

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken.” — John 10:35



DR. MARTIN LUTHER,
GOD'S MAN FOR REFORMATION

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A PRAYER FOR OUR PASTOR

In his retirement Pastor Emeritus Arthur Schulz, Black River Falls, Wis., has perused archived copies of Lutheran periodicals for hymns and poems and shared them with our pastors. This hymn—which may be sung to the tune of *TLH* #483—first appeared in the *Lutheran Witness* of January 29, 1946. It was written by Adela Kretzmann Weber of Canton, Ohio. We print it here for its correlation with President Eichstadt’s August letter of encouragement to our pastors on page 14.
— Editor

We pray Thee, Lord, Thy servant bless and keep,
For Thou hast called on him to feed Thy sheep.
Give strength and courage for the task ahead,
And on his work Thy fullest blessing shed.
In hours of grief and doubt his comfort be,
That he with trusting heart seek help from Thee.
When paths are rough and steep, be Thou his Guide,
Make known to him that Thou art at his side.
May we, Thy flock, with prayer his work uphold,
And help to bring lost sheep into Thy fold.
Our hearts keep humble—only trusting Thee—
And we shall praise Thee in eternity.

The Reformation Blessing Above All Others

PASTOR NATHAN PFEIFFER • SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

Many blessings of the Reformation of the 1500's still affect us today. We could mention having a Bible translation in our native tongue, having many hymns to sing praises to God, putting into practice the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (that Christ has given every believer—not just to the pope and his priests—the keys to forgive or to retain sins), and parents and pastors using Luther's *Small Catechism* to instruct children in the basic Bible teachings.

Many other blessings of the Reformation still flow down to us today. But one blessing rises above all the rest. It is the re-discovered answer to the eternally important question of the jailer in Philippi, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30)

Early in his life Martin Luther struggled in his relationship with God. He wrestled with guilt over his sins and looked to his church for answers. By doing good works he tried to quiet his conscience. He prayed to Mary (as his priests recommended) to aid him. None of these things helped. He still felt there was no way out from under God's wrath. He had been taught to see Christ as someone who was judging and condemning him for his sins.

What changed things for Luther?

While preparing for a lecture in Psalms, Luther struggled to understand Romans 1:17 where St. Paul writes, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" Here Luther began to find the help for which he had been so desperately searching—as he would later say:

"...I hated the expression 'righteousness of God,' since I had been instructed by the usage and custom of all teachers to understand it... as the 'formal or active righteousness' in which God proves Himself righteous by punishing sinners and the unjust...Finally, after days and nights of wrestling with this difficulty, God had mercy on me, and then I was able to note the connection of the words 'the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel' and 'the just shall live by faith.' Then I began to understand that the 'righteousness of God' is that through which the righteous live by the gift (*dono*)



"Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come, and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water'"

(Revelation 14:6-7 –
Dr. John Bugenhagen's
funeral text for
Martin Luther, who died
on February 18, 1546).

of God, that is through faith, and that the meaning is this: The gospel reveals the righteousness of God in a passive sense, that righteousness through which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.' Then I felt as if I had been completely reborn and had entered Paradise through widely opened doors." (WHAT LUTHER SAYS, Vol. III, p. 1225)

Here the great blessing of the Reformation shines forth! By studying God's Word Luther had discovered the good news that sinners are saved not by their works, but by faith in Jesus Christ. Our salvation is dependent on **Christ's** holiness, **His** righteousness, and **His** merits. Through faith in Jesus the believer is declared righteous in God's sight.

This is the eternal gospel we hear of in Revelation 14. Planned by God from eternity, it was first verbalized for man immediately after the fall into sin (Genesis 3). God promised that He would send One from the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head. It is said of Abraham that he "believed in the LORD and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). The Apostle Paul preached this eternal gospel throughout His epistles, "Therefore we conclude

that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28).

This is what Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions emphasize again and again—the eternal, unchangeable gospel. Article IV of the *Augsburg Confession* (1530 A.D.) states, "Our Churches...teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4."

It has been said that on this teaching the Lutheran church stands or falls. But much more than that—on this teaching our eternal salvation stands or falls! Thanks be to God that He justifies us, He declares us righteous, not by our feeble works but by faith in Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is imputed to us through faith.

This eternal gospel is the Reformation blessing which rises above all the rest. Thanks be to God!



Thy strong Word bespeaks us righteous; Bright with Thine own holiness, Glorious now, we press toward glory, And our lives our hopes confess. Alleluia! alleluia! Praise to Thee who light dost send! Alleluia, alleluia, Alleluia without end! Amen. (WS2000 #775:3).



After graduating from ILC this past Spring, teacher/Principal Ross Kok was installed at St. John's Lutheran Church, Okabena, Minnesota, on Sunday, August 17, 2014 (see announcements, p. 20). Ross, the youngest of three sons, is shown with his parents, Jim and Gena Kok. He was born in Waupun, Wis. and grew up on the family farm near Friesland. He attended elementary school at Faith Lutheran in Markesan, Immanuel Lutheran High School, Eau Claire, UW-Madison (two years), and three years in the Education program at ILC. God bless His servant's work in the classroom at Okabena! — Editor

What is a Lutheran (according to Luther)?

PASTOR DAVID REIM • VERNON, BC (CANADA)

You meet a new colleague and to your surprise you discover she is a Lutheran. You are delighted to find you have this in common. In the course of time, however, after several discussions you realize your colleague does not believe God created the world in six days, as the Bible says. Then, come to find out, she doesn't really believe the account of Jesus' resurrection is to be taken literally. When it really comes down to it, she isn't even sure there is a literal heaven and is pretty sure there is no such thing as hell.

You finally ask, incredulously, "You call yourself a 'Lutheran'?"

Just what is a 'Lutheran'?

Today it would seem that name doesn't stand for much. Many who call themselves Lutherans are among the most liberal 'Christians' around, denying key teachings of Scripture.

That gives us an opportunity to explain what it really means to be Lutheran. We are not honoring or following a man. It is not Luther's doctrine or teaching we follow but God's Word. We acknowledge and praise God that He used Martin Luther to bring His true Word back to the people.

To be 'Lutheran' is to share Luther's devotion to the Word of God, making it the only norm for all teaching in the church.

Perhaps the best way, therefore, to understand what it means to be a 'Lutheran' is to listen to what Martin Luther himself has to say about what is important and about the use of his name in this way.

"I ask that men make no reference to my name and call themselves, not Lutherans but Christians. What is Luther? After all, the doctrine is not mine, nor have I been crucified for anyone....I neither am nor want to be any man's master. Christ alone is our Master. He teaches me and all believers one and the

same doctrine (Matt. 23:8)" (*WHAT LUTHER SAYS*, Vol. II, p. 856).

Luther clearly considered the Word of God to be everything. The doctrine he taught was not his own but God's as taught in the Scriptures. Yet when the enemies of the gospel began calling those who believed as Luther believed 'Lutherans,' he realized that they cannot deny that name without denying Christ in whom Luther trusted.

Luther said, "But if you believe that Luther's doctrine is evangelical and the pope's unevangelical, you must not flatly disown Luther, otherwise you also disown his doctrine, which you admittedly recognize as the doctrine of Christ. Rather you must say: Whether Luther personally is a scoundrel or a saint means nothing to me. His doctrine, however, is not his but Christ's own" (*WLS*, Vol. II, p. 857).

So, you see, to be a 'Lutheran' is to stand firm on the Word of God. To believe every Word of God and to stand firm on that Word, proclaiming it against all that opposes God's Word.

As Luther said one time, "Luther himself has no desire to be Lutheran except insofar as he teaches the Holy Scripture in purity" (*WLS*, Vol. II, p. 858).

Also, the later confessors said, "The Word of God alone should be and remain the only standard and rule of doctrine" (*Formula of Concord*, T.D., #9, p. 855).

This is especially true of the central teaching of Holy Scripture that our salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ's substitutionary death.

May we live up to that name in our life and confession to show the world that we rely on God's Word alone, and that we trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness and salvation.

That is being truly 'Lutheran'!

What Is a ‘Confessional’ Lutheran?

PASTOR THEODORE BARTHELS • AUSTIN, MINNESOTA

*“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing,
but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”*

(Matthew 7:15)



*“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you
will save both yourself and those who hear you.”*

(1 Timothy 4:16)

Jesus emphasized doctrine in His ministry. He went from city to city teaching about the coming of the Kingdom of God, preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Jesus was very adamant about corrupt and false teachings that were being disseminated among the people. *“He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes”* (Matthew 7:29). He possessed the authority of God, for Jesus was and is the Word made flesh. His Word is true, and only by continuing in His Word shall we be set free from sin, death, and the devil (John 8:31-32).

Jesus’ warning concerning the dangers of false teachers and corrupt doctrine should not be taken lightly. It is a deadly serious matter for our souls. Too many Christians dismiss His warning for themselves, thinking they are astute enough or wise enough to avoid the pitfalls of false teaching.

What is the result of this cavalier attitude toward doctrine? The world’s perception of what a Lutheran believes would horrify Martin Luther. One of the standards of the Lutheran Reformation is that Scripture alone is to be the authority for faith and life. Scripture alone is to determine the teaching of the church—whether spoken from the pulpit, taught in the classroom, or lived on the street.

This was Luther’s position as he stood against the

reason of men, the authority of Rome, or the power of princes. It became necessary for the early leaders of the Reformation to state clearly what they believed and why they believed it—because it was clearly taught by Holy Scripture. When others taught something different, or when others distorted the teaching of the Lutheran Church for their own gain, the early leaders of the church, including the princes, clearly stated what they believed and what they rejected.

Apologetics is a fancy word for pointing out unscriptural positions, and then presenting the truth of Scripture. Many today are uncomfortable with the idea of pointing out doctrinal errors; it is not considered polite or socially and politically correct.

Diversity is highly praised in our country, and rightly so when it comes to cultural and ethnic diversity.

However, the standard for theology, for doctrine, and for truth has been set by the Lord—and it is the Word of God! Teachings at variance with God’s Word undermine the truth of the cross. The most precious thing that we can hand down to our children is faith-life founded on the Word.

Many people suggest that a church which cares about

purity of doctrine is dead, boring, and irrelevant. Nothing could be further from the truth! Jesus declared that the faithful teaching of the truth of Holy Scripture makes one truly free—free from the judgment of the law, free from slavery to sin, free from death and hell.

Because of this key element of Reformation Lutheranism, we are careful to describe ourselves as “confessional” Lutherans. We are not just “fundamental” (meaning that we regard only some doctrines as important to defend), and we are not simply “conservative” (for that allows some variance of opinion). Rather, we are “confessional,” meaning that we regard the entire Bible and every word in it as God’s Word.

As the fathers of the Reformation stood firmly upon the Word and would not be swayed by the opinions or pressures of the world, may we also

study the Word and pray to remain steadfast to its truth in these last days.

“..We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ” (Ephesians 4:14-15).

*Lord, help us ever to retain
The Catechism’s doctrine plain
As Luther taught the Word of truth
In simple style to tender youth.
(WS2000 #775:3).*



A REFORMATION MESSAGE FROM OUR CLC PRESIDENT

Are We Losing?

PASTOR MICHAEL EICHSTADT • HALES CORNERS, WISCONSIN

The troops are withdrawing and coming home. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that the remaining US combat forces will leave Afghanistan sometime in 2016, after a bloody fifteen year conflict.

Not many, however, are calling it a victory. The enemy has not surrendered. Battles continue to rage. Political analysts and countless commentators speculate on whether the US is losing its influence on the world’s stage.

Fifteen years of conflict is a long time, but it’s nothing compared to the five hundred years since the battles of the Reformation began. History records some armed conflicts of the period, but the heart of the struggle was for the truth of the gospel: the liberating news that sinners are saved by God’s grace alone through faith in Christ alone as revealed in Scripture alone. Luther took his stand on that Rock of Christ. By God’s grace, we stand there now.

But are we losing? Has the Lutheran Church made any progress over the past five hundred years, or is it in retreat? Christ-confessing believers are marginalized by the world and are shoved into an ever-smaller corner of influence in society. The world doesn’t want to hear about sin. It rejects the Savior who reconciled sinners to God by His blood. Many who identify themselves as Lutherans have withdrawn from the battlefield, choosing to compromise with the enemy rather than contend for the truth. Persecution is becoming bolder, and outwardly we are weaker. Few congregations in our synodical fellowship would say they are doing better financially, numerically, or materially than they were fifteen years ago.

It’s an ongoing and at times discouraging struggle. Are we losing?

As we commemorate the Reformation, it’s important to remember that the Lutheran Church

was never intended to be about political pull, social acceptance, or impressive buildings and numbers.

Luther wrote: “We hold to that Defender of our church who says in Matt. 16:18: I shall build My church, not upon length of time, nor upon the great number of people, nor upon ‘so it must be,’ nor upon the practice or word of the saints...but upon this sole and solid Rock, Christ, the Son of God. Here lies the strength of our faith, here we are safe against the gates of hell...” (*WHAT LUTHER SAYS*, Vol. II, p. 863)

The battles we face are fierce. “*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*” (Ephesians 6:12, NIV1984). The enemy and his allies are strong, but our Savior is stronger. In fact, He has already won the war. He went to the front lines and suffered

the full assault of the enemy. It cost Him His life, but He gained the victory. Now He lives and rules as King at the Father’s right hand, interceding in our behalf.

Are we losing? How can we lose when we are proclaiming Jesus’ victory over sin and death? Take all the personal battles we face as individual believers, the challenges and difficulties we have in our congregations and church body, the opposition of the world and Satan’s relentless attacks—add them all up, and Paul still says, “*In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us...*” (Romans 8:37, NIV1984).

May the Spirit through the Word give us strength to keep fighting the good fight of faith! Confident in Christ’s victory, let us press on until we hear Him say, “Come home!”



FAITH OF OUR FATHERS (FIRST OF FOUR)

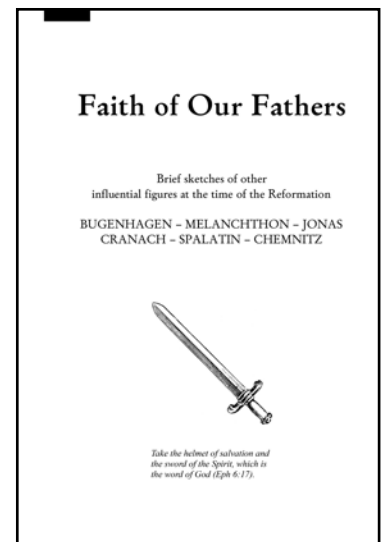
JOHN BUGENHAGEN

[These vignettes of men associated with Luther and the Reformation first appeared in connection with our CLC’s daily website devotions during Reformation season, 2013. Pastor David Schaller, Redeemer Lutheran Church, Sister Lakes, Mich., reports that the devotions were adapted from a Bible Class presentation, adding that “The original booklet and slides can be downloaded from our church website at <http://www.redeemerclc.info/devotional.html> — Go down the page until you see the ‘Faith of Our Fathers’ presentation.” — May the Holy Spirit bless our observance of this special season of the church year! — Editor]

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28, NIV1984)

In early sixteenth century Germany the Lord God used the life and work of Martin Luther to shine a light on the central teaching of the Bible: We gain heaven not on account of our own good deeds but because Jesus lived a perfect life and suffered for our sins. Yet while we refer to that period in history today as the “Lutheran” Reformation, the Holy Spirit was surely active in others besides Luther, leading them along the same path of discovery, uncovering for them too the precious truth of the gospel.

One of those others was John Bugenhagen. In 1504 at the age of nineteen,



FAITH OF OUR FATHERS: Brief sketches of other influential figures at the time of the Reformation. Includes Bugenhagen, Melanchthon, Jonas, Cranach, Spalatin, and Chemnitz.

Bugenhagen became a teacher and the principal of the school in Treptow, a town on the Rega River in what is today northern Poland. As it happened, although his chosen career was not strictly theological in nature, he had much contact with the church through his students as well as through a nearby monastery. Eventually, at the urging of his friends and with an inner desire for the ministry growing within him, he studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1509 at the age of twenty-four, becoming vicar of St. Mary's church in Treptow.

As a priest, Bugenhagen believed that a person could earn heaven through a series of good deeds and that he could make up for his own sins. He admitted later in an autobiographical commentary that before 1520 he attempted to achieve righteousness before God through good works and confession.

What changed in 1520? That was the year Luther's essay on "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" was published. This was the work that convinced Bugenhagen he needed to study carefully what the Bible taught about salvation by faith. The Holy Spirit led Bugenhagen to see this truth of Scripture, and

he found himself in agreement with Luther. In 1521 he moved to Wittenberg, Luther's hometown. While Martin was away at the Diet (Council) of Worms delivering his famous "Here I Stand" address, Bugenhagen taught his classes at the university.

In 1523 Bugenhagen became pastor of St. Mary's church in Wittenberg. Thus he became Luther's pastor, and the Lord used him to help shepherd Luther around the many spiritual pitfalls and dangers that beset him. Bugenhagen was always a pastor at heart, shepherding the church of God which Christ had bought with his own blood. He did not have the analytical mind of a Luther or a Melancthon, but he was a gifted organizer and contributed greatly to preserving unity in the early days of the Lutheran church. He died in 1558 at the age of seventy-three, a pastor in Wittenberg to the last.

(To read more about John Bugenhagen, try the brief biography by Walter Ruccius available free of charge online: <http://archive.org/details/johnbugenhagenpo00rucc>)



FAITH OF OUR FATHERS (SECOND OF FOUR)

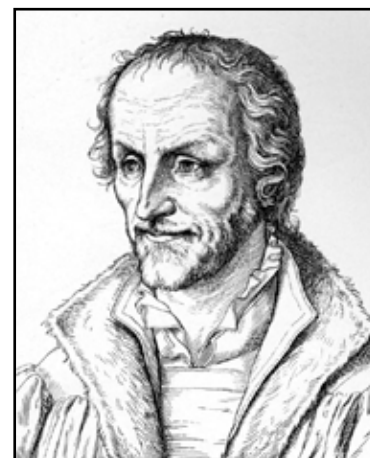
PHILIP MELANCHTHON

"For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (Romans 10:10, NIV1984)

Some think that confessions of faith such as the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed are not necessary. They say things like, "We just follow the Bible; we don't need to say anything more than that." In reality, however, this is not workable. For Scripture says, "...Many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

It is often very important to judge what comes from a person's mouth because there are so many false teachers who claim to "follow the Bible."

Philip Melancthon worked tirelessly during the decades of the Reformation in Germany to write down exactly what the Lutherans had come to know and believe from the Scriptures. These confessions were not a substitute for the Word of God, but they served to show others that what the Lutherans were preaching and teaching was actually in agreement with the Word of God.



Philip Melancthon
(16 February 1497 – 19 April 1560), was a German reformer, collaborator with Martin Luther.

In 1530 Emperor Charles V invited the Protestants to a meeting at Augsburg. Some were hesitant to attend, suspecting deceit on the part of the Emperor, but a confession of faith was prepared by Melancthon and was read aloud at the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530. Known today as the *Augsburg Confession*, it has become one of the most important documents in the history of the Christian church. It is known especially for its fourth article which summarizes what the Bible teaches about faith and salvation:

“Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.” (*Augsburg Confession*, Article IV)

+ Series to be continued

CATECHISM SERIES: STUDIES IN THE APOSTLES’ CREED

FIRST OF FIVE PARTS OF A SERIES ON THE THIRD ARTICLE

“This is most certainly true!”

“Called by the Gospel”

PROF. JOSEPH LAU • EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

In our ongoing exploration of the Apostles’ Creed, this is the first in a series of articles that focus on the work of the Holy Spirit—the third person of the Triune God.

I have been told that I am a difficult person to get hold of, for at times I don’t want to be contacted. I need a disconnect.

When I was assigned an article on “The Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel...,” it got me thinking...

Do Not Call

Humans in their natural state do not want to be gotten hold of either. We were conceived in sin inherited from our first parents, Adam and Eve (Psalm 51:5). As the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians, we “were dead in trespasses and sins...and were by nature children of wrath” (2:1,3); and again in Romans, “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (8:7).

God’s plan of redemption in Christ is foolishness to our human nature. “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him: nor can he know them,

The THIRD ARTICLE installments:

- 1) The Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel
- 2) The Holy Spirit enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps me
- 3) The Holy Spirit calls the whole Christian Church on Earth
- 4) The Holy Spirit daily forgives sins
- 5) The Holy Spirit gives me eternal life

*I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son,
our Lord, who was conceived by
the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin
Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried; He
descended into hell; the third day
He rose again from the dead; He
ascended into heaven and sitteth on
the right hand of God, the Father
Almighty; from thence He shall come
to judge the quick and the dead. I
believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy
Christian Church, the communion
of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the
resurrection of the body; and the life
everlasting. Amen.*

(TLH, p. 12)

When I was assigned an article on “The Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel...,” it got me thinking....

because they are spiritually discerned [understood]” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

In other words, by nature each of us places the Holy Spirit on our “do not call” list. We do not want to be bothered by what God has to say.

Voice Message and Text

“No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

How is it then that someone on our “do not call” list reaches us with the gospel message? The work the Holy Spirit does—sanctification (to make holy)—is a miracle, unable to be fully understood by us.

We do know, however, the *means* by which the Holy Spirit works. We refer to these as the “means of grace,” the gospel in the Word of God and in the sacraments.

For many of us the Word first came to us in our baptism. The power of God through His Word in the waters of baptism converted a heart blackened with sin to a heart of a child of God, lightened by faith in God’s forgiveness.

In a similar manner the Holy Spirit uses the spoken Word in the Lord’s Supper to sustain and strengthen the faith of a believer, conveying God’s forgiveness. “Take and eat. This is My body, which is given for you....This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

The sacraments employ the voice messages of God to produce and sustain faith in the hearts of people.

In addition to the Word of God used in connection with the sacraments, the Holy Spirit calls us through the spoken and written Word—the voice message and text, if you will. The regenerating power resides in the Word itself, whether proclaimed by a preacher, teacher, parent, or friend. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

The power is also in the written text as it is studied

by a lone individual or in the company of others. “These [Scriptures] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31).

Caller ID

Those who opt to have caller ID on their phones no doubt do so because they want to know the source of the call before picking up.

The Bible warns Christians that false prophets dressed in sheep’s clothing will teach lies. It is important therefore that like the Bereans of old we search the Scriptures daily to find out whether what is being taught us is the actual Word of God (see Acts 17:11).

With daily Bible study we grow in the knowledge of our Savior and His work on behalf of us sinners. We will come to recognize His “ring tone” and when we “pick up,” we will be ready to listen.

THE THIRD ARTICLE

(About Sanctification)

[We print Luther’s Explanation only.]

I believe that I cannot by my own reasoning or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, nor come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified, and kept me in true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the last day He will raise me and all the dead and give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

(Martin Luther’s *SMALL CATECHISM*,
Sydow edition, 2000)



“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday...”

PASTOR EMERITUS PAUL FLEISCHER, RED WING, MINNESOTA

“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace...”

(Hebrews 13:7-9)

An old gripe says that history is boring. In some circles today anything that did not transpire or originate in the last fifty years is suspect as to value or meaning for our “advanced” day and age.

One flyer we received not long ago quoted the Christian church historian Philip Schaff as saying: “...Next to God’s Word history is...the richest foundation of wisdom, and the surest guide...” The flyer spoke of “a glaring presence of an absence. That absence is the lack of awareness of our great heritage of faith and the amazing saga of how God has worked through His people over the ages.”

It should not be hard to see why our text is a recommended selection for the Reformation season. On the one hand, we are exhorted to remember our Christian forebears. On the other hand, we are warned against the promoters of false doctrine. And the glue which holds these exhortations together is the unchangeableness of Jesus Christ (“...*the same yesterday, today, and forever*”).

How so? Well, remembering the experiences of those who came before us in confessing the true faith in Jesus and His Word will help us be better prepared to ward off the competing cross-currents of false doctrine all around us in our own day.

The opening chapter of this letter to the Hebrew Christians is a clarion call for readers to see how

Jesus Christ was the same in all the yesterdays of history—in fact, predating all recorded human history! Jesus is called the eternal Son of God. He is called “*the brightness of [God’s] glory*” and “*the express image of [God’s] person*” (1:3). He is spoken of as the Creator of the Earth and the heavens which “*shall perish*,” while He Himself remains ever “*the same, and [His] years shall not fail*” (1:12).

And then following the tragedy of the Fall into sin in the garden of Eden, God acted in space-time history to provide otherwise hopelessly doomed sinners a rescue—and a Rescuer, His Savior-Son.

With that, it is impossible to over-emphasize that everything that happened to bring about the eternal rescue of sinners took place in God’s *yesterday*. It is tremendously significant to remember that biblical Christianity is a continual living on the basis of what happened in the past. Indeed, the basis for the good news of the gospel is that it is the record of the objective historical facts of what God, in Christ, did for the world of sinners centuries ago.

So then, how acquainted are *you* with “yesterday” in the church?

Our Christian Creeds

A religious cartoon depicted an angel in heaven saying to God: “It’s a little monotonous actually—history keeps repeating itself.” The joke is really on the devil.

Church history is truly *deja vu* all over again. It is the record of the repeated triumphs of God, His people, and His Truth over their enemies. It is the record, as says the poet, of “Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne; Yet above the grim unknown, God stands watching o’er His own” (J. R. Lowell).

Martin Luther was well aware of what we speak. In one of his Table Talks the Reformer said: “I know nothing about the Lord Christ that the devil has failed to attack; that is why he must now start again from the beginning and bring out the old errors and heresies.” One of the heresies Luther was referring to was first settled with the Nicene Creed (A.D. 325). Originally written against the heretic Arius, this creed confesses Jesus Christ as...

“...very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father...who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven. And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven....”

Notice the historical/past verb forms! Fourth century Christian confessors reclaimed for themselves and proclaimed for every future generation the fact that salvation took place on the basis of what the unchanging Christ accomplished “*yesterday*”!

Later came the Athanasian Creed (A.D. 450) which Luther called the grandest production of the church since the time of the apostles. In it Christians confess that God is triune and that within that Trinity Jesus Christ is God and man in one person who “suffered for our salvation,” rose again and ascended to heaven. The last paragraph reads: “This is the catholic [universal, Christian] faith which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved.”

Still today we confess—and more and more we are alone in this, dear friends!—that sinners can be saved in no other way. Why? Because, again, Jesus

Christ remains the same in the fifteen hundred years since the Athanasian Creed as He was in the four millennia preceding it.

The centuries before the sixteenth century Lutheran Reformation are termed the Dark Ages. Just how dark is clear from Luther’s childhood memories of Christ not as Savior but as merciless Judge. Behold how Satan had used the Roman church (!) as promoter of the heresy that Christ was not “*the same*” as confessed “*yesterday*” in each of the three universal Creeds of Christendom.

But the Spirit of God opened the heart of the young monk to reclaim and proclaim the blessed truth of the Scriptures. The Reformer’s explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed remains an unparalleled testimony to the objective historical fact that...

“[Christ] has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent sufferings and death....”

Our Lutheran Confessions

After the Dark Ages came the Age of Orthodoxy, ushered in with the publication of the nine Confessions assembled in the *Lutheran Book of Concord* of 1580. (Besides the three Creeds, the other six are Luther’s *Small* and *Large Catechisms* [1529], the *Augsburg Confession* [1530], the *Apology* [1530], the *Smalcald Articles* [1537], and the *Formula of Concord* [1577].)

The authors of these Confessions and their supporters saw them as a defense of the objective historical fact of the gospel of justification by faith—faith in Jesus Christ, crucified, died, and risen again. Ever since, true heirs of the Reformation have seen these Confessions the same way.

And what a treasure those Confessions are, as they help unify all Bible teachings around the doctrine of justification!

As the Lutheran Church in general, and our CLC in particular, look forward to observing the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation (1517—the

95 Theses; 1521—The Diet of Worms etc.), what a glorious opportunity to review the most significant events which impacted the birth and early growth of the Lutheran Church.

Doubtless, besides the stated Creeds and Confessions, the best and most reliable historical record of God's dealings with mankind is the infallible history which is the Bible itself.

During the Reformation season and always may

we thank and bless our God for preserving to us the "magnificent monotony" of the sizzling saga of Jesus Christ, ever the same in all mankind's and the church's history. Repetitious indeed, but never boring!

Dear friends, get into God's "holy history." You, your children, your children's children—and your church!—will be the richer for it.



A COMPELLING LETTER

[Some writings are self-explanatory—such as this August 2014 monthly pastoral letter our CLC President addressed to our synod pastors (reprinted here with President Eichstadt's permission).

As we received the letter and its encouragement, we were struck by the fact that the target audience deserved to be broader than the clergy.

Please join us in praying that God's Spirit would move the hearts of young men and women within our synodical fellowship to consider the preaching or teaching ministry as their privileged career calling. — Editor]

Dear fellow laborers in the Lord's harvest field: "I've always encouraged my children to consider the public ministry for their life's work, but now... I don't know." That was the very honest comment of a congregation member troubled by all the recent struggles and pressures that congregations and pastors in our fellowship have faced.

How would you answer her?

Have you had questions yourself?

Interviewers often ask people ranging from doctors to athletes, "Would you encourage your child to follow in your footsteps?" The response, of course, is a good barometer of the person's attitude toward their work. Would you encourage or do you encourage your child and others to prepare for the public ministry of the Word?

Preaching the Word of God, either from the pulpit or in the classroom, will never be an easy, financially lucrative, or popular calling. Jesus told the disciples: "A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master...*If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!*" (Matthew 10:24-25)

The Word will not always be welcomed with open ears. It is not a pleasant thing to confront sin and call a straying sheep to

**"Would you encourage
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ministry of the Word?**



Participating in the laying on of hands in the July 13, 2014, installation service for Pastor Chad Seybt (front) at Redeemer Lutheran, Cheyenne, Wyo., were: Robert Ruegge (Councilman), Michael Sprengeler, Pastor James Sandeen, ILC Prof. Steven Sippert, Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer.

repentance. Your most loving efforts may be met with sharp words which leave painful wounds on your heart. When the world does all it can to undermine everything the Lord has you proclaim, the effort can seem like a lost cause. Besides all that, each of us has our old adam which continually nags us to surrender.

So what is the up side? Is there one? Where can we go for encouragement? The Lord is always there for us with rest, refreshment, and renewed purpose. Remember His promise: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). We can leave our fears, failures, and doubts with Him—and in exchange He gives us the peace of forgiveness and the joy of serving Him who laid down His holy life for us.

St. Paul wrote young Pastor Timothy: *“If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task”* (1 Timothy 3:1). The public ministry is a blessed work, for one is called by the Lord of the Church to be His ambassador in announcing God’s love and salvation to fellow sinners.

What a high privilege to be entrusted with the holy Word! What an exciting assignment to share unqualified, unconditional, glorious news which everyone desperately needs!

What a wonder to be Jesus’ personal representative in holding the hand of the hospitalized believer and giving the assurance that Jesus is the One who *“forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases”* (Psalm 103:3).

What an awesome work to use the Lord’s Word to bring a young person to repent of the sin which put their soul at risk! *“Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins”* (James 5:20).

What a heartfelt joy to sing with a little one, “Jesus loves me, this I know...”!

Heading back inside after VBS recess one morning, a little preschool girl bounced along beside me and asked, “Pastor, do you like going to church?” I answered, “Yes, I do—very much!” She quickly agreed that it was good being in the Lord’s house.

May the Lord continually refresh our hearts and renew our joy and appreciation for the salvation He has won for us and for the amazing calling He has given us.

May we by word and example encourage many “sons and daughters” to prayerfully consider preparing for the public ministry.

“The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field”
(Matthew 9:37-38).

With prayers for joy in your labor,
Michael Eichstadt
CLC President



CROSS PURPOSES

Beating a Horse that Will Not Die

PASTOR EMERITUS DANIEL FLEISCHER • OAKDALE, MINNESOTA

“Beating a dead horse” phraseology may seem to fit, but it does not apply to our subject. This horse is beaten, but it *won't die*.

The Roman Catholic Church claims that the apostle Peter was the first pope. It does so upon its false interpretation of the passage, *“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18). This is a—if not the—foundation stone of Catholic theology.

The Roman claim falls for a number of reasons. First, it is not linguistically possible. In Greek *petros* is the man Peter, and *petra* (rock) is the substance of the confession that Peter made (Matthew 16:16). To declare Peter the foundation of the Church contradicts Scripture which says, *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST”* (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Nor is there conclusive evidence that Peter was ever in Rome, and he makes no reference in his epistles to being there—although *Babylon* in 1 Peter 5:13 may be a reference to Rome. Another false claim is that Peter alone was given the power over the binding and loosing keys in connection with Jesus' words, *“And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...”* (Matthew 16:19). Rome's claim that this refers exclusively to Peter is contradicted by Jesus in John 20:23.

Furthermore, one of the attributes claimed for the pope is ‘papal infallibility’—the notion that when he speaks officially, he cannot err. This specious claim falls under its own weight. No man—none—is infallible! Only One is true and infallible—our Lord Jesus Christ!

**Christ, Thou
art the sure
Foundation,
Thou the Head
and Cornerstone;
Chosen of
the Lord and
precious,
Binding all the
Church in one;
Thou Thy Zion's
Help forever
And her
Confidence
alone.
(TLH #466:1)**

Later Jesus rebuked Peter, “*Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me...*” (Matthew 16:23). Of course, we also know that at Jesus’ trial the alleged first pope denied with an oath that he even knew the Lord!

Peter was a dear disciple of the Lord who knew the forgiving grace of God. He was chosen of the Spirit to record the divinely inspired Word of God. We acknowledge the witness which the apostle—one of the inner group of three disciples—left us as a spokesman of the Lord. Yet our faith and confident hope are built not on Peter but on the Lord Jesus Christ! The Church is not built on a mortal man, but on Christ! It is Christ, the Foundation and the Head of the Church, who secured its victory over all foes.

Yes, it is Christ, the risen One, upon whom our faith and hope are built, not upon one whose bones lie moldering in the grave or in a fancy chest.

The Roman Church is built on human tradition and on superstition, which is idolatry.

In November of 2013 this idolatry was reported as follows: “Bones believed to belong to Saint Peter, one of the founding fathers of the Catholic Church, went on display for the first time Sunday..., as Pope Francis held a ceremony to end the ‘Year of Faith’. Tens of thousands of pilgrims gathered to catch a glimpse of the remains, eight fragments of bone between two and three centimeters (around one inch) long displayed on an ivory bed within a bronze chest on a pedestal in St. Peter’s Square. The chest, given to pope Paul VI in 1971 and usually kept in the tiny chapel of the papal apartments, was decorated with a carving of Peter, who was a fisherman before becoming the Church’s first pope, casting his nets into the sea.”

At the start of the solemn ceremony, Francis prayed before the chest, bordered by white and yellow roses, before blessing the bones with incense. The bones have long been the object of controversy between historians and archaeologists: they were first discovered in a 1940 dig next to an ancient monument honoring Saint Peter, but ended up gathering dust in a storage box.

The claim was made that the bones ‘belonged to a robust man who died aged between 60 and 70 and had been buried in a purple, gold-threaded cloth—enough to convince Paul VI to say in 1968 that Peter’s bones had been identified ‘in a convincing manner.’”

“...The people of God, have always believed these to be the relics of the apostle Peter, and we continue to venerate them in this way,” according a spokesman quoted in the Vatican’s newspaper. A picture showed the present pope kissing the chest in which the bone fragments were encased.

The claim that these are the bones of pope Peter fits the Roman agenda and plays nicely into its emphasis on the veneration of dead saints and dusty relics to which are ascribed miraculous powers as well as blessings to the faithful.

According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (on-line), “The teaching of the Catholic Church with regard to the veneration of relics is summed up in a decree of the *Council of Trent* (Sess. XXV)... “The holy bodies of holy martyrs and of others now living with Christ—which bodies were the living members of Christ and ‘the temple of the Holy Ghost’ (I Corinthians 6:19) and which are by Him to be raised to eternal life and to be glorified *are to be venerated by the faithful, for through these [bodies] many benefits are bestowed by God on men, so that they who affirm that veneration and honour are not due to the relics of the saints...are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned, and also now condemns them.*” (Italics—our emphasis).

Count us among the condemned. Acknowledging their right to believe what they choose, we reject the Roman claim.

In our ecumenical age, much of Lutheranism has moved closer and closer to Rome. Gathering the “separated brethren,” as Rome describes those who have forsaken “mother church,” has always been the goal of the Catholic Church. But as nominal Lutherans and Rome move closer to each other, and inasmuch as the Catholic Church has not changed in substantive doctrine, who is changing?





No Prayer Barrier

PROF. JOHN PFEIFFER

Heavenly Father, hear our prayers and accept our praises for Jesus' sake. Amen.

What we see and hear this day is a wondrous thing. The fact that this school exists is wondrous. The fact that you are here is wondrous. The fact that there are teachers and staff is wondrous. Most wondrous of all is the fact that this school, its students, faculty, and staff have the Word of God with its gospel of salvation.

God made all this happen. Without God, there would be no Bible...no gospel message. Without God you and I would not have faith. Without God there would be no ILC. Without God we would not be at ILC.

Without God! What a frightening thought! As you sit in the classroom, do you realize that without God you would not be there? In fact, you would not even exist.

So, what are you going to do with this information? Let the Apostle Paul tell you. *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving”* (Colossians 4:2).

If in God we live and move and exist, doesn't it just make sense that we should be in constant contact with Him? And the amazing thing is that it isn't hard. – Try getting an appointment to talk with President Obama or Wisconsin Governor Walker or Eau Claire City Manager Van Gompel. It's even easier to contact God than our ILC President Sippert. Moreover, it's faster than the Internet. All you have to do is think...to direct your thoughts toward God.

Of course, it wasn't always so easy. The line of communication was once blocked, and it was impossible for any human being to pierce through

that impenetrable barrier. As God tells us, *“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear”* (Isaiah 59:2). As long as our sins remained, the barrier remained. God dwells in a high and holy place. He will not allow sin-laden man to approach Him.

So, is there anything we can do? Well, with man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible (cf. Matthew 19:26). From this side of the barrier, nothing can be done. But from the other side something can be and has been done. And—thanks to Him who did it—you know about it.

The God against whom we sinned...the God who poured out His love, only to have it kicked back at Him by ungrateful sinners...this God continued to love us with such a vast love that He sent His own Son to tear down the barrier.

However, the only way that this could be done was by walking the pathway of justice. Perfect, divine justice demanded payment for our wickedness, for our rebellion against Him. We had pushed Him away and the only thing left for us was to be eternally away from God. That is hell, eternal separation from God and thus from all that is good and happy and peaceful. Justice demanded the punishment of hell.

So, that is what the Son of God had to do to tear down the barrier. HE had to suffer that punishment. Upon the cross He endured the fullness of hell's agony. When God suffers hell for mankind, justice is satisfied. The barrier created by our sins was torn down once and for all. Now, through Christ we have access by one Spirit to the Father. As Jesus said,

"I am the way...No one comes to the Father except through Me"
(John 14:6).

So, you can see that it wasn't easy to have contact with the Father. It was impossible for us, but Jesus made the impossible possible. And it wasn't easy for Him. Through great suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus opened the line of communication.

The way is open. Who would not take advantage of this wondrous blessing? So many millions in this world try to reach God by ways other than Jesus. But for them the barrier is still there. We, however, WE know Jesus. We believe in Jesus. There is no barrier for us.

So, why not pray? Why not send your thoughts heavenward in the classroom, in the dorm, in the gym, on the pathways, in the car, at home, abroad, morning, afternoon, night? Every phase of our existence is linked to the love and power of God. In Him we live; in Him we move; in Him we exist. Talk to Him; share with Him your sorrows and joys, your pains and pleasures. *"Continue earnestly in prayer."*

And do it with thanksgiving. Express your thanks that the barrier is down and you CAN pray. Thank Him for all past blessings without which you would not be here today. Here in this gym; here on this campus; here with these Christian teachers and students; here with faith in your heart and the solid hope of everlasting life.

Oh...and while you are praying, pray for me, please, and for your teachers and your dorm parents and the rest of the staff and your fellow students.

We now offer our prayer with the words of the hymn #24 (TLH).

*Lord of my life, whose tender care
Hath led me on till now,
Here lowly, at the hour of prayer,
Before Thy throne I bow.
I bless Thy gracious hand and pray
Forgiveness for another day.*

*Oh, may I daily, hourly, strive
In heav'nly grace to grow,
To Thee and to Thy glory live,
Dead to all else below!
Tread in the path my Savior trod,
Tho' thorny, yet the path of God.*

*With prayer my humble praise I bring
For mercies day by day.
Lord, teach my heart Thy love to sing;
Lord, teach me how to pray.
All that I have and am, to Thee
I offer thro' eternity.*



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ordination/Installation

In accord with our usage and order, David Ude, a 2014 graduate of Immanuel Lutheran Seminary, who was called by Living Hope Lutheran Church, Appleton, Wis. to be its pastor, was installed on June 29, 2014. The pastor's father, Prof. John Ude, delivered the sermon. Pastors from the surrounding area assisted with the laying on of hands.

—Pastor Neal Radichel



Pastor David Ude

ANNOUNCEMENTS: CONTINUED

Installations

In accord with our usage and order, Chad Seybt, who was called by Redeemer Lutheran Church, Cheyenne, Wyo., to be its pastor, was installed on Sunday, July 13, 2014. Prof. Steven Sippert delivered the message. Also laying on hands were Robert Ruegge (church Trustee), Michael Sprengeler, and Pastor Emeritus Daniel Fleischer.

—Pastor James Sandeen

In accord with our usage and order, Pastor Nathanael Mayhew, who was called by Faith Lutheran Church, New Ulm, Minn., and by Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sleepy Eye, Minn., to be their pastor, was installed on Sunday, August 10, 2014. The service was officiated by Pastors Mark Tiefel and Paul Tiefel, Jr. Pastors from the surrounding area assisted with the laying on of hands.

In accord with our usage and order, Philip Matzke and Anita Meyer, who were called by Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minn., to be teachers in its school, were installed on Sunday, August 10, 2014.

—Pastor Paul Nolting

In accord with our usage and order, Teacher Ross Kok, a 2014 graduate of Immanuel Lutheran College, who was called by St. John's Lutheran Church, Okabena, Minn., to be Upper Grade Teacher/Principal in its school, was installed on Sunday, August 17, 2014.

—Pastor James Albrecht

In accord with our usage and order, Mrs. Peggy Kesterson, who was called by St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Mountain View, Calif., to be Kindergarten teacher in its school, was installed on Sunday, August 17, 2014.

—Pastor Terrel Kesterson

In accord with our usage and order, Mrs. Collette Krause, who was called by Faith Lutheran Church, Markesan, Wis., to be upper grade teacher (grades 6-8) in its school, was installed on Sunday, August 17, 2014.

—Pastor Paul Krause

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“... THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN.” — JOHN 10 : 35

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