

# The EVANGEL

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# Letter From the Editor

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This edition of *The Evangel* focuses on The Reformation and study of Scripture. Surely without the deep, careful study of the Word of God, the Reformation would not have happened. Luther credited his Reformation discovery—that we are saved not by works of the Law, but by the righteousness of Christ—to the truths he found in Scripture, so it seems good, right, and salutary that we focus on both of these topics in our Reformation edition.

Personal study of the Scriptures can be difficult in our tech-obsessed, and otherwise distracted culture. It's easy to reach for a phone, or a television remote before reaching for the Bible. In so many ways, it's easy to choose anything else: work, family, sports, school. Good things even get in the way of our own private study.

So, let's begin this edition by answering the question: what is the Word of God, and why should we spend time reading it?

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16, NKJV)

Scripture is "given by the inspiration of God," literally meaning, it is "breathed-out" by God. Though there were real, historical people who wrote the Bible, it was God who orchestrated its writing; the other points flow from this. It is "profitable for doctrine," like Luther found when he sparked the Reformation. It informs our doctrine and guides our beliefs. Scripture is used for reproof and correction. Without God's Law written in the Bible, we would have very limited concept of what is right and wrong. "Instruction in righteousness" is a fascinating one. Not only does Scripture instruct us about what righteousness *should* look like through the Law, but it also shows us what righteousness *looked like* exemplified in Christ. Now, as people who believe in Christ, we are instructed to live lives that follow in that righteousness. Therefore, every person can be "equipped for every good work."

Time spent reading God's Word is beneficial not just for bolstering your intellectual abilities. Surely we do acquire knowledge of God, and that is a good thing. However, the Scriptures are not only used for that purpose. God speaks to us through His Word. He brings us the Law, and He brings

us His Gospel. We read about God's mighty acts, the constant forgiveness and love that He displays to His people. We get to know the God who created the entire universe who loves us and cares for us so much that He would send His son to die for us. The Scriptures bring us comfort, help us mourn well, and bring us peace when we are troubled. The Bible bolsters our love of God, and encourages us in our good works toward our neighbor. All of these things are wonderful, and worth setting aside some time for.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." (Ps. 119:105)

In Christ,  
Lisa Cooper

If you would like to submit an article to *The Evangel*, please send it and any pictures along with author and photo credits to [theevangel@taalc.org](mailto:theevangel@taalc.org). If you would prefer to send things via snail-mail, please send to Lisa Cooper at 117 Cedar Lane, Groton, NY, 13073.

# Three Little Rules

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

When Dr. Martin Luther was told that the publishers of Wittenberg wanted to print his German writings, he suggested that there was something of much greater importance than reading his books.<sup>1</sup> They should read and study the Holy Bible. Luther said that he would be quite content for his writings to remain in obscurity. He was aware of how little the Church had benefited from many collections of books, and how much more it would have derived from careful reading and study of the Holy Scriptures. Luther lamented that writings by church fathers, councils, and teachers often were read while the Bible lay, “forgotten in the dust under the bench (as happened to the book of Deuteronomy, in the time of the kings of Judah).” The Reformer declared that it was his intention when he translated the Bible into German that there would be much less writing by others, and much more reading and study of the Holy Scriptures. In his opinion, it would behoove everyone to let the prophets and apostles stand in the professor’s lectern; all the rest may listen at their feet. With that in mind, Luther made a friendly request of anyone who should desire to read his books. It was that such reading should not hinder their careful reading and study of God’s Holy Word. On that note, Dr. Luther suggested three little rules for the profitable reading and study of the Bible.

Following the example of King David as set before us in Psalm 119:26 ff., the three rules are: *Oratio, Meditatio, and Tentatio* (Prayer, Meditation, and Suffering). First, “Pray,” says Luther: “[K]neel down in your little room [Matt. 6:6] and pray to God with real humility and earnestness, that he through his dear Son may give you his Holy Spirit, who will enlighten you, lead you, and give you understanding.” We are reminded of how David ceaselessly entreated God throughout Psalm 119 saying, “Teach me, Lord, instruct me, lead me, show me.” Although David daily read and heard the text of Moses, his desire was for the One who is, “The real teacher of the Scriptures.” Second, “Meditate.” Surely, this is done silently, in the heart and mind. But also, we are admonished to speak out loud. Repeat God’s Word, read and reread it aloud, with careful attention and deep reflection. Ask the Holy Spirit for divine understanding. And, do not give up on the process prematurely, thinking that you have gained complete understanding after only one or two readings. If that is the case, says Luther, you will be like unripened fruit that, “falls to the ground before it is half

ripe.” Third, “Tentatio.” Luther follows this Latin term with the German translation, “*Anfechtung*,” for which there is no single English equivalent. Perhaps, we could offer: suffering, or tribulation, or temptation. The point is that Scripture must be applied to the reality of Christian life. One cannot know, “how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God’s Word is,” until it is brought to bear on life’s deepest difficulties, struggles, and sorrows. Here, Luther muses about how the devil attacks and assaults the children of God.

*I myself (if you will permit me, mere mouse-dirt, to be mingled with pepper) am deeply indebted to my papists that through the devil’s raging they have beaten, oppressed, and distressed me so much. That is to say, they have made a fairly good theologian of me, which I would not have become otherwise.<sup>2</sup>*

It is in this process of suffering that God’s children are taught to seek and love the Word of God.

Finally, Luther exhorts us by saying that if we truly study the Scriptures in this way, we will soon see that other books are “stale and putrid” in comparison. We will not only despise the books written by our adversaries, but grow less and less pleased with our own. If we reach such a place, perhaps we may begin to hope that we have become real theologians. However, if we are inclined to flatter ourselves with our own little books, or impressed ourselves with our beautiful sermons, and if we are extremely pleased by the praises that are heaped upon us, or we are looking for more praise when others seem to forget how gifted we are, then says Luther, take yourself by the ears. Yes! Take yourself by that beautiful pair of big, long, shaggy donkey ears. “Decorate them with golden bells, so that people will be able to hear you wherever you go, point their fingers at you, and say, ‘See, see! There goes that clever beast, who can write such exquisite books and preach so remarkably well.’”

Or, you could read and study God’s Holy Word using Three Little Rules. They are: Prayer, Meditation, and Suffering. May it be so! Amen!

<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, “Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther’s German Writings,” Volume 34. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960) pp. 283-288.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.287.

# Relationship Outreach

*by The Rev. Joe Christina*

**M**y own ministry experience has revealed that churches tend to do neighborhood and community outreach in pretty set patterns that have been the practice for many generations. Perhaps the most well-known form of community outreach would be VBS (which for many of our TAALC churches was probably suspended or modified this summer). But traditionally, VBS starts with a planning process. A curriculum is chosen, teachers and volunteers are fielded, and then a chosen format for publicity is decided upon: perhaps a newspaper ad, signage, flyers, a mailer, etc. Then the big week or days come. Parents file in with little ones, we have them register usually asking for a mailing address, and then we have our fun. At the end of the week, we mail a thank you letter and invite families to church or Sunday School in the fall. Next year, we rinse and repeat.

Now I am not disparaging this process in the least. It has been tried and true for many years and the Lord has no doubt used it to reach families with the message of the gospel. But what I am offering is that we look at outreach almost solely in the form of events. Outreach and having families added to our membership roll is not always as simple as an event and a mailing. In fact, it often takes time.

Relationship building is a powerful way to open up opportunities to share our faith and church with others. And like courting a person before marriage, these relationships can often take time to develop. Allow me to give a personal example of what I mean. "Phil" is the spouse of a very active member of my congregation. He would attend sporadically but he never had much (if anything) to say to me. And then one evening he attended one of our midweek Lenten meals.

We finally started talking. Not about church and Jesus and the Bible. Rather, about the movie "Tombstone." It was one of his favorites and he was surprised that a "man of the cloth" would even be familiar with an action packed shoot 'em up western like that. (By the way everyone thinks Val Kilmer stole the show in that film but Kurt Russel was as no-nonsense of a Wyatt Earp as anyone could be). Later on, during a hospital visit, we found ourselves talking football and when his wife arrived he marveled that she was probably shocked that we weren't talking about theology. I had developed a relationship with "Phil" and he became a much more regular attender and open to the Word and Sacrament.

And all I did was talk about "Tombstone." The Lord did the rest.

In our greater community, the Lord places people in our paths. We have friends and coworkers and people we just chance to meet, many of whom do not know the hope that we have in Jesus. These are opportunities for us to build these types of relationships. They need not be deep friendships like we might share with a spouse or our best friends. They simply need to be "friendlyships." And rather than immediately asking someone the "If you were to die tonight..." question, we might simply talk about other shared interests, or family, or whatever else comes to mind. As that relationship is nurtured, then it would follow that a person will be much more inclined to at least listen to a friendly invite to church or a profession of our personal faith. And again, these things take time. I pray that the Lord opens my eyes as well as the eyes of others in our association to see these relationship building opportunities.

# Benin Ministry Update

*by Patrice Legbanon, General Secretary, ELA-SBe*

Dear Presiding Pastor, and The American Association of Lutheran Churches,

May grace and peace be given to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I pray that this letter finds you in peace.

May the Lord give you back a hundredfold the means you deployed to the Lutheran Church in Africa—Synod of Benin (ELA-SBe) for the COVID-19 relief. The government of Benin announced to the Council of Ministers on Wednesday May 26, 2020 the reopening of places of worship (churches, temples, mosques, etc.) from Tuesday June 2, 2020 following a new evaluation of the measures implemented in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, this reopening of places of worship calls for individual and collective responsibility both for religious leaders, and for followers. All must scrupulously observe and follow barrier gestures in order to limit and contain the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

In places of worship, religious leaders must ensure that the wearing of masks, hand washing, and observance of the minimum health safety distance of one meter between people are observed. They must also, for those who practice it, prescribe the suspension of the liturgical gesture of peace or accolades during the celebrations.

In support of these measures, said officials will take care to observe reasonable margins of time between celebrations and then to disinfect places of worship regularly.

The government is appealing to everyone's sense of responsibility, so that the relaxation of the measure of closure of places of worship that has taken place since March 22, 2020 is a measure that benefits everyone.

After two months of closure due to COVID-19, churches and other places of worship are finally allowed to open their doors to the faithful. As a prelude to this reopening announced for June 2, 2020, President Rev. Abona Legue Koumbi of the Lutheran Church in Africa-Synod of Benin (ELA-

SBe) communicated to the faithful church members.

In a message in French and the Fon national language, President/Bishop Abona Legue Koumbi announced reopening of the churches, but he invited the faithful (church members) not to forget the conditions of this government decision. "Finally! Finally! You are going to attend the activities of our churches which will open as early as June 2," he said.

For the good progress of the activities of the church at this time of Coronavirus President/Bishop Abona Legue Koumbi urged the faithful to the rigorous respect of the barrier gestures indicated against the spread of COVID-19. "We need to know that the evil is still there; and that we must systematically follow these barrier gestures...I beg you, let us try to observe this scrupulously so that by attending the divine service, in church activities, we can also have the charity not to let this evil be propagate in our country," he insisted.

In West Africa, COVID-19 is spreading faster now. According to the Minister of Health, Benin has around 1,300 confirmed cases of Coronavirus. A third are declared cured, two thirds are under treatment and 21 deaths have occurred as of the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, 2020.

On Sunday July 5<sup>th</sup> 2020, after the Divine service, there followed the sharing of the package of the various food items to the community affected by this pandemic. Please find below the details of the funds.

We appreciate your gifts and seek your kind approval for regular support to the young Benin Lutheran Church.

Thank you.

In Christ.

**Budget:** Received budget: \$ 1,396.26  
XOF 812 434

Spent budget : \$ 1,376.04  
XOF 800 000

N°	Designation/Breakdown	Quantity of items	Amount (XOF) for unit price	Amount (XOF/CFA)	Amount (USD)
1	Hand washing device	2	90 000	180,000	\$ 309,639
2	Soap	30	1 000	30,000	\$ 51,603
3	Hand sanitizer	10	15 000	150,000	\$ 258,010
4	Mask	200	1 000	200,000	\$ 344,003
5	Rice	4	30 000	120,000	\$ 206,403
6	Beans	4	20 000	80,000	\$ 137,592
7	Oil	0	0	0	0
8	Maize/cob	2	20 000	40,000	\$ 68,795
<b>Total</b>				<b>800,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,376.04</b>



# Florida Ministry Update

*by The Rev. Robert Wallace*

*“Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved.” - Martin Luther*

**I**t was only a year ago when the new ministry began. The idea of planting a TAALC Lutheran Church in Charlotte, N.C. became a reality—a mission. The proposal was voted on and accepted by CAM (Commission on American Missions).

This new ministry had begun in Charlotte. Robert and Shelley reached out within the community and began holding Bible Study and Catechism every Sunday evening in a home. Wednesday night Bible Study at Chick-fil-a offered food for the soul and the belly. A group of 12 met weekly to hear God’s word as this new ministry began to blossom. All that was needed now was a place to worship.

Robert and Shelley prayed diligently and asked the Lord to lead them in the right direction. They stepped out in faith with peace in their hearts. During the Thanksgiving holiday, Robert and Shelley moved to a carriage apartment that had just opened up to rent. One large room was on the bottom floor, and a two-bedroom apartment was directly above it. Parking was available, and this room could possibly hold up to 40 people.

They began with an empty space, 10 hymnals, and 1/2 of a communion set. Furniture, a baptismal font, candles, Catechism books, and money for carpet and building materials came pouring in as God’s people began to contribute to this ministry. By February of 2020, Christus Victor Lutheran Church of Charlotte, NC had a place to worship. Robert and Shelley also had a place to live above the worship area where members of this small congregation could come together for fellowship.



Bible Study and Catechism classes began to be held in the new worship area. Our first formal Worship Service as a new church plant was scheduled to be held on March 15, 2020. Bulletins had been prepared, and a potluck dinner had been planned for the small congregation after their first Worship Service. Robert and Shelley were so excited.

Just as this new ministry was beginning to flourish, a storm hit. COVID-19, an infectious disease being spread throughout the world had found its way to the Charlotte area. Our first worship service had to be cancelled due to the effects of this virus and state mandates.

By the first week of April, the apartment complex which held our Carriage apartment/worship area fell victim to this deadly virus. Several families within this complex were infected with this virus. By mid-April, the first death occurred. Although we continued to reach out to our neighbors/congregation through telephone and virtual meetings, fear had already overcome. Several families who were part of our small congregation packed their bags and moved from the inner city. Those that stayed behind did not want to congregate within a small area such as ours in fear of contracting the virus.

Days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months. Robert and Shelley had to have their food / medicine delivered to their doors as it was not safe to be out. COVID cases were in each apartment building. They watched weekly as cleaning crews came in to sanitize the stairwells and moving vans covered the parking lot

daily. The beautiful little worship area that had been built by love sat empty. God had different plans.

During this time of isolation, Robert and Shelley prayed together to seek God's direction. Robert continued to minister to others through technology. They found themselves now with a worship area that no one was ready to enter due to the virus. Additional funds were paid each month so that they could have a place to worship in addition to a place to live. In June, their 6 month lease would be up for renewal. They began to understand that meeting for worship within a large apartment community in the center of Charlotte during a pandemic where so many had already been affected was not going to be the answer.

Robert and Shelley could not sit idle. They also did not feel that it was right to continue to receive monetary gifts and items for a space that could not be utilized as a worship area for some time (several months, if not a year or more). The decision was then made to push the "pause" button. Pressing the "pause" button would not abandon those who participated in this ministry prior to the pandemic. Most of this group is now scattered across the western part of North Carolina, and do not feel that they can continue to travel to the inner city to worship. Robert has and will continue to reach them through social media, and will continue weekly virtual Bible Study.

What now? Why Santa Rosa County in Florida? This area was on our radar at the foundation of this ministry. Two areas were discussed: Charlotte, North Carolina, and Milton, Florida. Both areas needed a Conservative Lutheran Church. Robert and Shelley were ready and willing to go to either place. The decision to go to Charlotte, NC was made due to the large population. Robert and Shelley believed that a new church could be established, and then after two to three years, another pastor could take over the ministry in Charlotte, and they could continue the ministry by relocating to Santa Rosa County in Florida to plant another church.

Milton, Florida is much different than the inner city area in Charlotte. Fear of the virus has not affect-

ed the people there as it has within the inner city of North Carolina. The Baptist churches in this area are full every Sunday. The Lutherans who live in Milton have to travel 45 minutes to the Pensacola area to worship in a Conservative Lutheran Church. Robert and Shelley's daughter and family are within this number.

Milton, Florida is the home of Whiting Field Naval Air Station. The Navy and Marine pilots come to this Air Station with their families for up to three years for training. Some are Lutheran families who have the choice to drive 45 minutes or more to worship, or to stay at home. As time goes by, many families end up staying at home.

On June 15th, with the blessings of CAM, Robert and Shelley (and their two chihuahuas) stored all of their furniture and relocated into an 18 ft. camper just outside the city limits of Milton, Florida. This location is in the Geographical center of Santa Rosa County.

Over the past seven weeks, they have grown from six people around their daughter's table to 8 people as well as 6 people virtually for weekly Bible Study. Within this short period of time, Robert and Shelley have reached out to the community, and several families have indicated that they would attend worship with our group once we begin meeting regularly in a church building. These families expressed how grateful they would be not to have to drive so far to worship within a Conservative Lutheran setting. As the numbers of individuals and families begin to grow interest in a church plant, Robert and Shelley's goal is to be in a worship facility by mid-October in Milton, Florida.

Robert and Shelley covet your prayers. For additional informational regarding their ministry, you many contact them at:

794-780-9705

robert2ukraine@gmail.com

New Physical Mailing Address:

5433 Russell Drive

Milton, Florida 32570

# The Invisible Enemy

by Dr. James Hoefer

Our President has called COVID-19 an invisible enemy, but as terrible as this virus is, it is nothing compared to THE INVISIBLE ENEMY we are facing every day. Many read the Bible thinking God and humans are the main characters of the story, and invisible spiritual beings as simply background characters. But a deeper dive into the biblical portrayal brings some surprises! There we find that *everything we see in the visible, physical realm is caused, provoked, or at least influenced by something in the invisible, spiritual realm.*

We have been taught a materialistic worldview where everything can be explained by our five senses. In fact, if a question can't be answered with a number or formula, or put into a test tube and analyzed under a microscope, it isn't considered worth thinking about. But this worldview can't answer ultimate questions such as who you are, or why you are here. It doesn't explain things like why teenage terrorists blow themselves up, or why one out of 75 men in America are in jail.

The Bible reveals that there are parallel invisible realities. When we read the Bible, we tend to focus on our rebellion against God; but Scripture reveals a parallel spiritual rebellion. As a result, territories, nations, people groups are now subjected to forces of darkness (Deut. 4, Eph. 6, Daniel 10), a hierarchy of terror seeking to team with earthly partners to bring total destruction!

But our Triune God also rules with His "staff-team." Invisible agents with delegated authority, honoring their creator, are portrayed as invited by God to participate in making decisions and carrying them out. This crew goes by many titles, as Psalm 89:5-7 demonstrates: *"The heavens will praise Your wonders, Yahweh; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones... Who among the sons of God is like Yahweh, A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all those who are around Him? Yahweh God of hosts, who is like You?"*

Do you realize that Church was birthed by the Holy Spirit to mirror God's heavenly staff-team! Is the church boring? Well, if it gets away from Christ's agenda, yes. But really, there is nothing more exciting than being part of the church! Sometimes we act as if Simon Peter called a meeting of the apostles and said to them, *"Now we are here today to talk about whether or not we ought to start a Church."* They discuss that for a while, and then James makes a motion, John seconds it, and they vote 10 to 2 to start a Church in Jerusalem.

It didn't happen that way! *"Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven"* (Acts 2). God started the Church—teaming up with us to attack the enemy's gatehouse (Matthew 16) and free the captives! The



Bible teaches that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus was actually his victory over the human and spiritual power structures who killed him (1 Cor 2:6-8; 15:22-27). Paul envisions the day when the rebels of the divine council, the powers and authorities, are dethroned and a recreated heaven and earth comes under the direct rule of Christ and his Church. This is why 1 Peter 1:12 tells us that the angels are looking at us, the church, astonished at authority God has placed in our hands. He has given us the keys of the kingdom, to move in Christ's authority, releasing the captives, and making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20).

One of the privileges I have is being a part of [www.hopeforhornofafrica.org](http://www.hopeforhornofafrica.org) headquartered here in Arizona. We work with one of the largest and fastest growing Lutheran church bodies in the world, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. Last year our leadership team offered pastor workshops in four cities, Destiny Discovery Training with youth, while encouraging the churches exploding inside the Eritrean refugee camps. This Spring, our House of Hope received from the government 15 more precious at risk children, coming from various backgrounds. We are now renting a new, larger facility, and hiring new staff to care and love each one! But our task is much more than providing food, clothing, education and medicine. The truth is, each one comes with unknown problems and challenges. We don't know all the hurts, betrayals and lies they have already faced in their young lives. We do know that even now the invisible enemy is seeking to rob them of God's glorious destiny. Will you join us in welcoming them? If you wish more information about praying for them, or sponsoring, contact our volunteer coordinator Nora (Poki) Carr at [pokicarr@hopeforhornofafrica.org](mailto:pokicarr@hopeforhornofafrica.org)

We invite you to exercise with us the authority we have in Christ, and proclaim freedom over these children. We guarantee you, there is nothing more exciting than to see a child *"delivered from the dominion of darkness and transferred in the kingdom of his beloved Son"* (Col 1:13)!



# VBS-in-a-Bag

by Kim Stephan and  
the Our Savior VBS Teachers

As the Vacation Bible School teachers at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Piqua, Ohio were planning for the 2020 VBS Week, they weren't planning for a COVID-19 pandemic. After deciding it was necessary to cancel VBS for the safety of the teachers and families involved, they put their plans on hold until 2020. All were disappointed, but member Becky Pethtel said she felt the Lord prompting her to try something new this year.

She shared the idea with the other teachers, "VBS-in-a-Bag" became the new 2020 VBS theme. Teachers sorted through odds-and-ends of lessons and crafts that were left over from previous VBS classes, and found plenty of materials. Christian shopping bags were donated by a church member, and the teachers spent an afternoon stuffing a bag for each regular VBS attendee that included 5 lesson sheets, coloring pages, a craft kit, a drawstring bag and other fun surprises, along with the all-important daily snack! They used pre-packaged crackers, cookies, and other snack treats.

Each family received a sticker book or card game. Families were encouraged to send photos to the church Facebook page or email them to the church so the teachers can see their projects. The Our Savior teachers hope this will be a welcomed idea for parents to keep their children involved in learning about the Bible and Jesus, and provide them with activities to do as everyone stays home and stays healthy!



## Prayer Bookmark

1. Rev. Daniel Cloeter
2. Abiding Grace Lutheran Church *Gillette, WY*
3. Rev. David F. Johnson
4. Clergy Commission
5. American Lutheran Church *Mandan, ND*
6. Rev. David M. Johnson
7. Bonnie Ohlrich, Secretary/Coordinator  
TAALC/ALTS
8. Ascension Lutheran Church *Ames, IA*
9. Ascension Lutheran Church *Waterloo, IA*
10. Dr. Dan Kruger, Treasurer of The AALC
11. Rev. Irvin Stapf
12. Bethel Lutheran Church *Rowland, PA*
13. God's Hidden Treasures (Rev. Scott Yount)
14. Rev. Dr. James L. Hoefler
15. Bible Lutheran Church *Dodge Center, MN*
16. Rev. Jamie Strickler
17. Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church  
*Saint Paul, MN*
18. Your Local Community
19. Rev. Loyd Ginn
20. Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church *Ellis, KS*
21. For All Affected by COVID-19
22. Rev. Dean Stoner, Administrator, Pro Tem.
23. Radio Ministry
24. Christ Lutheran Church *Chippewa Falls, WI*
25. Rev. Michael D. Holsten
26. Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins, Presiding Pastor
27. Regional Mission Developers
28. Rev. Morris M. Kirchhof
29. The Persecuted Church
30. Rev. Paul H. Hansen
31. For All Who Are Mourning

# Prayer Bookmark

1. Rev. Darrel Deuel
2. Christ Lutheran Church *Duluth, MN*
3. Mr. Duane Kleven, Administrator of the ALTS
4. Rev. John Hallock
5. Christ Lutheran Church *Germantown, MD*
6. Rev. Paul J. Johansen
7. Christ the King Lutheran Church  
*Chesterfield, MI*
8. World Mission Commission
9. TAALC Leadership
10. Rev. Phil Meadows
11. Christ the Ray of Hope Lutheran Church  
*Albuquerque, NM*
12. Board of Appeals and Adjudication
13. Board of Trustees
14. Rev. Richard Sunderlage
15. Christus Victor Lutheran Church *Fayetteville, NC*
16. Kris Johnson, Seminary Student
17. Clam Falls Lutheran Church *Frederic WI*
18. Call Committees
19. Rev. William P. Moberly
20. For the National Convention
21. Community Lutheran Church *Wausaukee, WI*
22. For All of our Seminary Students
23. Rev. Dr. Tom Stover, Seminary President
24. Elim Lutheran Church *Brush Prairie, WA*
25. Publications Commission
26. Emmanuel Lutheran Church *Bremerton, WA*
27. Pilot Knob Lutheran Church *Forest City, IA*
28. John Linch, Seminary student
29. Rev. Rich A. Eddy
30. Christus Victor Lutheran Church *Milton, FL*

# ALTS Has a New Website!

*by Duane Kleven*

A new initiative to update the American Lutheran Theological Seminary Website has proved to be fruitful. Not only has the new website been launched, but it looks better than ever.

The attached graphic represents two months—July and August—of activity for the new ALTS website. The numbers are not huge. We are averaging about 50 to 100 visits per week, but the numbers are double, or even triple the reach we had from our old website. Please also note, we have done zero advertising of the new site yet. This is purely organic growth by the Grace of God.

The exciting news is that we have touched nearly every country in the world in just two months. The map represents the visit count to the website by geographic region; the darker the shaded area, the higher the visit count.

We are exploring what opportunities we have available to us if we make a concerted effort to market ourselves. However, this is a very good start.

*"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:11-12, ESV)*





# Ordination of Andrew Virkus

*by the Rev. Andrew Virkus*



COVID-19 has had a large impact in today's culture. Everyone is encouraged to wear masks, self-isolate, and social-distance. I heard one person say recently on the radio that COVID-19 is bringing about or fostering a generation of hermits. Since my ordination was coming up, it seemed that Satan was actively seeking to prevent this celebration from happening.

Cabin fever is not all that uncommon in the northland. Minnesota, with its longer winter season, already creates anxiousness. The circumstances of COVID-19 seem to exacerbate this anxiety. These circumstances foster a sense that these days will never end and that the world is falling apart.

Summer is a season that is supposed to be busy with preparations for harvesting and harvesting itself. Yet, in these circumstances, just like Spring planting, it also reinforces our need for patience. It reinforces our need to pray and wait on the Lord. This is a part of country living, for the planting of a seed teaches patience. It is only through time in which the Lord causes the seed to grow that man can see the fruits of his labor.

Therefore, at the beginning of the recent respite, Poplar Lake Lutheran Church came together to celebrate my installation and ordination. We came together to celebrate God's Word and the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Therefore, what was planted here begins to bear fruit, and we begin to see what God has caused to grow.

You see, these things still hold us together—God's Word and His Sacraments still hold us together. For, God's Word and Sacraments involve both planting and harvesting. Even so, I was blessed to become more fully His Servant, more fully entrusted with the care and guidance of His Children. I told Pr. Leins, "I may have earned a masters degree, but I am not a master, for I still have a Master." The implication is that the work has just begun.

COVID-19 subdued the number of those able to attend, but the congregation was excited to be able to come back together after being sequestered since March.

Together, the people of Poplar Lake Lutheran Church shared a meal of many offerings: smoked turkey breast, wild rice chicken salad, cranberry-apple salad, and rhubarb cake.

There were many people involved in the service of ordination and installation. Pastor Leins and Pastor John Anderson attended, while Mr. Duane Kleven came as a representative of The American Lutheran Theological Seminary (Pastor Stoner and Pastor Stover had family matters to attend to). LeAnn Ryan made my stoles from old altar cloths. Mrs. LeAnn Ryan and Mrs. Pamela Virkus prepared and packaged the food items for lunch, and Mrs. Garnet Aanenson played music.

Another highlight of the day: Ethel Warren had been nursing some orphaned kittens. As we were eating our "prepackaged lunches," the wee-little kittens were crying because they were hungry. "Who can ignore their cries for mercy?" Their little pleas "for mercy" did not go unnoticed and we helped Ethel feed and cuddled with the kittens. Those kittens were recently adopted, just as we all have also been adopted.

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