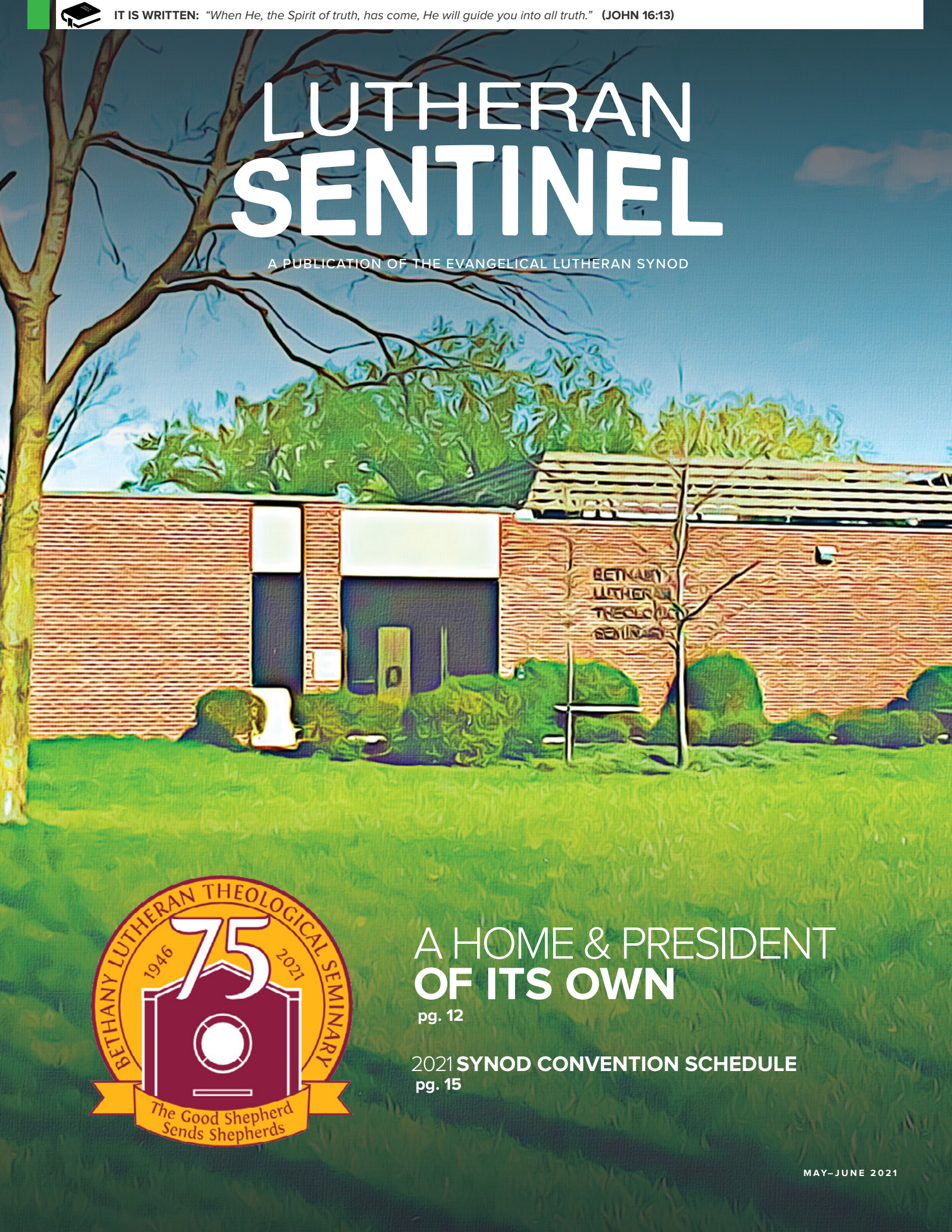




IT IS WRITTEN: "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth." (JOHN 16:13)

LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD



A HOME & PRESIDENT OF ITS OWN

pg. 12

2021 SYNOD CONVENTION SCHEDULE

pg. 15



Celebrating a Holy Citizenship

The third high festival of the church year, **The Day of Pentecost**, is observed by us this year on May 23. Sadly, today this festival is often observed to the surprise of most Christians. No one asks, “Do you have your Pentecost tree up or cards sent out yet?” “Are you planning to attend the Pentecost breakfast at church?” For the great feast day of the Holy Spirit, no one asks the question of Christians, “What are you serving for dinner: roast beef, ham, lamb, turkey?” This is likely a good thing since all the secular interests and trappings do not distract us as they do on the other two great feast days.

Lutherans are often accused of neglecting a proper focus on the Holy Spirit. That false accusation usually comes from those who do not understand the person and work of the Spirit. We know the power of God is the Gospel (Romans 1:16) and the focus of the Gospel is upon Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). When Christ and His salvation are preached, the Spirit is at work. If we constantly focus on the power of the Holy Spirit, He is not at work among us. Far from neglecting the Spirit, Lutherans allow Him to fill the lives of their members by preaching Christ constantly.

You regularly pray, “Thy kingdom come.” Have you ever considered how this petition has much to do with Pentecost? Luther explains it this way: “The kingdom of God comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity.” It is the Holy Spirit’s work among us to bring God’s kingdom to us.

We live, work, and play now in our earthly kingdom, but the outcome of such lives is death. What a miserable existence darkened by our sinful condition with such black things as pain, sorrow, sickness, loss, failures, and sin! We would have every reason to despair and give up. But there is that other Kingdom, the Kingdom of life, which comes to us in the appealing hues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

To be citizens of God’s holy Kingdom even as we struggle in the kingdom of this dark world is truly a delight upon which to meditate. The Spirit, poured out on Pentecost to the Church of all ages, brings this glorious Kingdom to you so that you might live in the light of God’s love for you in His Son and enjoy the peace the world can never give to you. God’s Kingdom has graciously come to you. Your sins are all forgiven. You possess even right now life everlasting. You have received in all of its abundance eternal salvation. These things are the Spirit’s gifts to you in Christ.

*Thy kingdom come! Thine let it be In time and through eternity!
O let Thy Holy Spirit dwell With us, to rule and guide us well;
From Satan’s mighty pow’r and rage
Preserve Thy Church from age to age. Amen.*
(ELH #383 v. 3)

4 CURRENT EVENTS SERIES: CROSS FOCUS
No More Forgiveness?
REV. PAUL FRIES

6 THE 1521 SERIES
The Edict of Worms
PROF. EMERITUS, ERLING T. TEIGEN

8 THE BIBLE'S PRAYER BOOK:
A Walk Through the Psalms
REV. TONY PITTENGER

10 2021 APOLOGETICS SERIES:
Critiquing Worldviews Opposed to Christianity
REV. DAVID THOMPSON

12 2021 SYNOD CONVENTION:
A Home & President of Its Own

14 EDITORS DEVOTIONAL SERIES
Bread for Today | The Bread of Life
REV. KYLE MADSON

16 MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS
**Gloria Dei Lutheran Church,
Saginaw, Michigan**
REV. JACOB KEMPFERT

DEPARTMENTS:

- 2 From the President
- 5 Pastor, I Have a Question
- 15 Synod News: Convention Schedule



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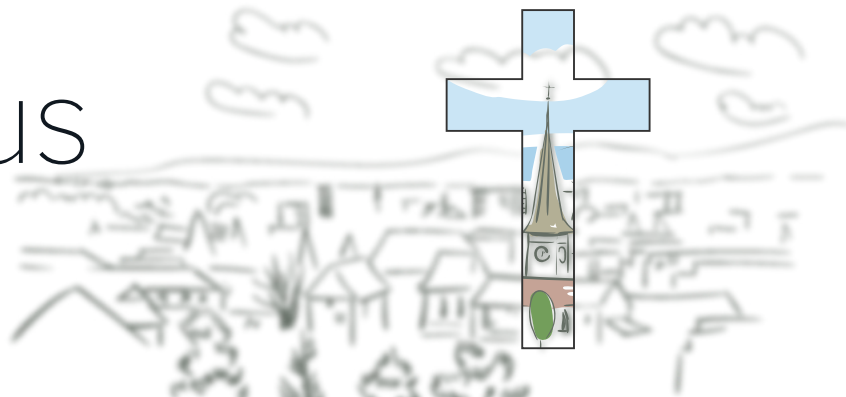
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Cross Focus

Focusing on the world around us through the lens of the cross.

by **REV. PAUL FRIES**, Communications Director
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NO MORE FORGIVENESS?

There has been a very disturbing trend in our nation during the last couple of decades. While there has always been a tendency to rush to judgment over certain events, condemning someone whether or not they are guilty, the new trend is to make this tendency standard practice. The condemnation and judgment then lead to negative actions. Waiting to hear an explanation, waiting for proof of guilt, or even waiting for an apology no longer seem to matter. And if you fail to follow the collective thinking or encourage others to wait for more information, you are in danger of the same condemnation and judgment.

Is this trend pleasing to God? What does our Savior think of “cancel culture” and the rush to judgment? What do we do if someone apologizes or asks for forgiveness for a public sin? Our culture now essentially tells us that we must not forgive or forget someone’s action whether or not they are sorry for that action. It is more important that they receive “justice” from the majority. Unfortunately, that “justice” is often revenge and leaves our nation’s laws and presumption of innocence out of the equation. This type of “justice” always leaves God and His Word out of the decision-making process.

In the Book of Matthew, we read, *Peter came up and asked Jesus, “Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother when he sins against me? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but I tell you as many as seventy-seven times (Matthew 18:21-22 EHV).* Jesus then went on to tell the parable of the unmerciful servant. The point was to show Peter and the other disciples, along with believers of all time, that forgiving our neighbor is not optional.

Get rid of every kind of bitterness, rage, anger, quarreling, and slander, along with every kind of malice. Instead, be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:31-32 EHV). Those words can be difficult to hear and often even more difficult to live. The key to us forgiving others is the end of that passage: just as God in Christ has forgiven us. We did not and do not earn forgiveness from God. Jesus earned it for us and paid for it with His life. In faith we repent of our sins, and in faith we receive the forgiveness earned for us. When we consider ourselves and the countless times we have sinned against others and against God, how can we fail to forgive our neighbor?

As our culture continues to “cancel” others whether or not they have apologized for their actions, it is our privilege as Christians to stand apart from the culture. It is our honor to wait for explanations and listen to apologies. And it is our joy to forgive, just as God in Christ has forgiven us.

*During the COVID-19 shutdowns, many churches were prohibited from gathering for worship. At the time, swift action seemed prudent given everything unknown about the virus. As time passed, though, some governmental restrictions on churches seemed excessive. **While believers do not want to rebel against our God-given authorities, when must Christians tell the government, “We must obey God rather than men”?***

Answer:

Faithful Christians know the great blessings that God grants through the Means of Grace and take seriously the admonition of the letter to the Hebrews to not give up meeting together for worship (Hebrews 10:25). So when the COVID-19 pandemic struck almost a year and a half ago and many states responded with orders limiting public gatherings, many Christians were saddened. Outside of online worship, public worship essentially came to a halt for several weeks.

In some states, the government took care to say that places of worship were essential. Churches were encouraged to continue offering worship through the means that were available, provided that they adhered to state regulations.

In other places, however, the governmental authorities did not seem to view religion in the same “essential” light. For example, one county health department in California declared that churches were “closed” and any form of in-person worship “forbidden.” As time went on, we heard news stories about county agencies threatening to halt “parking lot worship services” where worshipers were sitting in their own cars. In other places, governments refused to provide a “sunset” for restrictions on churches while allowing other gathering places like bars to open. In some places, worship is still highly restricted. A few churches have gotten attention from the media for violating state orders and reopening anyway, even if they have to pay fines and penalties for doing so.

Yet are COVID restrictions an exact parallel to the apostles’ situation in Acts 5? The Twelve found themselves on trial before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, which had ordered the apostles not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18, 5:28). Peter’s response forms the basis of today’s question when he spoke for the apostles and said, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29, EHV).

Peter did not speak those words flippantly. Refusing to obey a “lawful” order from the government is a serious matter. For this reason, believers don’t invoke Acts 5:29 lightly. Christians have to be certain that the only way to obey God is to disobey the government. Is the government’s order unlawful, outside of its God-given scope, or simply commanding us to sin? Is the government forbidding us

from keeping Christ’s command to preach and teach the Word of God? If the answer to those questions is “no,” then our obedience to the government is a cross to be borne out of love for God and our neighbor. On the other hand, if a government ordinance commands us to sin or forbids us from preaching and teaching God’s Word, then Christians owe allegiance to God first.

Yet invoking Acts 5:29 does not mean that Christians immediately run to disobey the civil authorities. By God’s grace, we live in a country that recognizes the citizen’s right to petition the government for redress. Churches and pastors can communicate with the local officials about how to proceed. Christians can seek help from their legislators, and, if need be, bring matters before the courts for adjudication. Before believers blatantly disobey the law, they will want to exhaust all reasonable avenues of redress first. Even St. Paul repeatedly availed himself of the Roman legal system. Perhaps reasonable officials will listen.

If officials do not listen, then, as a last resort, believers may disobey. Such action may bring harsh consequences. The Sanhedrin ordered that the Twelve be beaten, and afterward the apostles rejoiced at the privilege of suffering for Jesus’ name. If violating an order that would otherwise cause them to sin involves paying a fine or suffering a penalty, God’s people will gladly endure it without violence or resistance (1 Peter 2:20).

Following Christ is not easy. Jesus Himself suffered at the hands of a corrupt government even though He had every right to resist. Disciples of Christ are willing to do the same, trusting that the Lord lives and reigns, having overcome the world by His death and resurrection. As we step into the future with faith, our gracious God will protect us from harm, preserve us in adversity, and ultimately deliver us from this evil world to the kingdom of His glory.



Do you have a question for Pastor Van Kampen?

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Dr. Martin Luther in

1521

The Edict of Worms, April 1521

by **REV. ERLING TEIGEN**, Professor Emeritus
BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE, Contributing Writer

December 10, 1520 was the deadline for Luther to retract his writings; he didn't, but defiantly threw a copy of Exsurge Domine into a bonfire in which the University of Wittenberg students were burning papal papers and books. The final bull of excommunication, Decret Romanum, was signed in Rome on January 3, 1521, and sent to Worms where the Diet of the empire would be meeting from the end of January to mid-May. The bull arrived in Worms in early February and in mid-March, Luther was summoned to Worms. Luther and three others left for Worms at the end of March in a horse-drawn carriage and arrived on April 16.

Some years later, when speaking about his excommunication, Luther counted three of them:

In 1516 I began writing against the pope. In 1518 Doctor Staupitz released me from obedience to the order and left me alone at Augsburg. In 1521, Pope Leo excommunicated me from the church and this was the second release.

In 1521 Kaiser Charles excommunicated me from his empire, and that was the third release.

And the Lord took me up — Psalm 27:10

(Table Talk item 884, WAT,1,442).

In the first item, Luther stretches things a bit. At Augsburg, John Staupitz had joined Luther to offer some moral support in his appearance before Cajetan. When it appeared Luther and the others might be captured and taken to Rome, Staupitz, head of the Augustinian order in Germany, released Luther from his vows as an Augustinian monk—not to rid the order of a troublesome monk but to protect Luther from being forced to Rome. The outcome of that was to be feared since people still remembered the fate of John Hus, who was burned at the stake by the Council of Constance in 1415. Luther was given a horse and told to get quickly back to Saxony. That release from his vows is not really an excommunication, but it makes

his point—he was cut off, but the Lord took him under His protection, an allusion to Psalm 27:10.

The second event, the papal excommunication, meant Luther was out of the communion of the Roman Catholic Church. However, on the third one, Luther stretches things a little bit again. After the dramatic scene at Worms, in the presence of the emperor, the papal nuncio (emissary) Aleander, and members of the Diet/parliament, Luther refused to recant. The next few days, Luther met with a committee, including some theologians who tried to reason with him sympathetically. When that failed, Luther, with a safe passage guarantee, left Worms. Luther may have had an idea that something was going to happen, but Elector Frederick certainly knew. It was arranged that the wagon would be stopped by apparent robbers, who would abduct Luther and take him to the elector's Wartburg castle at Eisenach, where he would be safely hidden away for a time.

From the time Aleander arrived in Worms, he had been exerting pressure on the emperor to take the strongest action possible against Luther. Aleander had been a professor at the University of Paris and later served on the papal staff in Rome as the Vatican librarian. In 1519, Pope Leo X had sent Aleander as emissary to the coronation of Charles as emperor or Kaiser of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation and to the 1521 Diet of Worms, the first Diet during the reign of Charles V. Aleander had previously been appointed by the pope along with John Eck to distribute the bull *Exsurge Domine* in Germany. Aleander, a scholastic theologian, became a bitter enemy of Luther, who had widely condemned scholastic theology.

After Luther left Worms, Aleander kept prodding the emperor and produced a draft of the edict banning Luther from the Holy Roman Empire. Of course, the emperor had no power of excommunication, but he certainly could expel a troublemaker from the empire. For Luther, who loved his Germany, being banned from Germany was a much worse fate than being banned from the Roman Catholic Church.

There were many members of the Diet who had varying degrees of sympathy for Luther, even if they didn't fully agree with him. When Luther arrived in Worms, he was enthusiastically greeted by the citizens. Thus, it was unclear if Charles could get them to treat Luther so harshly. Ernst Schwiebert comments that "the emperor had no real power in Germany according to the constitution of the Holy Roman Empire... He needed the good will of the German Diet" (505), and "it was evident that the German estates would assert their constitutional right and refuse to permit a fellow German to be condemned without their approval and consent" (509).

And yet the Diet did approve of the Edict of Worms—by subterfuge. While the Diet was still in session, drafts of the edict were presented. Twice there were criticisms and the drafts were sent back to Aleander for changes. It became obvious that there was some opposition to the edict, especially among the electors. By May 12, Aleander presented the corrected copies (Latin and German) to Charles to be signed. By then, however, Charles saw that the edict would not be adopted with so many sympathetic to Luther present, so he set the draft aside and did not sign it.

The official copies of the edict signed by the Emperor were dated "May 8," the date of the first draft. During the days after May 12, many members of the Diet were leaving for various reasons. On May 25, the Diet was officially closed. That evening, the emperor summoned those electors and others who were still in Worms and had the edict read. The next day, May 26, the emperor signed the original Latin and German copies of the Edict on copies retaining the May 8 date (Schwiebert 511). Thus, the edict was in some quarters, especially Lutheran, regarded as the illegitimate act of a "rump session."

The edict was long (over eleven pages single-spaced), but most of that was narrative. The essence was that Martin Luther and his books and writings were subject to the edict, but the scope was much broader, applying also to Luther's associates—to anyone who favored him in any way or who gave him refuge.

The specific crime was "High Treason," which was itemized in the narrative. The punishment was "Confiscation and loss of body and belongings, fixed and moveable," and the proceeds from what was seized were to be divided in half, one half for the church and the other half to "the accusers and denouncers."

One outcome of the edict may well be that it broadened Luther's audience, especially in the north of Germany. Schwiebert comments that "it was too unreasonable to be enforced" (512). However, even before the adoption of the Edict of Worms, Luther's prince, Elector Frederick, was worried enough to have Luther hidden away in the Wartburg castle for ten months, which turned out to be a highly productive time for Luther. That will be our next topic.

Notes:

See <http://www.civoice.org/creededictworms.html> for the text of the Edict.

Detailed accounts of these events are found in E. G. Schwiebert, *Luther and his Times*, and Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation*.

The Bible's 'Prayer Book'

The Psalms: Teach Us to Pray

by **REV. TONY PITTENGER**, Contributing Writer
BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Port Orchard, Wash.

Psalm 98 - A Truly New Song

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon observes that "there is nothing new under the sun." A wise man in his own right, he points out that today's sunrise and sunset is a rerun. The winds may change, but they'll come back around again. Rivers have been rushing into the sea for eons, but it never fills.

Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us (Ecclesiastes 1:10).

With redundancies and repetition making up the fabric of our lives, Solomon is correct and incorrect; he is right but, praise God, he is also wrong.

Psalm 98 calls on God's people to sing a "new song." What does this mean?

Well, it might help to know that the Church traditionally uses, prays, and sings Psalm 98 twice each year. We sing it first on Christmas morning, the day the world opens its eyes to see something that is truly "new."

A virgin is a mother. While that's definitely new, there's more to this and to this song...

Her Child is without sin. He is holy and pure. The earth hasn't seen someone like this since Adam and Eve bit into that forbidden fruit.

In contradiction to Solomon, Christmas morning reveals something genuinely new and worth singing about.

But it's the second time we use Psalm 98 that we truly see something new and praiseworthy because ever since Adam and Eve, we have been hearing the same old song and dance.

It's the song and dance of sin and death, the final lyrics to all life. Ever since sin imposed its grim wage onto God's creation, death has been the final chapter written onto every page in this world's history.

Six feet beneath cemetery grass, you'll find the old song of sin and death. Dig deeper and you'll find that song written as a fossil record and as coal and oil deposits.

Sin's inexorable wage. Even the virgin's Son, that baby of Psalm 98, is subject to this rule. Because He took on human flesh, now even He was subject to the same old song of death.

Beat Him, scourge Him, nail Him to a cross and He will die just like anyone else. The tune in the background is the same old dirge that grinds everything in creation to dust: our grandest buildings,

highest mountains, stars in space, and even the sinless Son of God.

But pulling double duty, Psalm 98 is also an Easter song. When His family and friends came to sing His last verse and finish His burial, angels proclaimed news of the Church's new song.

He is not here. He has risen. See the place where they laid Him. See it and sing of something entirely different and new.

Christ is Psalm 98's "marvelous thing" that shatters all this world has ever known about the permanency of death and the iron bars of the grave. God and man died in Christ. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep.

But now... *His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. The Lord has made known His salvation* (Psalm 98:1-2).

In Christ, God has remembered us. *His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel* (98:3).

Here is something new and something to sing about! Let all creation, the sea, the rivers, the hills, and the peoples clap, shout, and sing for joy!

Break forth in song...with harp...trumpets...horn... shout joyfully before the Lord, the King (98:4-6).

Most times, life still seems to be the same old song and dance. A tired old tune of battling disease, growing old, and being haunted by a lifetime of sin and guilt. But in Christ, you have something new to sing about. This song is not just His and not just about Him. His victory is yours. The Lord's salvation, His righteousness, His mercy, and His faithfulness are for you.

Psalm 98 (NKJV)

A Psalm. ¹Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. ²The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations. ³He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. ⁴Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises. ⁵Sing to the Lord with the harp, With the harp and the sound of a psalm, ⁶With trumpets and the sound of a horn; Shout joyfully before the Lord, the King. ⁷Let the sea roar, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell in it; ⁸Let the rivers clap their hands; Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord, ⁹For He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, And the peoples with equity.

CRITIQUING WORLDVIEWS

Opposed to Christianity



by **REV. DAVID THOMPSON**, Contributing Writer
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A worldview is an overall belief system that governs a person's way of thinking and living. Biblical Christianity is our worldview. Other worldviews conflict with ours to a greater or lesser extent. But identifying and critiquing competing worldviews can be a challenge.

Challenges

Unfortunately, worldviews normally don't clearly announce, "Hi, I'm naturalism" or "I'm atheism" or "I'm Buddhism," etc. Rather, they come in bits and pieces. They come to us in individual assumptions — ideas, principles, or teachings assumed to be true within a worldview or religion. These assumptions can be very subtle. They can also be combined with other assumptions that may be true, making detection of the false more difficult.

An example would be "tolerance." There can be something good about tolerance (we may have to patiently put up with another's poor behavior or misguided beliefs). But over the last decades, tolerance has been promoted as an absolute obligation that insists on affirming certain ways of thinking and behaviors that are actually false, immoral, and contrary to the biblical worldview. We Christians can affirm many assumptions and behaviors to be good or fine, but there are many we would call wrong and evil because of the truths of Scripture and natural law. This tolerance assumption (resulting in Christians being called "intolerant" and "bigots") is part of the worldview often known as postmodernism, which has numerous other assumptions in conflict with our Christian faith. Such assumptions are found in all false worldviews.

Another challenge is that false worldviews and their assumptions often have

religious implications that masquerade as purely secular. Spiritual dangers can come from places unexpected: school policies and values (public and private), various educational disciplines, respected professors, corporation policies, social media, novels, movies, governing officials and policies, Supreme Court decisions, etc. It does not matter where they are found. What matters is they are out there, promoted, and contrary to the Bible's teachings.

What Do We Do?

It is important to recognize assumptions when they surface. A red flag may go up where we ask, "Is this true?" We then need to follow the approach of the believers in Berea: *Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so* (Acts 17:11). John the apostle told his readers to "test the spirits to see if they are from God" (1 John 4:1). Jesus said, "Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth" (John 17:17). The bottom line is God's inspired and infallible Word determines truth and therefore what is not in keeping with truth — what is false.

To put it another way, Christians, congregations, pastors, and synods need to be firmly grounded in biblical truth. Current notions, movements, and ways of thinking should not be assumed to be good just because they are popular, seem to make sense, promote something called "justice," appear to be beneficial, have "science" behind them, feel right, coincide with someone's experience, or collaboration has occurred. Every idea and belief that comes across our paths as Christians must be tested by the Word of God. We

should plead therefore that God grant us pastors, teachers, professors, congregations, and a church body where love and wisdom reside.

We can also ask some basic and helpful questions while holding to the right answers — questions and answers that can solidify in our minds Christian truth and thereby help us recognize false worldviews and their assumptions. Here are several examples of such questions (with the Christian answers summarized in parentheses):

1. Is the natural world all that exists or all that can be known? Are there supernatural beings? (There is one true God, and only one — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit — creator of all things, visible and invisible, who has made Himself known along with many things of His creation.)

2. Are there absolute truths and real knowledge that can be grasped by human beings? (God has given us our reason, senses, and conscience by which we can come to know many facts and certain truths about the world, ourselves, and even God but the ultimate and final authority is the inspired and inerrant Word, the Bible. It is this Word that declares what is true and false regarding beliefs, religion, worldviews, history, science, teachings, morality, behavior, and lifestyles. This source alone gives us the needed knowledge about ourselves and God in order to be saved.)

3. Who is man? (He is the most unique of all created beings, who alone was made in God's image. He has a soul and a sense of destiny beyond this life. He is a rational, creative, aesthetic, moral being; he is of infinite value.)



4. What is man's real problem?

(We have all inherited the original sin of Adam — an innate, desperate sinfulness and displayed whenever we violate the Ten Commandments in deeds, words, and thoughts, resulting in separation from God and death.)

5. What is the solution for man's problem? (Jesus Christ, whose perfect life, substitutionary death, and bodily resurrection fully acquired forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all, which is received freely and only by faith in Jesus alone and for whom believers now live.)

6. Who is Jesus Christ? (True God and true man, who never sinned, performed real miracles, was killed by crucifixion, rose bodily from the dead, ascended to his Father's right hand where he now reigns, and will return on the last day to judge the living and the dead.)

7. Is the Bible merely a "religious" book? (Though it is religious in that it is the authority for the Christian religion, it also contains records of major events in history, records that are shown to be reliable and trustworthy. For example, the separate records and numerous eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ, something these witnesses were willing to die for. No other religion has such reliable historical support.)

8. Are there any institutions in this life that help us and should be regarded as sacred? (God — and not man — has created for this life the institutions of marriage, government, and the holy Christian church.)

9. Is there anything beyond life? (All people upon natural death will enter either eternal life or eternal damnation.)

Though some worldviews do not deal with all these questions, every worldview deals with some of them. One can apply these questions (and others) to assump-

tions and ways of thinking that are found in the world today. If those assumptions offer contrary answers, one is dealing with a false worldview and a lie.

To put this in perspective, imagine someone (like our child or grandchild) placed in an environment where assumptions are openly or subtly promoted but never explained to be a part of a worldview — where assumptions are never challenged, where no alternative answers are provided, where one is not asked to think critically whether they might be right or wrong. For example, think of being in a class where only evolution is allowed or in a setting where transgenderism is affirmed and contrary (biblical) beliefs are condemned. What could happen?

The fact is deceptive worldviews are promoted more often than we realize. And what happens is truth and the message of the Savior never get a fair hearing — faith in Christ is not an option, or faith in Christ can be lost. This is why St. Paul said, *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ* (Colossians 2:8). And why St. Peter wrote, *In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect* (1 Peter 3:15).

And most importantly, we hold to the powerful Truth of our worldview — the gospel — that, amid all these threatening worldviews, pierces like a sword into our hearts to strengthen and preserve us in our faith in Christ.

Learn more... about Critiquing Worldviews that Oppose Christianity



Website:

Center for Apologetics and Worldview Studies: www.blc.edu/apologetics



Book / David Thompson

What in the World is Going On: Identifying Hollow and Deceptive Worldviews, a Guide for Christian Parents, Churches and Schools (Northwestern Publishing House, 2010)

Book / Curtis A. Jahn, ed.,

Here We Stand: A Confessional Christian Study of Worldviews (Northwestern Publishing House, 2010)



Video / Ryan MacPherson

"What's Worldview Got to Do with Everything"
www.blc.edu/2018/06/an-apologetics-and-worldview-seminar

4-Part Series Introducing the Center for Apologetics and Worldviews:

Presenting Evidence for the Truth of Christianity

March-April, 2021

Critiquing Worldviews that Oppose Christianity

May-June, 2021

Fortifying Believers with a Proper Interpretation of Holy Scripture

Sep-Oct, 2021

Engaging Unbelievers in Conversation Leading toward the Gospel Proclamation of Forgiveness in Christ

Nov-Dec, 2021



Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

75 Years of Blessings

A Home & President of Its Own

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary has been blessed with faithful leaders and professors. **Milton Otto** (1914–1982) followed **Norman Madson** as dean of the seminary. In 1957, he joined the seminary staff and was named dean of the seminary in 1968. He had been the pastor of the Saude–Jerico parish in northeastern Iowa and had served as president of the synod. He was the first clergyman of German extraction ever to be elected president of the once predominantly Norwegian church body. The core classes of the curriculum were taught by Otto. He is remembered for his pastoral care and evangelical heart.

The 1974 convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod resolved that the seminary presidency be separated from the college presidency. Until this time, the college presidents, **S. C. Ylvisaker** and **B. W. Teigen**, were the presidents of the seminary. Because of size and various responsibilities, it was natural that their concerns centered mainly on the college. **Theodore A. Aaberg** (1925–1980) was called as the first full-time president of the seminary in 1976. He had distinguished himself as a parish pastor and a theologian in the synod. Now the seminary had its own leader who could better advocate for its needs. At this time, the Regents created the office of dean of students, to which position Professor **Juul Madson**, a member of the staff since 1970, was appointed. New Testament and Greek were Madson's area of expertise. During much of this period, Professor **Rudolph Honsey** taught the Old Testament classes for the seminary. President Aaberg tendered his resignation because of ill health in August 1979 and passed away in January 1980. Professor **Glenn Reichwald** (1927–1995) served as acting president for the 1979–1980 school year.

Until 1978, the seminary had no permanent home; it was provided quarters by the college. The 1976 convention adopted a recommendation from the Board of Regents to authorize a special thank offering known as "Gratitude for Grace" for the purpose of higher education. It set a goal of \$600,000, two-fifths of which was to be allocated to the seminary. Pledges quickly exceeded that goal and at the next convention, groundbreaking occurred for the seminary building just across the street from the college at **447 North Division Street** (the present Milton Tweit Hall).

With the encouragement of Aaberg and others, the first seminary building was built and dedicated on Synod Sunday, June 18, 1978. The building was a sturdy, one-story brick and stone structure containing two classrooms, a library, five offices, and additional work and storage space.

The erection of its own separate building together with the acquisition of its own institutional president provided the seminary with a far greater sense of identity. Its students were able to live and learn in facilities under better conditions, suited for their needs and more favorable to the purpose of the institution.

The Lord has blessed the seminary with faithful leaders and fine facilities. Our synod and seminary have remained true to the infallible Word and the Lutheran Confessions. Our congregations have received faithful pastors who proclaim the life-giving Word for the salvation of souls and properly administer the blessed Sacraments. The seminary faculty, staff, students, and graduates want to express special thanks to the synod for the thank offerings that enable the seminary to grow and for your ongoing support. A seventy-fifth anniversary fund has been established, and we encourage everyone to consider a gift to this fund.



A New Home

When our Lord and Savior summoned the relatively young Theodore Aaberg to his eternal home in 1980, the seminary was left without a permanent administrative head. Glenn Reichwald served as acting president until **Wilhelm W. Petersen** (1928–2018) accepted the call of the Board of Regents to be the new president of the seminary and began his work on August 1, 1980. Having been named by his parents after the founding president of the Missouri Synod, Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, theologian Petersen understandably developed a strong and vital interest in the topic so dear to this noble spiritual forebearer and so ably set forth in the latter's priceless volume, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*. During Petersen's presidency, **Adolph Harstad** received a call to teach Old Testament studies and **John Moldstad** to teach New Testament studies.

During these same years, the need for a larger seminary building was recognized. When the headquarters of the synod moved to Bethany in 1986, it took over one large seminary classroom for office space and required more secretarial space for printing, mailing, copying, etc. The seminary library had become too small to accommodate the need for study carrels, a computer lab, new books, and the storage of periodicals. The fire marshal had informed the seminary that it was not in conformity with space requirements. In general, the seminary had become overcrowded and lacked sufficient space for both the synod and the seminary.

On June 15, 1997, the new seminary building was dedicated to the glory of the gracious Savior. The new seminary building provided ample space for the synodical offices and archives. It houses the headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In the building, the offices of the synodical president, giving counselor, and business administrator are found. The major-

ity of synodical committee meetings occur in the seminary conference room. Adequate classroom space was provided for the seminary. In addition, a chapel, student lounge, library, and professors' offices were included. The beautiful chapel is named the Good Shepherd Chapel because of the stained-glass window that predominates the worship area.

The same day the new seminary building was dedicated, **Gaylin Schmeling** was installed as president of the seminary. In 2006, **Michael Smith** was called to teach New Testament. After the retirement of Adolph Harstad, **Timothy Schmeling** received a call to teach Old Testament courses, Confessions, and church history. When Smith accepted a call to the seminary in Hong Kong, **Nicholas Proksch** was called in his place. For many years, **Thomas Kuster** taught communication courses in the seminary. After his retirement, **Brian Klebig** began teaching these courses.

Throughout its history, a large number of men have attended Bethany Seminary to prepare for the pastoral ministry. Many international students have attended the institution and then have returned to their homelands as missionaries. From 1961 to 1988, the Mequon Program at Bethany provided pre-seminary training for second career students of the Wisconsin Synod.

With the beautiful seminary facilities at **6 Browns Court** and an adequate faculty, the seminary has been able to train more and more pastors for our congregations and mission fields. The seminary desires to instill in each student a love for God's Word and a love for souls. Having reached this important milestone of seventy-five years, the seminary, by God's grace, intends to continue this vital work of preparing shepherds to proclaim salvation in Christ the crucified. To make this possible, everyone is encouraged to participate in the seventy-fifth anniversary fund.

Bread for Today | The Bread of Life

by REV. KYLE MADSON, Editor
THE LUTHERAN SENTINEL, Norseland, Minn.

Perhaps you, together with countless others, have tried (or continue) to use one of the many variations of the low/no carb diets that have gained significant attention over the past few decades. There actually is plenty of good sustenance out there without the carb-rich foods... but the bagel and the burger bun, the savory croissant and the cinnamon roll are certainly out. And yet, even if you are dedicated to “no carbs,” the 4th petition of The Lord’s Prayer is still very much for you:

Give us this day our daily bread.

Luther, in his large catechism, says of this simple little prayer: “Here we consider the poor bread basket – the needs of our body and our life on earth” (Tappert - *Book of Concord*; Large Catechism - p. 430). Far from the Christian forsaking a “no-carb” way of life, this is a simple prayer prayed by the Christian for anything and everything our poor, needy body requires for life and well-being on the earth. The prayer teaches us of our needs with the term “bread” serving to summarize every provision supplied by our gracious God -- supplied to the righteous and the unrighteous just the same (Matthew 5:45).

But as we learn to see ourselves as “poor bread baskets,” we are driven to our Father, who is rich with gifts -- “everything,” in fact, “which we need for this body and life”:

food and drink, clothing and shoes, house, home, fields, cattle, money, goods, God-fearing spouse and children, faithful servants and good government, good weather, peace, health, order, honor, true friends, good neighbors, and the like.

(Small Catechism, 4th Petition)

So rich is the Father with these “daily bread” gifts that Luther reminds us they are given “without our asking.” Even when we have often failed to petition for such gifts from our gift-rich Father, the daily bread has still poured forth. This prayer isn’t an application for gifts but acknowledgment of them and especially teaching us the Christian virtue of “thanksgiving” to our Father who is so abundant toward us with all that we need.

But the Devil is cunning and crafty. He knows us and how quick we are to turn gifts from God into trials and temptations for ourselves. In fact, the Devil shows us our flesh’s great vulnerability with “daily bread” when he tempts the famished flesh of Jesus in the wilderness: “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread” (Matthew 4:3). We are so easily and so often lured into living life, as Jesus says, “by bread alone” (Matthew 4:4). We replace the Bread of Life -- Jesus Himself and the Word and promises of God that gift Him to us -- with our love for daily bread.

So, right on the heels of our prayer for “daily bread” is the petition our Lord gives to us that is bursting with the Bread of Life:

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Where daily bread gives for the well-being of the body and for the day at hand, here in the forgiveness of sins is given The Bread of Life. Here is the Bread that delivers the day that never perishes, never spoils, never fades-- the forgiveness of your sins, dear Christian, the Eternal Day! This is the gift from God that delivers Heaven itself. This Bread is so full of wealth and richness that it is the gift that keeps on giving. In Christ’s death and resurrection, we have received from the Lord’s hand “double (payment) for all our sins” (Isaiah 40:2). The Bread of forgiveness is so replete with Life for you and me that it is meant to be given out by us to those around us. It’s been said before that the Gospel -- the good news of Jesus for sinners -- is nothing more than one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread. When your pastor announces the forgiveness of your sins in Christ, that is nothing other than one beggar announcing to another where the living bread is. When your spouse says “I forgive you” or when you say the same to your mother or father, THE BREAD is being passed -- the bread that delivers Life for the Eternal Day with God and all the saints. “*Lord, give us this bread always!*” (John 6:34).

THE FOURTH PETITION

Give us this day our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God certainly gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all the wicked; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to acknowledge this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything needed for this life, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, fields, cattle, money, goods, God-fearing spouse and children, faithful servants and rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, order, honor, true friends, good neighbors, and the like.

THE FIFTH PETITION

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins, nor on their account deny our prayer; for we are not worthy of anything we ask, neither have we deserved it. But we pray that He would give us everything by grace, for we daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment; and we on our part will heartily forgive and readily do good to those who sin against us.

ANNOUNCING

THE 104TH CONVENTION OF THE
Evangelical Lutheran SynodTHE 65TH ANNUAL MEETING OF
Bethany Lutheran College, Inc.THE 6TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
Lutheran Schools of America, Inc.*“The Good Shepherd Sends Shepherds”*

JUNE 21 – 24, 2021 | MANKATO, MINNESOTA

JUNE 20 | Synod Sunday**4:00 pm** | Synod Sunday Service observing the 75th anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (Trinity Chapel with overflow in the gymnasiums)**Preacher** | Rev. Glenn Obenberger (Tacoma, Wash.)**5:30 pm** | Dinner (free will donation)**6:30 pm** | Open House (Seminary)**JUNE 21 | Monday****9:00 am** | Opening Convention Service (gymnasiums)**10:30 am** | Convention Essay:
*The Good Shepherd Sends Shepherds,
Pastoral Care through the Ages***Essayist** | Rev. Timothy Schmeling (Mankato, Minn.)**11:30 am – 1:00 pm** | Lunch**1:00 pm** | Anniversaries Observed:Joseph Burkhardt, 41
Craig Ferkenstad, 41
Thomas Heyn, 41
Martin Hoesch, 41
Matthew Luttmann, 41
Thomas Smuda, 41
Ernest Geistfeld, 26
Gene Lilienthal, 26Ronald Pederson, 26
Daniel Faugstad, 40
Steve Reagles, 40
Paul Zager, 40
Erik Gernander, 25
Jerome Gernander, 25
Anthony Pittenger, 25**JUNE 22 | Tuesday****9:00 am** | Devotion (gymnasiums)**11:30 am – 1:00 pm** | Lunch**2:00 pm** | Convention Essay:
*The Good Shepherd Sends Shepherds,
The Pastor and Pastoral Care Today***Essayist** | Rev. Gaylin Schmeling (Mankato, Minn.)**5:00 pm** | Communion / Memorial Service, Mt. Olive
Preacher | Rev. Craig A. Ferkenstad (Mankato, Minn.)Linda Teigen (1947–2019) Frank Fielder (1943–2020)
Richard Waters (1950–2019) Irene Martin (1922–2020)
Kim Holtz (1957–2019) Doris Carter (1936–2020)
Clarice Madson (1926–2020) John Moldstad (1954–2021)
Ruth Wagner (1915–2020) Cynthia Stubenvoll (1952–2021)
Carolyn Smith (1936–2020) Jerrold Dalke (1952–2021)**JUNE 23 | Wednesday****9:00 am** | Devotion (gymnasiums)**11:30 am – 1:00 pm** | Lunch**2:00 pm** | Convention Essay:
*The Good Shepherd Sends Shepherds,
The Pastor and Pastoral Care Looking to the Future***Essayist** | Rev. Brian Klebig (Mankato, Minn.)**JUNE 24 | Thursday****8:00 am** | Devotion (gymnasiums)**8:45 am** | Unfinished business

MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS:

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Saginaw, Michigan

by **REV. JACOB KEMPFFERT**, Contributing Writer
GLORIA DEI LUTHERAN CHURCH, Saginaw, Mich.



Gloria Dei was formed in May of 1985 by 170 souls who had left a congregation from the American Lutheran Church in Saginaw, MI, seeking to continue in the confessional doctrine and practices of the historic Lutheran church. These faithful members formed an independent Lutheran congregation. Soon a pastor was called. Pastor J. Kincaid Smith accepted the call to become the congregation's first regular pastor. In 1989, Gloria Dei joined the Evangelical Lutheran Synod under the guidance of Pastor Smith. The blessings of this larger orthodox fellowship helped in facilitating the ministry of the congregation in its outreach, nurture, and confessional practices.

The congregation gathered in various spaces in their early years, including on the campus of Michigan Lutheran Seminary. A permanency of place was secured in 1990 when eight acres of land were acquired and the present church building was erected. A new sanctuary was constructed in 2011. Pastor Homer Mosley followed Pastor Smith and served Gloria Dei faithfully for 20 years until his retirement in 2020. Pastor Jacob Kempfert was called to fill the vacancy and currently serves the congregation.

The church is located in Saginaw Township, which comprises the western portion of the greater Saginaw metropolitan area. Gloria Dei serves this community with an annual harvest festival, a popular VBS program, and other events. The Lord has blessed Gloria Dei with a variety of musical gifts, including a vocal choir (on pause during the pandemic) and two handbell choirs. A variety of instrumental music also beautifies the divine service with praise and glory to God.