

The EVANGEL

A Publication of The American Association of Lutheran Churches
Issue No. 190—November/December 2018



- Pg. 2 — From the Editor
- Pg. 3 — From the Presiding Pastor
- Pg. 4 — A Holy Universal Church
- Pg. 5 — Driven: An Open House
for Men
- Pg. 6 — 25 Years of Christian
Service
- Pg. 8 — Lightning Damage at Christ
Lutheran in Duluth
- Pg. 9 — The Word and the Water
- Pg. 10 — Calvary Celebrates a
Century of Faithfulness
- Pg. 12— Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire!
- Pg. 13-14 — Prayer Bookmark
- Pg. 14 — Women of L.I.F.E.
2019 Study
- Pg. 15— Two Kinds of Relationships

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: Lisa Cooper

Layout & Design: Lynette Macias

Cover Photo: iStock Photo

Letter From the Editor

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

This edition of *The Evangel* focuses on the Third Article of the Creed and the explanation from Luther's Small Catechism. Now, I know that there are some excellent articles in this edition about the Holy Spirit and sanctification, but in my letter to you, I wanted to touch on the last phrase of the creed: I believe in "the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

You may have seen depictions of heaven in popular culture with people-turned-angels playing harps and singing. Or maybe you've heard that when we die, we become disembodied spirits who float around forever in heaven. This is not what we have to look forward to in Christ. Scripture tells us that we, like Jesus Himself, will have a bodily resurrection. And, in that resurrection, we will live forever in the new heavens and the new earth.

Luther specifies this in his explanation: "On the Last Day He will raise *me* and all the dead, and give eternal life to *me* and all believers in Christ." I added the italics there. Do you see it? Me. These promises are for me. These promises are for you.

I spend a lot of time thinking about what it will be like to have a perfect body—and to be clear, I don't mean that in the sense that our culture talks about perfect bodies—but, what would it look like to have a body that is no longer affected by sin? A body with no more pain. A body with no more disease. A body with no more death. Will we look the same? How old will we look? And though Scripture doesn't give us a direct answer to these questions, we do have certainty that we will see God in our flesh. Job says:

*For I know that my Redeemer lives,
And He shall stand at last on the earth;
And after my skin is destroyed, this I know,
That in my flesh I shall see God,
Whom I shall see for myself,
And my eyes shall behold, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me! (Job 19:25-27, NKJV)*

These words are true for us, just as they were true for Job. We will indeed see God face to face in the resurrection, and we there will be an end to all sadness, all pain, and death itself. John writes in Revelation:

*And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."
(Rev. 21:3-4)*

Throughout all of Scripture, God makes promises and keeps them. We can be sure that this promise will be kept too. Jesus proved that the resurrection will happen because He has raised from the dead. He is the "first fruits of the resurrection." Therefore, we do not need to fear death. Because of what Christ has done in dying and raising for us, death is not a gateway to eternal death, but to eternal life. This is most certainly true.

In Christ,
Lisa Cooper

Submitting to *The Evangel*: Please include your name and contact information, along with the article, and all photo credits in an email to theevangel@taalc.org. UPDATE: I have a new mailing address. If you would like to submit to *The Evangel* by mail, please send articles, photos, and contact information to 600 Warren Rd. Apt#6-1A, Ithaca, NY 14850. If you have been sending me a church newsletter, please update your records.

For We are God's fellow workers; You are God's field, God's building.

(I Corinthians 3:9)

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

Imagine, if you can, a dead field. It is completely barren and nothing can grow there. Perhaps in times past, it was flooded with salt water. Maybe, it was saturated with chemical toxins that have "killed" the land. Whatever the cause, it is unlike any field that you have ever seen. The land is dead. It would not matter if you irrigated the soil, planted super seed, or used explosive fertilizer; nothing can grow there.

I am not sure that such a place exists anywhere on earth, but such a place does exist in the human heart. The Bible teaches that before faith in Jesus Christ, we were spiritually dead.

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions. (Col. 2:13)

We were like a dead field. We were born in sin and our selfish soul-sickness infected our every decision and every action. Even if we did a "good" thing, no matter how "good" it was, it still was tainted with our sin. As such, it was unacceptable to God. We could not choose God, could not obey God, and could not believe in God. We were dead! Our only hope was for God to choose us, obey for us, and give us the faith that we could not produce ourselves.

This is, of course, exactly what God has done. God has sent His Word empowered by the Holy Spirit. Through this means, God created faith in our hearts and made our dead field alive. "Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ," (Romans 10:17). As passive recipients, incapable of any good work or even choosing to believe, God brought our dead hearts to life by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Luther's explanation of The Third Article of The Creed expresses this exactly:

I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

This work of creating faith by the Spirit-inspired Word of God is called monergism. This term makes clear that salvation is in no way our own work, but is solely and completely the work of God. In creating or giving faith, God alone is the One (mono)

who works (ergism). As Luther's explanation above indicates, the Holy Spirit calls us into faith in Christ, gathers us into fellowship with Christ and His church, enlightens us with the bounty of His gifts (chief among them are faith, forgiveness, life and salvation), and sanctifies us so that His own Holy Spirit lives within us.

At this point, we are born again, children of God and inheritors of eternal life. Now, the dead field is alive! Its very nature and substance have been transformed, out of darkness into glorious light, out of death into the resurrected life of Jesus Christ.

Does that mean that now we are capable of spiritual independence? Now that we are saved, are we able by our own power, to govern our own destiny, maintain our own purity, and manage our own eternity? No! We are still in need of God's Holy Spirit to continue His work of sanctification and to preserve us in the one true faith. The difference is that now, we are alive in Christ. Therefore, we can in some small measure co-operate with God. The work of justification was by One alone, monergism. The work of Christian living is by synergism. Together (syn), we work (ergism) with and in the Holy Spirit.

St. Paul writes in I Cor. 3:9, "For we are God's fellow workers; **you are God's field**, God's building." Your "field" was purchased by God with the costly blood of Jesus Christ. God, the Holy Spirit, continues to work in that field, cleaning, clearing, sowing, and harvesting His good fruit. Though you may think that you own the property, you belong to Him who saved you. And, though you may think that you are the only one who is working the field, you are co-laboring with the Holy Spirit, who is doing the lion's share of the work in and through you. This is your active righteousness, sharing the love of Christ with the world, bearing fruit by the power of God!

Imagine, if you can, a dead field. It is completely barren and nothing can grow there. You were that field. But, by the payment of Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice, you have been purchased. As God's own field, you have been transformed by His Holy Spirit. Your spiritual soil has come to life, by grace through faith! You are watered with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. You are nourished with the Lord's true body and blood. You are seeded with God's Holy Word. You are enlivened with the sunshine of God's forgiveness and love. You are kept safe and preserved by God's Holy Spirit living within you.

You are God's Field. As He works within you, may you bear good fruit!

A Holy Universal Church

by The Rev. Dave Spotts

The *Evangel* has recently been studying the *Apostles' Creed*. It's part of our Lutheran heritage, as we typically recite either this creed or the *Nicene Creed* on a weekly basis. Both serve as summaries of essential elements of the Christian faith. Both are very old. How old is the *Apostles' Creed*? Nobody knows. Some traditions in the Middle Ages said it was written by the apostles themselves. Others say it comes from the period immediately after the apostles. We are pretty sure it dates back at least to the middle of the fourth century, and that by that time it was well known and established.

Whatever our conclusion, this has been a confession of Christians for many, many years. We still use the *Apostles' Creed* for good reason. It serves as a great unifier for Christians of every race, language, and cultural background. That's a powerful claim for a little confession that takes under 35 seconds to say.

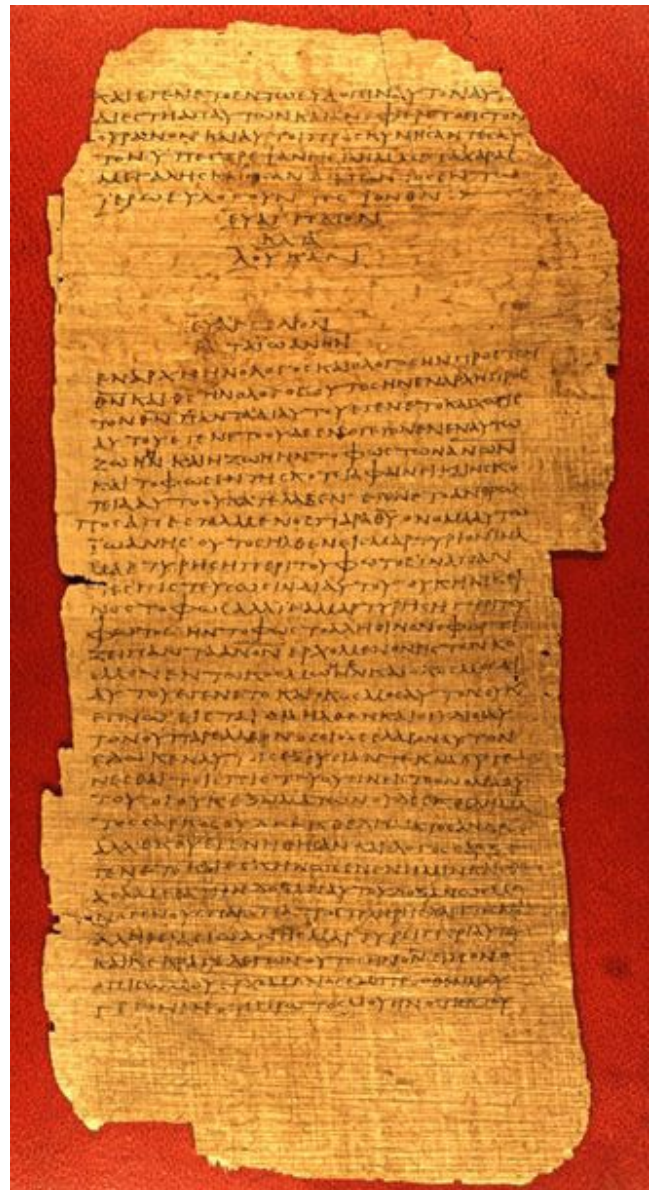
The third article starts from a belief in the Holy Spirit. That may seem impractical to us. After all, we like material things. We think we live in a real world, full of real things, solid things. Our culture has taught us that any talk of the "spiritual" is by nature individually mediated. It might fit your spirit but not mine. It's spiritual for me but not for this other person. It may be something we just made up.

What does the third article of the *Apostles' Creed* tie to the belief in the Holy Spirit? Here's my translation. It works equally well from the Latin text and the Greek text. "I believe in the Holy Spirit, a holy catholic church, a fellowship of saints, a forgiveness of sins, a resurrection of body, an eternal life. Amen." The belief in the Holy Spirit leads directly to several things which are much more visible. The invisible Holy Spirit is tied here to a church, an assembly of believers, which is universal (catholic) in nature. This unity found in the Holy Spirit takes Christian believers from all over the world and ties them together. They have fellowship, a strong commonality. This is exactly the same kind of language the apostle Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 10 when he speaks of us having a "participation" in the body and blood of Christ in communion. We are really together in the Holy Spirit. Why are we together? It's because our sins have been sent away from us. They have been forgiven. We no longer carry them. By the Holy Spirit, those sins have been transferred to Jesus. It's that same Holy Spirit who will deliver resurrection to us. Unlike the hope of the Greek philosophers, who looked for death as a release from the body, the Christian has a hope in the body and soul being reunited in glory. By the Holy Spirit our physical body will be brought back. How long does this last? It lasts forever.

Before we veer off again into abstraction, I want to pull us back to the very concrete reality of the "holy catholic church." My work as a missionary campus pastor brings me together with interesting people from all around the world. Some have a Christian background. Others do not. What does this article of the Creed confess? It confesses that by the Holy Spirit, our friends from Japan and Turkey are saved exactly the same way as each other. Our friends from Morocco and from China are brought into fellowship with one another, with Jesus, and with me by the one Holy Spirit. Our friends from Haiti and from Brazil are participants in Christ, who knows no borders.

For more than 1,500 years Christians have believed, taught, and confessed that there is one and only one Holy Spirit. We have confessed that the Holy Spirit gathers his people together under the shelter of His wings, into His Church. When the Holy Spirit has gathered us together, we are truly put together in one.

<i>Credo in SPIRITUM</i>	Πιστεύω εἰς τὸ
<i>SANCTUM; sanctam</i>	ΠΝΕΥΜΑ ΤΟ ΑΓΙΟΝ,
<i>ecclesiam catholicam;</i>	ἁγίαν καθολικὴν
<i>sanctorum communionem;</i>	ἐκκλησίαν, ἁγίων
<i>remissionem peccatorum;</i>	κοινωνίαν, ἄφεσιν
<i>carnis resurrectionem;</i>	ἁμαρτιῶν, σαρκὸς
<i>vitam æternam. Amen.</i>	ἀνάστασιν, ζωὴν αἰώνιον.
	Ἀμήν.



Graphics courtesy of Rev. Dave Spotts

Driven: An Open House For Men

by Matt Ryan

At Trinity Lutheran Church in San Pedro, we adopted a new mission statement of "Welcome Home." As a part of that, the men's group was revamped into an open house style and we had our first gathering on Wednesday, September 27th. Upon entering, guests were greeted with automotive themed decorations, a projector playing an assortment of videos depicting people's hilarious failures at parking their cars, and the usual welcoming spirit of Trinity. Before long, Pastor Poul Erik Norgaard welcomed everyone and laid out the plan for the evening which included worship, dinner, a raffle, and a guest speaker.



Fellowship resumed as everyone began to gather in line to get some food. Salad and warm corn bread were a wonderful accompaniment to the delicious homemade chili, which had just a bit of a kick to it. That was rounded out with cake, pie and ice cream for dessert. As we ate, each table leader began conversation based on a car related item they were to bring. One table reminisced about their first car, while another recollected the vehicle they used to learn to drive and other car related anecdotes.

As dinner was winding to a close, the guest speaker was introduced, Hollywood veteran Joth Riggs. Joth was involved in the making of many notable films such as Starship Troopers and End of Days, and TV shows such as 7th Heaven and Baywatch. His testimony was touching and heartfelt, and it hit home for a number of the men. He described his time in Hollywood and how that affected his personal and spiritual life. As time went on, and as God called



Joth back to His path, he began getting into faith based films and has since worked on hits like God's Not Dead 2 and the recently released documentary, The Heart of Man.

All those in attendance spoke highly of the evening, noting how well it captured the "Welcome Home" spirit that was intended. We were blessed with a great turnout, and hope that even more will come to next month's gathering. God's hand was clearly on that evening and we look forward to seeing how He uses these men's open houses for His glory.

All those in attendance spoke highly of the evening, noting how well it captured the "Welcome Home" spirit that was intended. We were blessed with a great turnout, and hope that even more will come to next month's gathering. God's hand was clearly on that evening and we look forward to seeing how He uses these men's open houses for His glory.



25 Years of Christian Service to the Elk Grove, California Community

by Maureen Feaster

...do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. ~ Deuteronomy 4:9

In May 1998, *Elk Grove Citizen* staff writer Mary Lewis began an article about St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Elk Grove, California, saying: "The history of a town is often seen through its churches," Ms. Lewis, we couldn't agree with you more.

In October 1982, under the leadership of Pastor Darrel Deuel, a bold dream, which included a Christian day school, took root at St. Peter's Lutheran Church. Stepping forward in faith, we voted overwhelmingly to move from our location in Old Town Elk Grove to a larger site. The new site chosen was ten acres at 8701 Elk Grove-Florin Road, which we purchased in early 1984.

Under the able guidance of the late Ken Grubbs, our contractor and a member of our congregation, we completed the first part of our dream, the current fellowship hall and sanctuary, by September 1990. Then, in January 1991, we undertook the next phase of our dream: developing our Christian day school. A unanimous congregational vote in May 1991 allowed us to forge ahead with God's plan.

We opened our doors for school for the first time on August 30, 1993, and have been a Christian school resource to our Elk Grove neighbors for 25 years now.

We recently had the pleasure of sitting down with newly selected School Administrator, Kristin Puccinelli, whose history at St. Peter's goes back 27 years. She shared with us her thoughts about why as a parent, church member, volunteer, Preschool Administrator, and now School Administrator, she was inspired by the vision of St. Peter's Lutheran School so many years ago.



St. Peter's: Kristin, why did you get involved with St. Peter's Lutheran School 27 years ago?

Puccinelli: I had been a strong public school proponent, but in researching schools for my four children, had the chance to observe the family atmosphere at a Lutheran school that was in South Sacramento at the time. I saw that the children were loved and respected and I wanted that for my kids. I enrolled them at St. Peter's when it first opened so they could experience a quality education that was Christ-centered. I also felt the St. Peter's church leaders starting up the school were an excellent group of people I could trust.

St. Peter's: Looking back, how has the school benefitted your family?

Puccinelli: It taught us to bring Christ into our family's daily life—even minute to minute. It influences so many important decisions in our life and the use of our resources.

St. Peter's: As the new School Administrator, how would you like the school to influence our community's future?

Puccinelli: My goals for our school are that we:

- Build trust both within our school community and with the public.
- Be true to our vision and mission statement.
- Demonstrate the love of Christ to all.
- Inspire people in the community by what we say and do.
- Help families raise productive, faithful, healthy children into adulthood.



Indeed, in the words of former School Administrator Ann Cunningham, "Our goal is prepare the whole child for the world, not seclude them."

Our church and school have matured well over the years, as the community continues to grow significantly. Today we reflect the beautiful diversity in our neighborhoods. Some enrolled at our school are the children of former students. We offer enriched course work in Latin, Spanish, art, music, science, and math. In our sixth through eighth grade classes we consistently use iPads for teaching, remediation, homework, and teacher input. We celebrate our faith through regular Bible teaching and weekly chapel, along with special emphasis on Advent and Christmas, and Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. We participate in community events such as inter-school speech meets and the Elk Grove Western Festival. Our students transfer well into area high schools and go on to higher education. We are accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International.

But most importantly, we model to our pre-k through eighth graders how important it is to be a Christ follower. And along the way, we who work here realize what a blessing it is to influence a child's life in this way.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to the Builders for Christ and the Laborers for Christ, two traveling bands of Lutheran builders and their wives, who graced us with their fellowship, skills, and hard work during our construction phases so many years ago. We have not forgotten their crucial partnership with us in this effort.

The stories of grace, struggle, effort, and growth are too many to tell here. But we cherish them all.

Happy 25th Anniversary, St. Peter's Lutheran School! We thank God for who you've been, who you are, and who you will become! Amen!

Though the school year recently began, some classroom spaces are available. If you live in our area and are interested in learning more about our school, please visit our website at www.spseagles.org, call us at 916.689.3050, or email us at: info@spseagles.org. We also offer enriching classes in preschool through eighth grade, along with before and after school care and summer daycare.



Lightning Damage at Christ Lutheran in Duluth

by Carolyn Lofald, Vice President/Acting President

On Thursday morning, July 12, 2018, the Piedmont neighborhood of Duluth, MN was experiencing a severe rain storm with loud rolls of thunder and lightning. The crack of lightening at 5:27 a.m. shook the whole neighborhood from our slumber, and made some of us sit straight up in bed. Shortly thereafter the sounds of sirens became heard and stopped very close to home. Then the call: the Duluth Police Department informed us that our church was struck by lightning and had started on fire. They wanted to know if anyone would have been in the building and how quick we could get there. We were fortunate that someone saw the fire and called it in.

Upon our arrival, we watched the hook and ladder and 4 other fire trucks putting out the last of the flames. Lightening had struck the cupola, but not the cross. It also blew out some of the tongue and groove cedar ceiling in our sanctuary. When we were allowed to enter, the air smelled of campfire. Then a fireman walked up to us and presented us with the bible from the altar—this brought us to tears. We thanked them over and over. They had rushed in to save all our altar items and get it covered up before they started pouring water on our roof. They had called the gas company to stand by and to shut off supply and check for leaks. They instructed us to call our electrician to confirm the damage and cautioned us not to turn on any light switches. Next, we needed to call our insurance company and our roofing company to cover the damage to stop further water infiltration.



We began inspecting our church. The ceiling of our lower level was dripping as water was coming through the floor from above. The strike was so severe, it jarred the main water line into the building. It blew the gasket after the meter so that was leaking and when we tried to turn the water off, we found it had blown the handle off too. We had to call the city to shut us off in the street. When they went to turn us back on, they noted the shut off in the street was broken too so the street had to be dug up. We called a restoration service and began the slow process of cleaning and demolition. The kitchen had the most water damage as it was directly under the altar area. All the cabinets and every dish in every cupboard were cleaned. It has now been a little over two months and we are still going through the motions with our adjuster, getting bids and planning for repairs which we hope will begin before October. Pastor Tim Ludwig of Peace In Christ Lutheran Church of the Missouri Synod reached out to us the morning of the fire and offered us to join them for services and to use whatever we needed at their church. We worked out a schedule with them and were able to hold our own services in their sanctuary for three weeks at 11 a.m.

We are now meeting back at Christ Lutheran and are worshiping in our fellowship hall every Sunday. We had to turn our library into an ozone room, a procedure in which all the oxygen is removed from the air which in turn destroys the smoke smell. All of our hymnals, bibles and other items from our sanctuary that were exposed to smoke have been repeatedly ozoned. Because smoke is toxic and destroys the strings of pianos and organs, we had to have our organ lifted out of our balcony and the grand piano removed from our sanctuary. They are currently being stored off-site. We were without phone service, as this had also blown out again... Yes, this was not the first time we were hit by lightning... we had another

smaller hit without a fire on May 27, which blew out our phone system and communication modules in our computers and fried many of our wires. We were still working with our insurance company to settle that claim. Our elevator phone was also blown out so we are still not able to use that until that is replaced.

During this time, we are without a full-time pastor. Pastor Michael Main had taken another call in Arizona in October of 2017. We were going through the call process. We were very thankful that we had our interim pastor, Pastor Carl Bengtson. He was fervently praying and supporting us. He has ended his interim now and his last day with us was August 26. He stated in all his years, he had never experienced all we had endured at Christ Lutheran. He lined up pulpit supply for us for the month of September. We are praying that God will provide a new Shepherd for us soon. Our church president also stepped down in June due to personal reasons and we lost a couple of people from our call committee.

This has been a hard road. We are learning patience. We know that God will provide in His perfect timing to make all things new. He knew this was all going to happen and He allowed it. We are taking this time to pray and wait on Him. Things that needed attention are now being fixed. We are painting and reorganizing. We are also waiting for our electrical to be updated so we can proceed with our plans to have our new boiler installed. We are praying that will be soon, as the temperature has already gone down into the low 30's at night. We ask for prayers that God will make us whole again, that we will continue in unity and that God will provide a Shepherd to lead us soon.



The Word and the Water

by James Lahmann

Each year on a hot day in August, members of St. Paul Lutheran Congregation in Tripoli Iowa, walk before the Tripoli Days Parade and hand out bottles of cold water to those attending the parade.

Every bottle is labeled with a picture of Saint Paul's Lutheran, the address and worship time, as well as a Bible verse chosen by the congregation. This year's special verse was "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36a).

Members gathered on Wednesday evening before the parade to label the bottles and again on Saturday morning to distribute them. A total of 800 bottles of cold water were given out before the parade this year. Over the past few years, more than 3,000 bottles and Bible verses have been shared.

In the past, another verse that was used was "Ask and I will give you living water," from John 4:10. Members of St. Paul Lutheran believe in sharing the water and the word in our community.



Members of St. Paul Lutheran get ready to hand out bottles of cold water to the parade watchers. All of them, ages 5-80, look forward to sharing the water and the Word. Please notice that those participating are wearing protective vests because there are always some late-comers looking for a place to watch the parade. This is a necessary safety measure.

Calvary Celebrates a Century of Faithfulness:

Lutheran church carries on tradition of service in answer to His Word

by Roger Barr

As the Reverend Joe Marsh prepares his sermon for Sunday, May 20, the pastor of Calvary Evangelical Lutheran will be contemplating the past, present, and future of his church at 341 S. Hamline Ave. That morning the congregation will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Calvary's founding.

"We're celebrating the faithfulness of the people all those years," Marsh said. "We're celebrating the faithfulness of God and the things He has allowed this congregation to do for the community."

The centennial celebration will open at 9 a.m. With an open house, followed by a performance of gospel, folk, and bluegrass music by the trio Singleton Street. The worship service will begin at 10 a.m. and be followed by a luncheon at 11:30 a.m. "I'm looking forward to seeing people who may not have attended for a while," Marsh said.

Calvary Lutheran traces its roots to the opening of a Sunday school in 1917. That fall the first worship services were held in a private home at 1270 Niles Ave. However, the congregation was not formally organized until March 24, 1918, under the name Randolph Heights Lutheran Church.

That year the congregation moved into a combination church and parsonage at 1352 Lansing Street (Now Wellesley Avenue). Two years later, it was reorganized under the name Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church and a new church building was constructed. That building was raised in 1926 when the cornerstone for the existing church was laid.

The new church was dedicated on January 30, 1927. A pipe organ was installed and the church's interior was



Calvary Lutheran's first confirmation class posed in 1920 with the Reverend John F. Otto, the church's second pastor.

redecorated in 1941. A subsequent remodeling in 1954 relocated the front entrance and added a vestibule and baby "cry room."

At the May 20 luncheon, long-time member Mary Gardner said she may share memories of the old Luther League. "Every other Friday night, we'd have a church supper and afterwards we'd play volleyball, sometimes until 2 a.m.," Gardner recalled. "When I got home, my mother couldn't believe I was at church that long. It gave us such strength to be in a church with such a good group of Christian people."

Gardner, 84, has been a member of Calvary for as long as she can remember. She served as the church's substitute organist for many years before becoming its full time organist and musical director 15 years ago.

Calvary now has about 50 members. Attendance at Sunday worship varies, but the message does not. "Every minister every Sunday has always preached about the word of God," Gardner said. "There's been no politics. Sermons are true to the word."

Calvary feels "like home" to member Mike Johnson, who has lived in St. Paul since the late 1980s. Eight years ago, when he and his wife Carmen were searching for a new church, they chose Calvary because it was Lutheran and in the neighborhood, he said. Now an elder in the congregation and a member of the church choir, Johnson enjoys the contemporary Christian music that Calvary incorporates in its worship services, though he remains partial to the more traditional hymns.

The congregation's mission is to spread the Gospel—not by preaching, but by serving the community.

“We’re a Bible-based church,” Johnson said. “We want to apply that to people’s daily lives.”

The church hosts the weekly meetings of two recovery groups, including a chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous. Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops meet at the church. The congregation also collects clothing and personal items for Metro Hope, a nonprofit organization that serves people in recovery.

Church members serve a free lunch each year to the teachers at nearby Randolph Heights Elementary School and gather donated supplies for the teachers to use in their classrooms. One congregation member volunteers each month to lead a worship service at Union Gospel Mission. Others lead monthly worship services at the state correctional facility in St. Cloud.

Calvary is a member of the American Association of Lutheran Churches. Its theology falls somewhere between the more conservative Wisconsin Synod and the more progressive Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. Like many Christian congregations, it has seen its membership decline in recent decades amid changing demographics and changing attitudes about religious practice.

Things are “never going to be the way they used to be,” Marsh said. “Many people have accepted that, but they’re talking about what we can do now” to reverse the trend.

“I think the biggest thing is how do we grow the ministry?” Johnson said. “How do we get more young people in the church and away from media and games? While our worship services may not have smoke machines and la-



Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church pastor the Reverend Joe Marsh and his wife Mary Jo (second from left) pose with congregation members Sally Iverson, Mike Johnson and Bob and Gretchen Felt. Photo by Brad Stauffer.



Calvary Evangelical Lutheran’s confirmation class of 1963 gathers around the Reverend Arthur H. Braun, the Macalester-Groveland church’s pastor for nearly 45 years, from January 1938 to October 1982.

sers, we do preach God’s word and try to stick with that as close as possible.”

Calvary members believe their evangelical mission is still relevant, and they strive to connect with people who are looking for sanctuary from a chaotic world. “A lot of people struggle spiritually,” Johnson said. “It helps to have a place to go when you’re struggling and when you want to recognize how God is at work in your life.”

That evangelical focus has succeeded in bringing former members back to Calvary, according to Johnson. Helen Miels is one. Her father, the Reverend Dr. Arthur H. Braun, served as Calvary’s pastor from 1938-83. Following his retirement, Miels felt she “needed a change” and attended several other churches before returning to Calvary in 2016.

“I came back to a Christ-centered church where I knew scripture was being preached,” she said. “I truly believe that Christ was crucified and rose again. To me, that’s very important. I believe Jesus died for my sins and that I can look forward to being in heaven with Him because He forgives.”

For information about Calvary Lutheran or its centennial celebration, contact the church at 651-698-6138 or celc341@msn.com.

This article and photos originally appeared in the May 9-22, 2018 edition of *The Villager*, and has been reprinted with permission.

Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire!

by *The Rev. Richard Eddy, Pastor Emeritus, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Elk Grove, CA*

I recently had one of THOSE telephone calls.

You know the kind I mean; in fact, you've probably received the same call yourself. A recorded woman's voice begins in mid-sentence, warning you that you are in trouble with the IRS. She says that a criminal lawsuit has been filed against you, and that if you don't reply, the "local cops" are on their way to arrest you. She then gives you a phone number to call, which she urges you to do right away. She closes with a pleasant, "Good bye."

Whenever I get those calls, I just shake my head and hang up. I know the IRS doesn't make such calls (not that I've experienced any *real* IRS calls myself).

I watched a couple YouTube videos recorded by people who actually called the number and pretended to believe the warning. The person answering at that number identified himself as an IRS agent and gave some badge number. The scammer explained that the victim owed thousands of dollars in back taxes and penalties, and that the IRS believed the person intentionally cheated on their taxes. To which the pretend victim expressed horror and asked what he or she could do to avoid going to prison. The scammer connected the caller to his "supervisor" who offered to reduce the amount owed and drop the criminal charges if the caller would go right away to a Target or Walmart store and buy hundreds of dollars of pre-paid debit or gift cards and mail them to a specified address. Of course, the person pretending to be a sucker never actually sends the money or cards, after which the scammer usually starts cussing and threatening before hanging up.

While watching the scammers get scammed is somewhat entertaining and appeals to my sense of justice, what amazes me is the brazen, in-your-face dishonesty of the scammers. Not only are they bold-face lying to people and upsetting them in order to steal their cash, they don't care how much it hurts the person they scam. When one intended victim explained she had only \$800 in the bank, and was a single mom with four kids to feed, the scammer just asked how fast she could send the debit cards. When another intended victim said his mother was dying and needed pain medicine, the scammer asked how close the Walmart was so he could wire them cash. How hardhearted such scammers are!

You would think that such scams would fail, and yet they succeed often enough. Tens of thousands of people have sent and lost millions of dollars. How is it that the victims believed the scammers? Partly because of our mistaken belief that people are basically good. When someone tells us something, we tend to believe them right away. After all, we depend on honest communication for practically everything in our lives, from our parents teaching us life skills, to our school-day education, to safety rules, to work assignments, to loving relationships, to our doctor's prescriptions, to our religious faith and teachings. Most of what we hear is true, or at worst, mistaken; rarely have we experienced blatant lies, so when someone tells us something and sounds authoritative, our default reaction is to believe them. Why would they lie to us?

To be honest, even when I hear the scammers' lies, I find myself still wanting to believe them, though my mind tells me not to. I've always wanted to trust people, even when I learned they were lying. When I was in active pastoral ministry, I would hear couples talk about their relationship problems, believing what they told me, until I realized from the contradictions that at least one of them was lying. People would come into the church from off the street and ask for financial help, sometimes changing their names or stories depending on which time they asked or whom they asked. Then there was the guy I bought groceries for at a store to feed his hungry children, only to have him sneak back in and return the groceries for a refund after I left.

Of course, as Christians, we are called to be honest in our dealings with others. We have the 8th Commandment not to bear false witness against our neighbor - that is, don't lie to them! Luther explained this commandment in his Small Catechism: "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." Thus, not only does this commandment forbid us from saying things that are outright lies, we are also forbidden from saying things that may technically be true, yet by their effect deceive or cause harm to others (unlike the scammers who didn't care about

starving kids or dying mothers, just so they got their money!). We are even commanded to consider ways that what someone tells us may not be a lie; they could be mistaken, or maybe we don't have enough information to judge their statement as false. Thus, if a kid comes running down the block screaming he is being chased by a T-Rex, it's *possible* he's not lying . . . maybe I should look for myself or duck under cover . . . just in case!

And yet, though we are called to be honest, we know that the world in general is not. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" and Jeremiah 9:5 says, "Everyone deceives his neighbor, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they weary themselves committing iniquity." Psalm 116:11 cries out, "All mankind are liars." When children break something, we expect them to cover it up with a lie. When courts swear in witnesses, they threaten penalties for perjury, because they can't count on truthful testimony by the goodness of people's hearts. And let's not even start talking about politics!

Why is deceit so prominent? The problem, of course, is sin. Which entered into the world as a result of . . . a lie, told by the devil, whom Jesus called "the father of lies" (John 8:44), when he lied to Eve in the Garden and told her that she would surely not die if she ate the forbidden fruit. By those words, the devil called God a liar, and revealed his own true nature. Unfortunately, the mother of all living (Genesis 3:20) believed his lie and acted upon it - falling victim to the world's first scammer.

But although the world is full of lies, God is Truth. Romans 3:4 says, "Let God be true, though everyone were a liar . . ." God's Word is true and righteous; it is the power of salvation for all who believe. It is the sure foundation of life here and in eternity. We can trust it in all matters of faith and life, receiving faith, inspiration, strength, and hope by his Word and by his Spirit who works through the Word to call, save, and sanctify us for our benefit and God's glory.

Therefore, we can endure a world of liars - and phone scammers - remembering to be cautious and clear-thinking, being "as sheep in the midst of wolves . . . wise as serpents and gentle as dove" in all our dealings with the world (Matthew 10:16). We can endure the times because we know how they will end, when the Lord fulfills his promises and returns to judge the living and the dead. And when he does, he will judge all liars with the infernal father of lies, and unless they have repented and trusted in Christ for their forgiveness, they too will be thrown into the lake of fire with the devil and all the other wicked creatures (Revelation 20:10 and 21:8).

There's an old taunt that goes, "Liar, liar, pants on fire!" On fire, indeed!

Prayer Bookmark

November

1. Rev. David Swarthout Sr.
2. Kongsvinger Lutheran Church, Oslo
3. Todd Baio, Seminary Student
4. Rev. Don F. Ginkel
5. Lake Madison Lutheran Church
Rutland/Nunda
6. Rev. Dr. Duane R. Lindberg
7. Light of Christ Lutheran Church, Williston
8. Michael Callahan, Seminary Student
9. Commission on Doctrine and Church
Relations
10. Rev. Dr. Fred P. Hall
11. Lucky Mound Lutheran Church, Parshall
12. For the lost, that they would hear the
gospel
13. God would raise up church workers
14. Rev. Dr. Johannes Orville, Mosbo
15. Mighty Fortress Ev. Lutheran Church,
Seward
16. Kris Johnson, Seminary Student
17. Mountain View Lutheran Church,
Thornton
18. Local TAALC church
19. Rev. Edwin Sandvig
20. New Hope Lutheran Church, Newfolden
21. Pensions committee
22. Matthew Kolden, Seminary Student
23. Rev. Ernest L. Swenson
24. Women of LIFE committee
25. Rev. Harold E. Petersen
26. Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church.
Williston
27. Chris Leins, Seminary Student
28. Our Savior Lutheran Church, Piqua
29. Rev. James G. Kloster
30. Peace Lutheran Church, Defiance

Prayer Bookmark

December

1. Rev. Scott Yount
2. Faith Lutheran Church, Columbus
3. Rev. Stephen Unger
- 4 Commission for Commissioned Church Workers
5. Faith Lutheran Church, Holstein
6. Rev. Thomas Jahr
7. Angie Wagner, Seminary student
8. Faith Lutheran Church, Watseka
9. First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Parshall
10. Faith Rosebrough, Seminary Student
11. Rev. Valeri A. Tchijik
12. Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church, San Diego
13. Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, Presiding Pastor
14. Rev. Arne C. Bjelland
15. Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Franklin
16. Rev. Bernt Larson
17. Grace Ev. Lutheran Church of Deephaven, Wayzata
18. Future of Seminary
19. Rev. Charles Knappenberger
20. Grace Lutheran Church, Nunda
21. Our nation's leaders
22. Nigel Brown, seminary student
23. Ministry Initiatives of Westfield
24. Hope Lutheran Church, Brighton
25. Rev. Chris Rodger Meyer
26. Nathan Rinne, Seminary Student
27. Janet Price, Seminary Student
- 28 Hope Lutheran Church, Hampton
29. Rev. Dale Zastrow
30. Tartu Academy of Theology
31. Regional Mission Developers

Women of L.I.F.E. 2019 Study

"This is Most Certainly True: A Study of the Catechisms"

by the Rev. Joseph Dapelo

I regularly remind my confirmation students and my entire congregation that "catechesis", or instruction in the Christian faith, is not simply a two or three year program when you are in Middle School. For the baptized child, their catechesis doesn't begin when they become a pre-teen, and there isn't a time in the Christian life when our catechesis ends.

So why do we forget about the basics in the Christian faith, and why do we think that there is a time when we have outgrown learning the catechism?

This is not a new thing. As Luther wrote the preface for his Large Catechism, even many pastors read it once, think they understand it perfectly, throw it in the corner, and never read it again. He says that even as a doctor and a preacher he turns to the catechism regularly, studying it daily, and yet he cannot master it enough to toss it aside.

The catechisms, both Luther's Small Catechism and his Large Catechism, teach us the basics of the Christian faith, but they also challenge us to keep digging into the faith and into the Scriptures. Whether we are a housewife, a mother, a teacher, an experienced Christian, or a new Christian (or new to the Lutheran church), there is much to learn as we walk through the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments. There is richness for our daily Christian life as we live it out in the home, in the church, in the community, and in the world.

Equipped and instructed in the faith and having it reinforced over and over again, helps us to stand firm in the midst of false teachings and a culture that pushes against the truth. It helps us to stand and say, "This is most certainly true!"

The 2019 Women of L.I.F.E. Study will be a walk through the catechisms, learning again and again the truths of Scripture and the faith which has been handed down to us.

This Is Most Certainly True: A Study of Luther's Catechisms

January: The Ten Commandments: First Table of the Law (1-3)

February: The Ten Commandments: Second Table of the Law (4-10)

March: The Creed: First Article (God, the Father)

April: The Creed: Second Article (God, the Son)

May: The Creed: Third Article (God, the Holy Spirit)

June: The Lord's Prayer: Our Father

July: The Lord's Prayer: Why do we pray?

August: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism: What is Baptism?

September: The Sacrament of Holy Baptism: What benefits does Baptism give?

October: Confession: What is Confession? What about Private Confession and Absolution?

November: the Sacrament of the Altar: What is the Sacrament of the Altar?

December: The Sacrament of the Altar: What is the benefit of eating and drinking?

Appendix: Daily Prayers and Table of Duties

Two Kinds of Relationships

by *The Rev. Jordan Cooper*

When looking at the third article of the creed, it is clear that our sanctification (third article) is distinct from our justification (second article). This leaves us with the question: how can we explain our status before God as wholly forgiven, without compromising the call we have to participate in this life in serving our neighbor?

Our lives are built around relationships. We have relationships with our spouse, our parents, siblings, children, neighbors, coworkers, and many others. Among our different kinds of relationships in the world, there are two fundamental categories: our relationship with God, and our relationship with other human beings. These two different relationships define our life in this world, and both of these relationships work in very different ways.

Our relationship with God is passive. Before God, we do not work to establish our righteousness. We do not offer God any of our works, ideas, talents, or anything else in order to please or pacify Our Heavenly Father. Instead, God desires to be the one who works for us. He desires to give his gifts to us. This is why our righteousness before God is something that Jesus Christ earns for us—not something we do. God grants us righteousness freely, without demanding payment. We simply open up our hands of faith and receive all the Christ has to give.

The relationships that we have in the world work very differently. Instead of being passive, as those who merely receive, we are called to be active in the world. We are called to love and serve our neighbors. We are called to give all that we are to the world so that those in our communities have all that they need in this life. Our jobs are opportunities for us to serve people, just as are our roles in the family and in society.

Christians thus have two different kinds of righteousness. We have passive righteousness—that which God gives us freely through faith. This is something that we receive and don't work for. On the other hand, we have active righteousness. We are not active for the good of God, because God doesn't need our works. Instead, we are active in the world, because our neighbors need us. Our communities need us. Our families need us.

We need to make sure that we don't confuse these two relationships, these two kinds of righteousness. This is what happened during Luther's time. Many in the medieval church taught that God desires active righteousness from us in order to be saved. If we confuse these two types of righteousness, then we end up trusting in ourselves for our own salvation. This indeed is backwards! God does not judge us according to our deeds, which will never be enough to stand before God's judgment seat. Instead, God judges us on the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone.

Similarly, if we confuse these two types of righteousness, it can also lead to neglected duties in this world. If we think that passive righteousness establishes not only our relationship with God, but also our relationship with our neighbors, then we will end up neglecting the needs of the world around us. We will fail to do the work that God desires us to do out in the world. We will fail to work hard at our vocations.

When we go to the worship service, we need to see ourselves as those who receive. God desires to give us his forgiveness in absolution and the proclaimed Word. He desires to give us the true body and blood of his Son in Holy Communion. We simply receive, without any merit on our part. But then we are compelled to offer up our lives as a living sacrifice to God because of what he has done for us—not for fear of punishment or promise of reward, but out of thanksgiving to God. Therefore, we go out into the world during the week, we go about our jobs to the best of our ability, and we live with our families and neighbors, caring for them according to our vocation.

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 190

November/December 2018

The American Association of Lutheran Churches

Phone: (260) 452-3213

Fax: (260) 452-3215

Email: theaalc@taalc.org

Visit Us On The Web
www.taalc.org

The Evangel

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

Mail your check and this form to:

The AALC

921 East Dupont Rd #920

Fort Wayne IN 46825-1551

_____ New Subscription _____ Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

Congregation _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Subscription \$ _____

Additional donation for The AALC \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____