiding Grace Lutheran *Gillette, WY*
8. Future of seminary
9. Bonnie Ohlrich, Secretary/Coordinator
10. Sonland Lutheran *Casa Grande, AZ*
11. Pensions committee
12. Local TAALC church
13. Living Christ Fellowship *Mesa, AZ*
14. St. Peter's Lutheran *Elk Grove, CA*
15. Shepherd of the Mountain *Frazier Park, CA*
16. Protection for our military
17. Protection for the unborn
18. Shepherd of the Valley *Galt, CA*
19. Reverend Dr. Jeffrey Pulse, Seminary Professor
20. Good Shepherd Evangelical *San Diego, CA*
21. Dr. Adam Francisco, Seminary Professor
22. Local community
23. Trinity Lutheran *San Pedro, CA*
24. Shepherd of the Valley *Yuba City, CA*
25. Christ the Ray of Hope *Albuquerque, NM*
26. Commission on Doctrine and Church Relations
27. The Barn Again Lutheran *Tijeras, NM*
28. Emmanuel Lutheran *Bremerton, WA*
29. Reverend Dr. Craig Henningfield, Seminary Professor
30. Elim Lutheran *Brush Prairie, WA*
31. First Evangelical Lutheran *Parshall, ND*

(Continued from Page 5)

teaching) and the positive side (faithful proclamation of Law and Gospel).

We present a broad view of history in one course, and then we narrow down the perspective to specific time periods in other courses. By this approach the student can keep a tri-focus: broad history, pinpoint events and people, and current manifestations in the current church.

Courses: Church History Overview, Early Church, reformation, Modern/Post Modern, AALC History and Polity.

Practical

All the academic learning then informs and forms the application in real life. In the Practical department, we examine critical areas of pastoral ministry. Preaching and Worship are obvious courses, but that is only part of the the studies. The seminarians have the opportunity to study the theology behind our practices as pastors. In the process they begin to apply many of the Biblical, Doctrinal, and Historical insights in real world ministry.

These course are then supplemented by two practical experiences (applies to both online and on campus seminarians):

1) Field Work: This phase begins as soon as the seminarian begins classes and allows the seminarian to learn from a designated pastor in the local congregation, and begin to be exposed to participating in leading worship, preaching, teaching, caring for sick, shut-ins, etc. The student is not immersed into all this at one time, but rather in graded steps to learn more, experiment, and grow.

2) Vicarage/Internship: After the seminarian has taken sufficient classes he will be authorized to serve as vicar/intern in one of our congregations. This moves the student into more of a full time environment, experiencing all aspects of pastoral service under the supervision of a designated pastor. This opens the seminarian to all the demands, opportunities, and challenges of serving as a pastor in a congregation.

Courses: Preaching 1 & 2, Teaching, Missions, Pastoral Theology and Life, Pastoral Leadership, Church Administration (two kingdoms approach to Church and ministry).

Conclusion

With this overview, I hope to show the extent of training and opportunities that the seminarian will go through before reaching graduation and ordination. It is a challenging time, but rewarding. Our graduates from both seminaries: online and on campus, have demonstrated faithful service to our congregations. Our desire at ALTS is to continue training next generation men who will step into the long train of Reformation Heritage trained pastors, who will faithfully believe, teach, and confess the Christian faith as they serve God's people.

God Will Provide

by Mary Koeberl Rechenberg

Imagine a typical summer evening, company is in the house, and you are ready to start the grill for your son's birthday supper. Fast forward twenty minutes and your whole world has totally changed. Basically everything you own has been destroyed and you realize your family is homeless.

Richard and Tonya Brandon and their three children Billy, Ashley, and Brittany have experienced this unthinkable tragedy when their home in the small town of Pocahontas, Missouri caught fire and burned at 6:30 pm. June 9, 2016.

The fire raced through their brick home, jumping from wall to wall within minutes, as the result of an electrical malfunction. By the time firefighters arrived thirteen minutes later the home was totally engulfed in flames. Thanks be to God, everyone escaped unharmed, including the family dog.

The Brandon family is putting their lives back together one step at a time, but when you need everything it's a daunting process. Neighbors, friends, and Richard's coworkers donated money and a few household items, and St. John's Lutheran Church in Pocahontas, Missouri is providing their vacant parsonage with free utilities, as a temporary home for them.

The Brandon's faith in God is their stronghold and their attitude is good, but the tears come easily when reliving the details of that horrible evening and speaking of their uncertain future.

They have been told their house is a total loss and will need to be demolished. How do you start over with no money? They face the fact that the money they are to receive from their insurance will only be slightly more than their mortgage on the burned out house. They have received no insurance money yet as Tonya is still filling out the many required forms. They do know paying for demolition of the house and removal of the structure will be their responsibility.

Amidst the bleak reminders inside their burned out home the voice of a loving and understanding God seemed to whisper to them when they went searching for salvageable items. Where family pictures once hung on the living room wall, they found only blackened shadows and a canvas from one of Tonya's paintings. Next to the canvas their metal wall hanging spelling out the word "Joy," now black from smoke remained in place. The ironic part of this discovery was on the canvas.

The canvas had been a three layer piece of art that Tonya had made for her husband. First she had painted a special word on the canvas then covered it with an abstract painting. Later a third layer consisting of a family portrait had been decouped over the painting. Their discovery on the smoke stained wall blew them away!

All that remained of the three layer art on the canvas was the special word—"Restoration." The heat and flames had stripped off the decouped portrait and the abstract painting, while leaving the painted word intact.

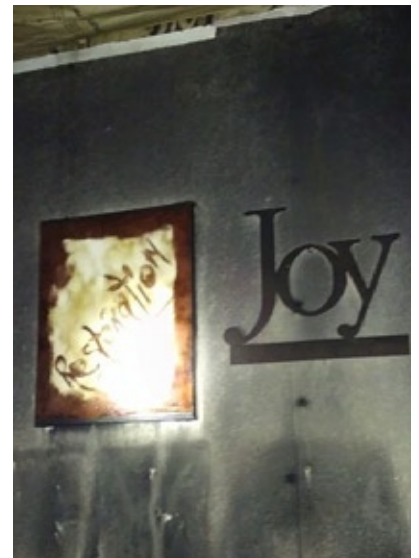
The two words "Restoration" and "Joy". What a message! Is this God's way of telling the Brandon's that they should go about restoring their lives with joy in their hearts, in spite of their feelings of grief and loss? Richard and Tonya believe it is so. At our interview Tonya easily quoted part of the verse in Nehemiah about another group of grieving people who needed reassurance.

"This day is holy unto our Lord: do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8: 10b.

This message of "Restoration" and "Joy" can be applied to not only the Brandon's problems, but to the lives of people everywhere. Pain, suffering, and grief are the result of man's sinful nature. However, God has the solution. Trusting in Him to get us through the rough spots, praying for His guidance, and believing that Jesus died for our sins and saves us will assure us of "Restoration with Joy."

My day was totally enriched by speaking to these wonderful people, and I am asking anyone who reads this story to pray that God will bless all grieving people with peace and love as they move forward with their lives.

If you have the means to help the Brandon's by making a monetary donation, please send your check to: St. John's Lutheran Church Box 10 Pocahontas, Missouri 63779. Please make checks payable to Richard or Tonya Brandon.



The American Association of Lutheran Churches

921 East Dupont Road, #920

Fort Wayne, IN 46825-1551

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The
American Association
of Lutheran Churches

The Evangel — Issue 180
November/December 2016

The American Association of Lutheran Churches

Main Office Located at:

6600 N. Clinton St.

Augustine Hall

Fort Wayne IN 46825

Phone: (260) 452-3213

Fax: (260) 452-3215

Email: theaalc@TheAALC.org

Visit Us On The Web
www.TheAALC.org

The Evangel

The Evangel, a publication of The American Association of Lutheran Churches, is published bimonthly. A one-year subscription is \$10.00.

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