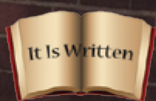


September–October 2015

# Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

*"Engage Others with Jesus."*



*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:23-24)*

## In This Issue

- 2 From the President
- 3 Pastor Said What?!!!
- 4 The Lutheran Reformation by *Scene*
- 5 The Lutheran Reformation by *Sight*
- 8 The Lutheran Reformation in *Sound*
- 9 Why and How Did Martin Luther Write His Catechisms?
- 10 On the Synodical Scene...
- 11 See the Opportunities
- 12 Why Do Christians Continually Confess Their Sins, Since They Live in a State of Forgiveness?
- 13 Pastor, I Have a Question...
- 14 Bridge Work in Chile
- 15 Editorial: And So *IT* Continues
- 16 Seminary Begins a New School Year



VOLUME 98  
NUMBER 5  
ISSN 0024-7510

**Lutheran Sentinel** September–October 2015

### Staff

Paul Fries . . . . . Editor  
 Kyle Madson . . . . . Managing Editor  
 Denise Luehmann . . . . . Subscription Manager  
 Erica Jacobsen . . . . . Proofreader

### Contributing Editors

Charles Keeler

Published by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001.

The *Lutheran Sentinel* is the official publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and is published six times per year. The subscription price is \$12.00 per year, with reduced rates available for blanket subscriptions at \$10.00 through a member congregation.

**Address Editorial Correspondence To:** Rev. Paul Fries, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001.

**Address Circulation Correspondence and Address Corrections To:** *Lutheran Sentinel*, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001.

**Periodical Postpaid at Mankato, MN 56001 and additional offices.** Postmaster: Send changes (Form 3579) to *Lutheran Sentinel*, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001.



[www.els.name/ls](http://www.els.name/ls)

# From the President

Dear members and friends of our ELS:

If a survey of your life were taken, would one conclude, “Now, there’s a lover of the world”? With a barrage of dismal news for the state of Christianity, how can any confessor of the Savior care to be glued to what this fleeting world offers? Preserving the values of the Christian faith is becoming more and more difficult in a culture bent on elevating and glorifying what is immoral. We now even hear of people defending the buying and selling of body parts of the indefensible little ones!

As repulsive as the world scene appears in so many ways, we have to admit our sinful nature still desires to attach itself to the things of this present world. Oh, we hear of the atrocities, and they upset us deeply. Yet we look around and say, “Thank God, they’re not in my own backyard—at least not yet! My own turf looks pretty serene.” The lure of living for temporal pleasure and material blessings looms large. Regardless of our age, we feel the pull on our hearts for the here and now.

The apostle John may have been nearing a hundred years old and likely was residing in Ephesus when he wrote this powerful exhortation:

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:15–17).

A tremendous and blessed irony, however, exists in the pages of God’s Word. While we have sinned in loving the world, **God has so loved the world** that He has given us forgiveness and eternal life through His Son! Of course, here we are talking about people, souls. We—the people of the world—have a perfect Savior who always had the will of His heavenly Father driving His own life lived in our place. We have a Savior whose love for the Father’s will and love for the world of sinners—love for you and me—caused Him to make the ultimate sacrifice for our sins and then was raised again for our justification! “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17).

Love the world? Through faith in the Savior, we know we have a better world to come! So, our Savior’s love for the world of sinners is the **kind of love for the world** we want to be a part of and wish to promote. . . Go ahead, “Love the world” with the everlasting love of the Savior. What a message we have to proclaim! It is meant for every soul in the world!

*John A. Moldstad*  
John A. Moldstad, President of the ELS



# Pastor Said What?!!!

*How Can a Pastor Declare Forgiveness of Sins, When Only God Forgives?*

The man put away his book and started chatting with the passenger next to him. After awhile he asked, "So what is it that you do?" The passenger, who happened to be a Lutheran pastor, replied, "I forgive sins!"

How do you like his answer? There are many who would take issue with it. "Only God can forgive sins," they might say. "No one—not even a pastor—has the power to forgive sins." But that isn't exactly true. Pastors do have the power to forgive sins. This power does not come from inside them, as if pastors are somehow holier than others. Nothing about the pastor makes the forgiveness of sins effective. Rather, the power is from God.

A pastor is called by God through the congregation he serves to forgive their sins. That is his primary responsibility. Of course, he must convict and instruct through the preaching and teaching of the Word. Yet, his central calling and so too his highest joy is to distribute God's forgiveness through the proclamation of the Word and the distribution of the Sacraments.

The pastor is a sinner like anyone else, but God calls him to be a mouthpiece for Him. Jesus could send the holy angels or some other creature to do this (remember Balaam's donkey?), but He chooses to use sinful men instead. He said to His disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore" (Matthew 28:18–19). Only a little while before this He had said to the same men, "As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld" (John 20:21–23).

This means that when a pastor points out the sin of the members he serves, they should listen to the Law as if Jesus were speaking directly to them. And when he announces the forgiveness of their sins, they should recognize this as the very Word of Christ (Luke 10:16). The absolution spoken by the pastor in the divine service emphasizes this: "I, by virtue of my office as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God to all of you, and in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

The pastor forgives sins "by virtue of my office," and "in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ." He does not do this by virtue of his own person or authority. To make this point even clearer, Lutheran pastors wear vestments. The white gown symbolizes the covering of the sinner with Jesus' righteousness and the holiness of the work of Christ carried out through the pastor. The stole around his neck illustrates the yoke he bears as a called servant of Christ. These things remind God's people not to focus on the man, but on the office through which he delivers the forgiveness of sins.

So it is proper for a pastor to summarize his work with, "I forgive sins." God has indeed "given such authority to men" (Matthew 9:8). And what a gift this is! When you hear your pastor speak the absolution, remember that Jesus is the one who commands him to do this. Jesus wants you to know that because He fulfilled the Law for you and died on the cross in your place, your sins are most certainly forgiven!

---

**Peter Faugstad** is co-pastor of Parkland Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington.



# The Lutheran Reformation by Scene

## *The Historical Setting for Lutheran Reform*

At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Martin Luther stood alone against all the power of the emperor and the pope bearing down upon him. Emperor Charles V, the most powerful man in the world at that time, was present in the room. Luther was being pressured to deny his own teaching of the truth of God's Word. It certainly looked like Luther was alone, and the government of his day was opposed to the Gospel.

At least that is how it looked.

Then Luther was "kidnapped" on the road. But this was a ruse. The men who did this were sent by Prince Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony. He too was a ruling authority. He was Luther's ruling prince. The electors were princes who had the right and duty of electing the emperor at the time of succession. So Elector Frederick had much power and influence. And he was on Luther's side.

This is an example of how the political situation actually helped the Lutheran Reformation. That sounds strange to us. We think religion and politics have to be kept apart. But in the German lands of Luther's day, the ruling prince determined the religion of his subjects. If the prince was Lutheran, then Lutheran doctrine and worship would have free course.

**Frederick the Wise** did three things that helped Luther in 1521 (in the early years of the Reformation), when the emperor agreed to putting Luther on trial in Rome. First, Frederick refused to let him be taken to Rome, and only would let him be tried in Germany. Second, Frederick ensured that Luther was guaranteed safe travel to and from the trial. Third, he had Luther "kidnapped" and taken secretly to the Wartburg Castle, out of danger for the time being.

Elector Frederick was Luther's protector, and by extension the protector of Lutheran doctrine and worship. But he had many successors, and not only in Saxony.

**Elector John the Steadfast** succeeded Frederick the Wise. He was the first of the Lutherans to arrive at Augsburg in 1530 when the Lutherans were "invited" to declare their faith before the emperor. He and the other princes were threatened with the loss of their lands, their homes, their churches, and their lives. But he said: "Tell my theologians to do what is right to the glory and honor of God, and to have no regard for me, my country, or my people." John and six other princes publicly signed their names to the

Augsburg Confession.

In another country, Denmark, another ruler allowed the Lutheran faith to flourish. **Christian III** became king at age 30 and promptly invited Luther's pastor, Johannes Bugenhagen, to establish the Lutheran confession of faith throughout the nation, by means of a church order. This church order included the original form of the Lutheran liturgy that we use in our congregations (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, p. 41ff.).

For a brief time even a woman, **Duchess Elisabeth of Braunschweig**, used her opportunity to rule her people to spread the Lutheran faith among them. When she was thirty, her husband died; with their oldest son (the heir to the throne) only 12 years old, she had six years to rule the Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel province.

Elisabeth brought a Lutheran pastor, Antonius Corvinus, to her lands. He went around the province introducing Lutheran catechetical instruction and worship. She often accompanied him, showing her people how important this faith was to her. She herself also taught her children the catechism, trying to prepare her son to be a Lutheran prince.

Things did not go as she planned; when her son became the ruling duke he renounced his Lutheran faith, became an ally of Emperor Charles V, restored Roman Catholic worship, and persecuted the Lutheran pastors.

But Elisabeth had used her brief opportunity to spread the Lutheran faith throughout the country, and she is a good example of how it was possible for Lutheran teaching and worship to spread under the leadership of a Lutheran ruler.



---

**Jerry Gernander** is pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Princeton, Minnesota.

# The Lutheran Reformation by Sight

## *The Art of the Reformation Era*

It may surprise us, but in the art community, the name Martin Luther is typically despised. He is seen as one who damaged the patron–artist relationship, and watered the arts down to a role of instruction, rather than standing as beautiful objects on their own. He took the spotlight off the art itself—as well as the artist—and put it on Christ. Some of this criticism holds true. However, to be fair, his views on church art went through some gradual changes based upon events of the Reformation era.

### **Church Art: Part of the Problem**

In the early days of the Reformation, Luther did not care for church art because it was part of the system of indulgences. A donor could pay for a work of art to shorten his time in purgatory. Dr. Luther also condemned the potential for statues and paintings to become idolatrous, as objects of veneration. The attention had often been taken off Christ and placed onto His followers.

The reformer's views began to change following his time of hiding in the Wartburg castle. During his absence, Andreas Karlstadt had stirred people into a mob that led a “cleansing” of the church—vandalizing and destroying all that represented Rome. Paintings and statues were defaced or destroyed. A few went so far as to defecate and urinate on church artwork. Animosity against the Pope was vented through vandalism—thinking Luther would want this. They were wrong. When he came out of hiding, he called for a stop to the madness. He was seeking reform, not revolution. Luther's objective was to keep whatever was good and remove only that which detracted from the Gospel. The rest of his life, Luther objected to being lumped together with the radical reformers.

### **Reclaim**

In the years that followed, the Reformation movement began to reclaim many of the images of the church. A portrait of a saint for instance, would have a prayer to Peter replaced by a Bible passage. On one altar painting of the Virgin Mary, the words were added, “Mary is to be honored, but not adored.” Luther wanted to hold onto what belonged to the ancient, apostolic church. By cleansing the church images, the reformers could claim to be part of the legitimate remnant of Christendom. Even artwork that did not serve the Gospel was often preserved and then stored in a side room in the church to protect them simply as works of art.

### **What Should We Keep?**

Now that they were in control, the young Lutherans saw themselves as stewards living in a beautiful home they had inherited. They developed a high respect for the music, liturgy, art, and architecture of the church. A mature Luther saw the visual arts, just like music, as an important instrument for serving the Gospel. Art should be simple, not overpowering what it hopes to convey, and therefore instructive for the common man, delivering the mercy of God in Christ.

May this same spirit continue to be alive among us today, as we seek to hold the wonderful Gospel of our Savior before the world in music, words, and images. To paraphrase Luther, “Even a picture of Christ can communicate God's grace to us.”



**Don Moldstad** is chaplain at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota.





Einen andern Grund kann niemand legen  
außer dem der gelegt ist, welcher ist  
JESUS CHRISTUS



A.D.  
1547



A.D.  
1928

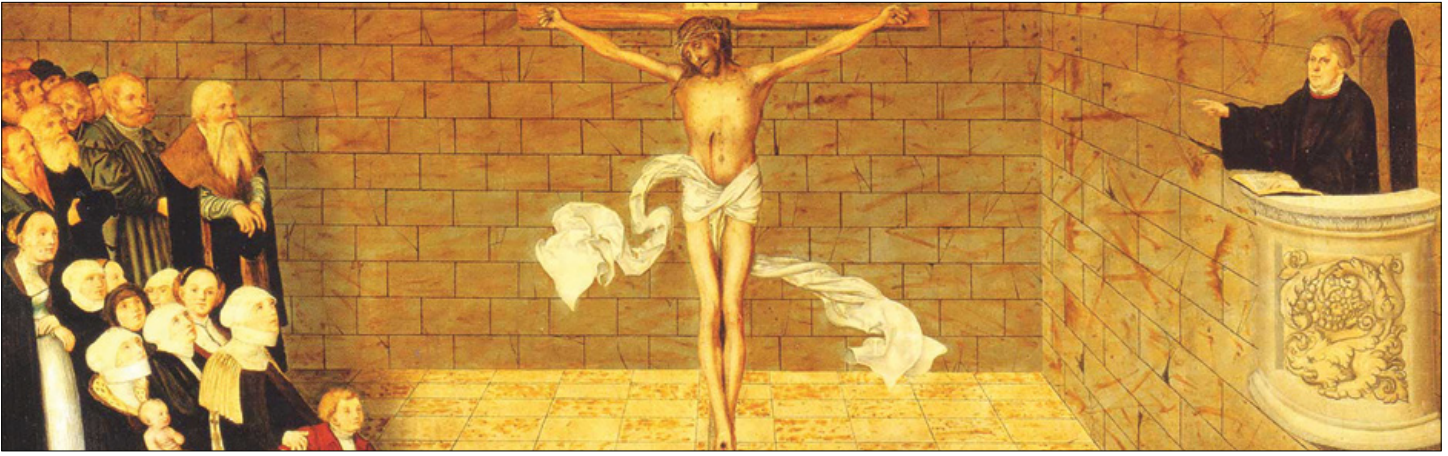
### Wittenberg Stadtkirche - Altarpiece

This was painted by Lucas Cranach (1472-1553), a very close friend to Luther. In this work he has depicted the early reformers as apostles dispensing the Means of Grace. The bottom panel is a wonderful summary of Luther's work, portraying him pointing to Christ alone.



**The center altarpiece at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Weimar, Germany.**

Lucas Cranach, Sr., started this painting, but following his death it was completed by his son. It is packed with imagery from the life of Christ and is an excellent example of how Lutheran art tended to be instructive, illustrating the primary doctrines found in Scripture. If you look closely you will find numerous Biblical scenes that display the Gospel.



# The Lutheran Reformation in Sound

## The Gospel's Distinct Voice

The Lutheran Reformation grew and spread rapidly by means of sound—in a world that knew nothing of electronics, broadcasting, and decibels.

The sounds of the Reformation came from two sides—from the pulpit and from the pew. The Reformation was centered on the word of the Gospel—voiced from the pulpit and prayed and sung from the pew.

The Greek word *angelo* in the word “evangelical” means “to announce or proclaim.” The evangel is the Gospel, an announcement of good news. And those words point especially to oral proclamation or preaching.

Luther emphasized the oral, audible proclamation of the Word when he wrote in the Smalcald Articles: “*Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the sacraments*” (SA III, VIII, 10).

Luther believed that Scripture is the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that it is the absolute authority. Luther spelled it out: “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason... my conscience is captive to the Word of God.”

Christians are urged to study God's Word. But the exercise of the Christian faith is not merely a private communion with God with the Bible in one's hands. Christians congregate, that is, they gather together to hear God's Word *sounded* — proclaimed publicly and audibly. Luther points to the fruit of this preaching when he writes: “The Word of God is of such character that when someone preaches it, it never returns void” (*Luther's Works*, 18, p. 376, on Haggai 1:12).

This preaching is not just sounds and words, or talk about oneself and one's own experience; it is the specific proclamation of sin and grace—our sinfulness and God's grace in giving up His Son to death on the cross. That's what must be the sound coming from the pulpit. In this

connection, Luther often quotes Jesus' words, “He who hears you, hears me” (Luke 10:16), and St. Paul's words, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

But the Reformation also sounds from the pew. Luther's sermons take up many volumes. But he also prepared words for proclamation by the congregation. Our *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* contains twenty-eight hymns by Luther, and the American edition of *Luther's Works* has thirty-seven as well as several liturgical chants. Luther's hymns set a pattern for many others to follow. From the pew the people sing the Law and Gospel of God's Word.

Luther's reworking of the historic liturgy placed God's grace, the justification of the sinner, and the service of Word and Sacrament at the center of worship. Worship was no longer work that we do for God, but the place where God comes to us. Hymns were an important part of that worship, the Divine Service. Many of Luther's hymns are simply parts of the liturgy—Kyrie, Gloria, Creed, Sanctus, Agnus Dei; others are paraphrases of Scripture; and still others teach the Gospel and Christian doctrine. The content sounded by the people as they sing these Lutheran hymns is precisely the same message sounded from the pulpit.

The sound of the Reformation from pulpit and pew aims at just one thing—to proclaim Jesus Christ and His cross of salvation to sinners, who are given new life by our Lord's life-giving word—“Strengthened in faith, perfected in holiness, and comforted in life and in death.”

---

**Erling T. Teigen** is professor emeritus at Bethany Lutheran College.





# Why and How Did Martin Luther Write His Catechisms?

## *What does this mean?*

For catechized Lutherans, this is a very familiar question. It is a simple question; a question that seeks a simple, clear, and brief explanation. It is the natural question of a curious mind. And that is exactly why Dr. Martin Luther used it throughout his *Small Catechism*. His goal was to develop resources for parents, teachers, and pastors to use as they taught the young and uneducated the fundamental teachings of the evangelical Christian faith. But don't let the question's simplicity fool you into thinking that the *Small Catechism* is a simple book. It was not the light afternoon's work of a Wittenberg theologian.

## *Why did Luther write the Catechisms?*

Luther realized that there was a need for a new evangelical catechism. In fact, he had asked a couple of colleagues to write one, but they never finished it to his satisfaction. It wasn't until he visited a number of congregations in Saxony that he was "constrained" to take up this task himself.

In his Preface to the Small Catechism (p. 9) Luther wrote, "*The deplorable conditions which I recently encountered when I was a visitor constrained me to prepare this brief and simple catechism or statement of Christian teaching.*" What were these "deplorable conditions"? "*The common people... have no knowledge whatever of Christian teaching, and unfortunately many pastors are quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching.*" Luther couldn't stand by anymore and let a truly Christian and evangelical catechism go unproduced.

## *How did Luther write the Catechisms?*

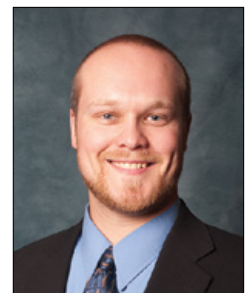
As a parish pastor, Luther preached to and instructed the youth of the congregation. During his tenure, he had preached a few series of sermons on the Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer that served as the foundation for the *Large Catechism*. In fact, in the Short Preface to the Large Catechism, Luther actually calls the *Large Catechism* a sermon.

The *Large Catechism* was the first to be published, in April of 1529. It was written for the basic and foundational instruction of the instructors, namely parents, teachers, and pastors. Remember how "many pastors [were] quite incompetent and unfitted for teaching"? Now they, as well as parents and teachers, would at least have a resource for preparing themselves to teach and expand upon what the children would memorize from the *Small Catechism*.

The *Small Catechism* was published a month later, in May of 1529. And it is this *Catechism* from which the famous "What does this mean?" comes. Luther suggested that parents, teachers, and pastors constantly (as in weekly, even daily) review these texts and explanations verbatim so that the students learn them by heart. In fact, the first words of the *Catechism* are "*As the Head of the Family Should Teach Them in a Simple Way to His Household.*"

## *Are Luther's Catechisms still useful today?*

Today, as in Luther's day, there is still a need for faithful resources to teach the foundations of the evangelical Christian faith. Since 1529, Lutherans have been learning and memorizing Luther's *Small Catechism*. Its truths are timeless, because they are eternal, divine truths. They are worth constant study and committing to memory even for the learned, because they will never change. They bring the young to maturity and develop the unlearned into grounded Christians. They are also a ready-made "defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). After all, aren't they basically asking, "What does this mean?"



**Samuel Gullixson** is pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Bishop, California, and founder of According to Your Word.



# On the Synodical Scene...

## The Rev. David R. Emmons Installed

The Rev. David Emmons was installed as pastor of the Five Point Parish on July 12, 2015. The parish includes Lime Creek (Lake Mills), Somber (Northwood), Lake Mills (Lake Mills), First Shell Rock (Northwood), and Immanuel (Riceville) Lutheran Churches in northern Iowa. The Rev. Robert Harting served as the liturgist, and the Rev. Joseph Abrahamson served as lector. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary President Gaylin Schmeling preached the installation sermon based on Luke 10:16 with the theme “Christian Proclamation Is the Voice of the Savior.” The Circuit Visitor, the Rev. Wayne Halvorson, performed the rite of installation. Mrs. Christa Ryg served as organist.

The Rev. David Emmons and his wife, Lisa, have four daughters and one son: Gabrielle, Arianna, Natania, Annaliese, and Micah.

After the service the members of the parish served an excellent dinner to the many members and guests who attended the service.



*Back Row (L to R): The Revs. Ronald Pederson, Robert Otto, Gaylin Schmeling, Shawn Stafford, Martin Hoesch. Front Row (L to R): Robert Harting, Joseph Abrahamson, David Emmons, Wayne Halvorson, Thomas Rank.*

## The Rev. Mark Faugstad Installed

Rev. Mark Faugstad was installed at Christ Lutheran Church in Port St. Lucie, Florida, on August 2, 2015, and will be teaching the upper grade class at Christ Lutheran School.

## Marlene Faugstad Installed

Marlene Faugstad was installed at Christ Lutheran School in Port St. Lucie, Florida, on August 2, 2015. She will be teaching Kindergarten.



*Back Row (L to R): The Revs. Matthew Luttmann, Andrew Burmeister, Herb Huhnerkoch, Matthew Moldstad, Charles Keeler. Front Row (L to R): Rev. Michael Dale, Rev. Mark Faugstad, Marlene Faugstad, Rev. Christopher Dale.*

## The Rev. Phillip Lepak Installed

The Rev. Phillip Lepak was installed as the pastor of Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, on Sunday July 12, 2015. President John Moldstad preached the sermon. Several area ELS and WELS pastors participated in the service.



*Pastor Phillip Lepak is pictured in the foreground.*

## The Rev. Cory Hahnke Installed

The Rev. Cory Hahnke was installed as the pastor of Grace and Our Saviour's Lutheran Churches, Madison, Wisconsin, on Sunday, July 12, 2015. The service was held at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church. The Rev. Bernt Tweit of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Madison was the preacher. Several pastors participated in the service. A reception was held for Pastor Hahnke and his family in the fellowship hall following the service.



## The Rev. Mark Rogers Installed

The Rev. Mark Rogers was installed as pastor of Scriptural Lutheran Church in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, on July 12, 2015.



# See the Opportunities

My wife is an avid morel hunter. She gets really excited about it. The conditions have to be just right for them to show up in the spring, and their season is pretty short. So when they appear, you have to be ready.

The first time that she took me morel hunting I didn't know what they looked like. Let's face it. Morels are weird-looking. How do you describe a morel to someone who has never seen one? But caught up in my wife's enthusiasm, I went trudging into the woods. I probably trampled on some and walked by others before I spotted my first. But then, I knew. That weird shape helped me pick them out from the forest floor. Spotting them became much easier.

Looking for opportunities to tell someone about Jesus is similar to morel hunting. If you don't know what you are looking for, it would be very easy to trample some underfoot and pass by others. So how do we learn to spot opportunities to tell others about Jesus?

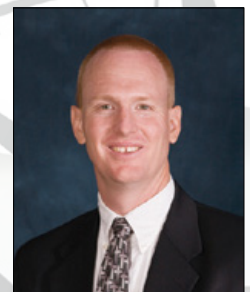
The theme verse for this series of articles says, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15). This verse helps us identify when we have opportunity to tell others about Jesus. Here are three pointers.

1. **When people ask:** Obviously, if someone is asking you about what you believe or the hope that you have, that is an opportunity to tell them about Jesus.
2. **When hope is needed:** The hardships of life can provide many occasions for sharing your faith. Sin has ruined the world we live in. Because of it, we deal with sickness, death, heartache, unfaithfulness, failure, and disappointment. These often rob people of joy and hope. If you see people struggling with life, you may have an opportunity to tell them about Jesus. If you are struggling with life and people see the hope that you have in the midst of that hardship, you may

have opportunity to tell them about Jesus. The darkness and pain of suffering can make eyes more willing to see and ears more willing to hear about Jesus, who said, "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

3. **When you can speak with gentleness and respect:** This point brings in Christian wisdom. It requires that Christians be aware of the situation and the context of the conversation. We may not be in a state of mind where we can speak with gentleness and respect. In such circumstances, it may be better that we say nothing at all. The setting of the conversation may not allow for it to be gentle and respectful. As an example, pointing out someone's sin in front of others may do more harm than good. Embarrassing them is not likely to make them receptive to your message of forgiveness in Jesus. Seeking the opportunity for a one-on-one conversation is probably better. The Christian is to be careful so that the message of hope in Jesus is presented with gentleness and respect.

These pointers should help you identify opportunities to tell others about Jesus. It is a lot like morel hunting though. The best thing to do is to head out into the woods. Experience will teach you. Once you see an opportunity, it is very likely that you will begin to notice more and more. Look around. God has placed people in your life right now who need the hope that you have in Jesus. Seize the opportunities. Tell them about Jesus.



**Timothy Hartwig** is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in North Mankato, Minnesota.

# Why Do Christians Continually Confess Their Sins, Since They Live in a State of Forgiveness?

Jesus teaches us to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses." God *requires* confession of us. We must continually be reminded of sin's destructive force in our lives that threatens our eternal salvation. Christian faith and life are a continuing state of *repentance*. Jesus' own instruction—"Repent! For the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2)—isn't a task to be checked off, but a daily dying to sin.

Luther encourages us to be of the mind that lives in daily confession. He speaks of Baptism, not just as a momentary ceremony, but as a *daily drowning of the old Adam* in us through contrition and repentance (ELS Catechism, 2001 edition, p. 187). In the *Christian Questions and Answers*, he encourages anyone who would be hesitant to be of this mind to "put his hand into his bosom, and feel whether he still have flesh and blood, and that he by all means believe what the Scriptures say of it in Galatians 5 [on the works of the flesh] and Romans 7 [on the daily and constant struggle against sin]" (p. 32). Luther goes on to say that we need communion (and its preceding confession) because sin and the devil in the world will not allow the Christian to have a moment's peace.

Scripture provides numerous examples of faithful people confessing their sins before God. One of the most famous is King David, who wrote in Psalm 32 of his guilt before God. He was a believer who had strayed in sin, like we all do. He was in great spiritual danger as one who was living in a state of deliberate and determined sin against God. Confronted by God's Law as delivered by the prophet Nathan, David writes:

*"I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not cover my iniquity;  
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,'  
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin"* (Psalm 32:5).

He goes on to encourage fellow believers to similarly confess their sins to God:

*"Therefore let everyone who is godly  
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;  
surely in the rush of great waters,  
they shall not reach him"* (Psalm 32:6).

Just before His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was speaking with a very faithful Simon Peter, whose every intention was to follow Jesus whatever the result (just like you, dear reader). But Jesus declared to him that he would fall away. He would even deny his Lord three times that night. Jesus said to him, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32).

Peter's warning of the devil prowling around "*like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*" (1 Peter 5:8) reminds us that our faith is constantly under attack and can be lost through carelessness. We confess our sins because as David and Simon Peter, we are burdened with sin's guilt. We feel the Lord's hand heavy upon us. We need the relief that He offers at the foot of the cross for all who repent.

Yes, we live in a state of forgiveness by God's grace alone, through faith alone in Christ's atonement for sins. We continually confess our sins according to Jesus' instruction, John's preaching, and the example of the faithful in Scripture so that the seed that the Spirit has planted in us might avoid being lost in carelessness, and instead, mature unto salvation.



Michael Dale is pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Port St. Lucie, Florida.

# Pastor, I Have a Question...

**Question:** *I know we have to be careful what songs we pick for funerals, but can we pick any song from our church hymnal? It is full of wonderful songs. Also a funeral is a time to celebrate the life of the one who went to heaven. Most families know what songs their loved one liked and they want to share the joy of music that can give great joy and comfort for the survivors. So is there any reason we can't pick any hymn from our church hymnal?*

**ANSWER:** It is the duty of the Church to provide a Christian funeral for members. Over the centuries, funeral practices have changed. Today, "the celebration of life" seems to be replacing the Christian funeral throughout the country. According to the funeral industry, "the celebration of life" is another way of saying a memorial service. A Christian funeral is not the same as a "celebration of life." Our church owes its members a Christian funeral.

When a pastor is notified of the death of a church member, his immediate duty is to visit mourning members. He will bring the comfort of the Gospel. It is a most appropriate time for a pastoral visit and one of the most important services of a pastor. Jesus came into this world to conquer death on behalf of sinners. The pastor will consult with the family of the deceased or others charged with planning as to scheduling. He may ask if they want a special Bible passage for the sermon and favorite hymns.

We are careful about the music we choose. The purpose of the Christian funeral is to comfort those mourning. It is a service of worship. We worship Jesus. He is our God and Savior. He became one with us at Christmas for a specific purpose, as we read in Hebrews 2:14-15:

*"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."*

By His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus earned for each of us the forgiveness of sins and the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to life eternal. At a time of mourning Christians rejoice in Jesus' promise:

*"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).*

Our Lutheran hymnbooks are filled with great hymns praising the Savior. It is entirely fitting to choose a favorite of the departed loved one from the hymnbook. Some favorite hymns are not from the hymnbook. They may or may not be fitting for a Lutheran funeral. The pastor will help with those selections.

Hymnbooks have suggestions for hymns for death and burial. We need not limit ourselves to those. Christians mourn but not as others who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13ff.). We also rejoice that our Christian dead are with Christ. We bury our Christian dead in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection unto life everlasting. Hymns of joy and comfort are most appropriate. Resurrection hymns speak to the very situation in which we find ourselves. We are not limited to these choices.

The pastor will welcome appropriate suggestions from our hymnbook. Mourners, in their grief, may not be able to remember particular hymns. The pastor will help.

There are other considerations: the difficulty of the hymn, the size of the congregation, and others. Some prefer to have soloists. And again, any appropriate hymn from our hymnbook could be used.

## Send your questions to:

Pastor Charles Keeler  
117 Ruby Lake Dr.  
Winter Haven, FL 33884

**Charles Keeler** is pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida.



# Bridge Work in Chile

*“We don’t mind. We’d actually like more of it, if you can. This is a church, after all.”* The 30-60 year olds in the small English classroom at “Unidos por la Fe” Lutheran Church in Chile have been actually asking for more Bible-related materials and discussion.

And so, in English class, we have begun with hymns, key Bible verses that explain the Law and the Gospel, Bible stories, and Bible “chats” about Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, forgiveness, good works, and living.

For many Latinos, this may be one of the first times they’ve been able to study the promises of God in an interactive format. Once they’ve come to trust the teacher or pastor, the majority of the students want to learn more about the Bible, and are just waiting for an invitation to talk. Building a bridge between the ESL program and the church leaders or members is a key to opening and deepening that desire.

In Chile, we are constantly learning and growing in this “bridge-building” aspect, but we have studied several insights from WELS missionary Mike Hartman in Mexico, who emphasizes *connection* as the key:

**Connection to a church leader:** A local national pastor that was completely supportive of the program and spent significant time with students (visiting, teaching, etc.).

**Connection to church members:** Regular social activities outside of class (Latinos are extremely social).

**Connection to the Word:** The pastor offered Introductory Bible Information classes either before or after the EFL classes.

The latest adult student to be “connected” to the Gospel message is named Pamela Valdés. She works at a frozen food factory near the church in Linares and has two 16-year-old twin girls. Elise Gross, a newly arrived field worker from Kingdom Workers, interviewed Pamela in July. Pamela says:

*“I noticed the sign outside the church door that advertised English classes, and I was interested.”*

*During English classes, I learned more about the Lutheran church. I carry a heavy load and had been looking for a church. I went to many many churches but they always seemed to make my load heavier.*

*I am passionate about my daughters and their relationship with God so I talked with Pastor Tim. I left feeling lighter. Now I take classes with Pastor Tim and will be a member in September. It will be my spiritual birthday!*

*My favorite thing about the Lutheran church is that it emphasizes grace and salvation. I love reading the Bible, and I love the words I hear in the sermons on Sundays. I also love the feel here; it is like a family.”*

And more connections are happening. Pamela said, “I like [my Bible classes] more each day. I’m already letting some of my friends know about my confirmation date so that they can accompany me. They’re very curious to find out who it is that has ‘trapped’ me. They don’t know that it was Jesus.”

Pamela’s twin teenage daughters also came to Sunday service last week! Both of the girls are very shy; they previously had a jarring experience at another church in town that was very legalistic. They have been hesitant to come see what their mom is doing at this Lutheran church.

Their mother Pamela writes, “I hope they continue to attend. That will be a big job.”

It will be, but nothing is impossible for the Holy Spirit. We pray that the English program continues to be a link to reach students, family members, and friends with the burden-relieving message that Christ has redeemed them, fully and freely.

A long-term outreach program such as ESL classes can run the risk of becoming isolated. As the program grows, there must be multiple and varied connections to the Word and the Church, to give more opportunities for participants to “taste and see.”

We pray that God blesses the outreach programs at our missions home and abroad, as we all work to **connect** lost souls to the life-giving Message.



**Chelsea Dietsche** serves as an EFL teacher and outreach assistant at Unidos por la Fe congregation in Linares, Chile.

## And So *IT* Continues

*Back in the day...* That's the prelude to many a story of good times gone by. Memories are great gifts of God—the ability to recollect a happy, dramatic, or even sad moment of our life or the life of one we've loved and lost.

As we celebrate the Lutheran Reformation, it's very important that we don't celebrate it as a *back-in-the-day* moment, as a *good-time-gone-by*. This is not at all suggesting we deny the Lutheran Reformation its historicity. Luther nailing theses to the Castle Church, standing before Emperor Charles, and hiding away at the Wartburg are absolutely historical events, as historical as Jesus being born of Mary, suffering under Pilate, dying on the cross, and being raised again and appearing to more than 500 real, historical witnesses.

The Lutheran Reformation most certainly took place in history. More than that, though, it *CONTINUES* to take place now. This is possible because the Reformation we celebrate was not Luther's work or effort, properly speaking. It was the Lord's work *through Luther*. And this work of the Lord wasn't new with Luther in the 1500s. It's the same old work the Lord has been up to all along:

*“The Lord kills and makes alive;  
He brings down to the grave and brings up.  
The Lord makes poor and makes rich;  
He brings low and lifts up” (1 Samuel 2:6-7).*

The note in Luther's pocket on his dying bed is said to have simply read: *“We are beggars. This is true.”* This is Luther summarizing the Reformation with perfect simplicity. Beggars have nothing with which they might trade for the goods of another. The Word of the Lord makes *us* beggars—with no thoughts pure

enough, no words kind enough, no works sturdy enough to claim status as God's holy people. The essence of the Reformation starts in this *empty-handedness*. We are “brought to the grave.”

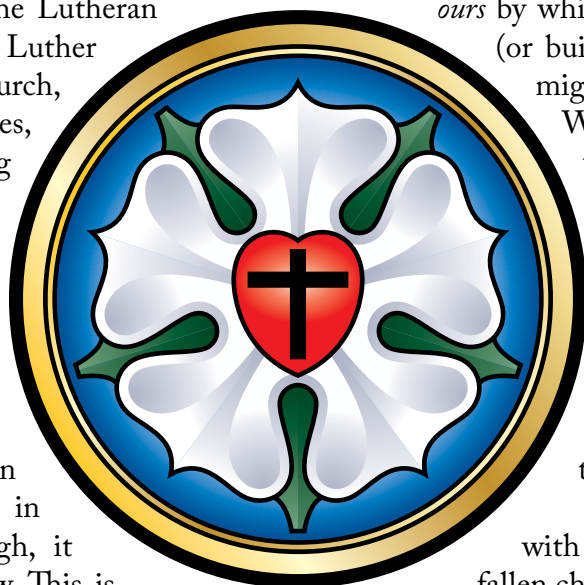
But the Word of the Lord doesn't leave this *beggar-status* as the sad and pathetic scene we imagine. Rather, the Word of the Lord has us lose everything of *ours* by which we imagine ourselves wealthy

(or building wealth) with God that we might instead gain God's wealth. The

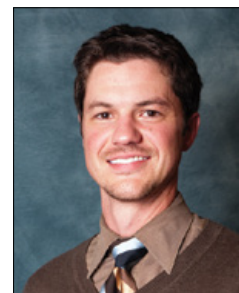
Word of the Lord *makes us rich* with Christ. The powerful Word of the Gospel bathes us in the priceless blood of Jesus' death. The Word of the Lord dresses our spiritually naked bodies in Christ's pure thoughts, His kind words, His perfect works of love. And so our life is snatched from the grave, our poverty is made rich.

God gave *form* to the Gospel with His word of promise to His fallen children in the Garden of Eden. He preserved this *good news* through the prophets.

He fulfilled it in the person and work of His Son, Jesus. And when the will and work of sinful hearts had mangled this good news, God *reformed* it again using Luther as His tool. And so *IT* continues—wherever Christ's blood washes filthy beggars in Holy Baptism, whenever Christ's righteous life is draped upon stained consciences in preaching and teaching, as often as Christ's body and blood are received under bread and wine as nothing less than sins forgiven fully and freely—*THERE the Reformation continues*—because there is Christ *FOR YOU*.



**Kyle Madson** is pastor of Divine Mercy Lutheran Church in Hudson Oaks, Texas, and serves as managing editor of the *Lutheran Sentinel*.



## Seminary Begins a New School Year

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary began its new school year with an opening service on August 24, 2015, in Good Shepherd Chapel. Dr. Thomas Kuster, basing his message on the account of the calling of the first disciples recorded in Luke 5:1–10, urged students to turn their full attention this school year to studying their main tool, the Means of Grace, for their future calling of “catching men.” On the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret, Dr. Kuster pointed out, our Lord observed His future disciples washing and mending their nets, their main tool for serious commercial fishing. After the Lord showed His power by the miraculous catch, He called them to “catch men,” and they left their nets to follow Him. The main tool for their new calling of “catching men” is the Word of God and its visible forms, the holy Sacraments—the Means of Grace. This “net” is made up of two strong interwoven strands: objective justification and our Lord’s institution. The seminary curriculum focuses attention on Word and Sacraments from multiple perspectives: those of Biblical, Doctrinal, Historical, and Practical Theology. At the shore of the Lake of Gennesaret, there was a time for fishing and a time for washing nets. Seminary is an important time to give full attention to preparing one’s nets, the Means of Grace, for the future calling of “catching men.”

The teaching staff for the seminary this year is as follows: Thomas Flunker, Adolph Harstad, Thomas Kuster, Dennis Marzolf, Michael Smith, and Gaylin Schmeling. Professor Flunker is teaching Hispanic outreach; Professor Harstad is teaching in the areas of Old Testament, counseling, and homiletics; Professor Kuster is teaching communication; Professor Marzolf is teaching hymnology; Professor Smith is teaching in the areas of New Testament, hermeneutics, and homiletics; and Professor Schmeling is teaching courses in church history, dogmatics, and homiletics.



*Back Row (L to R): Aaron Ferkenstad, Christian Walz, Noah Thompson. Front Row (L to R): Patrick Ernst, Kurtis Freimuth, Joseph Lundsten*  
*Vicars not pictured: Matthew Behmer, Jeffrey Hendrix, Joshua Mayer, Daniel Ruiz, Andrew Soule*

The seminary enrollment this year numbers eleven. There are five vicars, two seniors, two middlers, and two juniors. The vicars are Matthew Behmer at Peace Lutheran Church (North Mankato, Minnesota) and Bethany Lutheran College (Mankato, Minnesota); Jeffrey Hendrix at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (Indianola, Iowa); Joshua Mayer at Redeeming Grace Lutheran Church (Rogers, Minnesota); Daniel Ruiz at Hope Lutheran Church (Leander, Texas); and Andrew Soule at Norseland Lutheran Church (Saint Peter, Minnesota) and Norwegian Grove Lutheran Church (Gaylord, Minnesota). Also we have one student in the Master of Arts in Lutheran Theological Studies program.