

EXODUS 20:22

EXODUS 20
 LORD your God, am a jealous
 God, punishing the children for
 the sin of the fathers to the third
 and fourth generation of those
 who hate me, but showing love
 to a thousand generations, of
 those who love me and keep my
 commandments.
 You shall not misuse the name of the
 LORD your God, for the LORD
 will not forgive anyone who

7th You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

*Remember the Sabbath day is a Sabbath to you, keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter,

the seventh day, God
the Lord your God,
shall not do any work,
neither you, nor your son or daughter,
nor your manservant or maid,
nor your animals, nor your
oxen, nor your gates.
Seven days the Lord made the
heaven and the earth, the sea, and
all that is in them, but he rested
on the seventh day. Therefore
blessed the Sabbath day

...and the
...is in them.
...seventh day.
...blessed the Sabbath
...it holy.
...father and your mother,
...may live long in the
...your God is giving

it holy.
her and your
may live long in
your God is giving
r. adultery.

may be your God.
adultery.
testi

adults
e testi
nei

LUTHER'S
SMALL
CATECHISM
and Explanation



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

MARCH 2022
VOL. 60 NO. 3

EDITOR

Pastor Robert L. Lee
rlee@aflc.org

MANAGING EDITOR

Ruth Gunderson
ruthg@aflc.org

CIRCULATION

Liz McCarlson
lasubscriptions@aflc.org

EDITORIAL BOARD

Monica Coyle
Pastor Jerry Moan
Pastor J. Christian Andrews

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

(ISSN 0746-3413) (USPS 588-620)
is published monthly by the
Association of Free Lutheran
Congregations,
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,
Plymouth, MN 55441
Phone (763) 545-5631
Periodicals postage paid at
St. Paul, MN and additional
mailing offices.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to
The Lutheran Ambassador,
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,
Plymouth, MN 55441.

SUBSCRIPTION CHANGES AND INFORMATION

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.,
Plymouth, MN 55441.
763-545-5631
lasubscriptions@aflc.org

ENCOURAGING WORD

ILLOGICALLY MERCIFUL

BY KIRSTIE SKOGERBOE

I have been reading through Bo Giertz's devotional *To Live with Christ* this year and am struck by how candidly he speaks of Jesus and of himself—simple, profound exegesis, followed by humble confession. His entry for Monday after the third Sunday in Epiphany concerns the bleeding woman who touches Jesus' tunic for healing. The key verse encompasses her faith: "If I touch even His garments ..." (Mark 5:28). She reaches out hoping for mercy, but receives Christ's tenderness, too.

This may be one of my favorite Bible verses; I pray for her kind of trust. More moving than this woman's faith or healing, however, is Jesus' awareness of her—of her "timid" faith (as Giertz calls it), her small touch, and her great need. The pastor writes, "No one who needs His help can touch Him, even if it is only in thought or just for a moment, without His noticing it." I've read that sentence many times now, and it still brings me to tears. I am far less aware of Him than He is of me, yet He lives for my nearly imperceptible movements toward Him. Giertz says that "For him, moments like those are the greatest moments in life." My feeble, inconstant faith brings my God joy.

This is a good word for anyone who feels that their relationship with Christ is inadequate—a

good word for me. We often speak of a personal relationship with Him in terms of ourselves, saying things like, "I want to be close to Jesus," or asking, "Do you have a personal relationship with Christ?" This isn't inappropriate. There are eternal consequences for how we respond to our Savior. But when we start to realize that we will never notice or love or live for Him enough, fear can obscure the fact that He is still noticing, loving, and living for us.

The most important part of our relationship with Jesus is His tenderness toward *us*. We tremble, cower in sin, return to Him, and sin again. He does not change. He will always notice our need, even when our need makes us unworthy of His notice. When we pray timidly that He would forgive us, power goes out of Him to heal us with grace.

All this leaves Giertz, and us, with a final comfort: "He is illogically merciful ..." We will not be rejected if we touch Jesus. We will not be rejected if we touch Him more hesitantly than someone else. No one gets His notice by degrees. He will give us His full attention, and we will receive His joy.

Skogerboe, a 2018 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College, Plymouth, Minn., lives in Orange, Calif.

The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare this Catechism ... in this small, plain, simple form.

—Martin Luther

The Small Catechism “represents the crowning consummation of the educational endeavors put forth by the Church during the course of fifteen centuries.”

—Johann Michael Reu

The Small Catechism is a handbook for the Christian household or a teacher’s guide for beleaguered Christian parents, helping them answer the deepest questions and explain the central texts and activities of the Christian assembly.

—Timothy J. Wengert

We often refer to Luther’s Small Catechism as a “handbook for Christian doctrine”, but he intended it to be even more, a handbook and basic guide for Christian daily life.

—Robert Kolb

Luther’s Small Catechism is truly a great little book, with as many thoughts as words, and every word telling and sticking to the heart as well as the memory.

—Philip Schaff

CATECHESIS

uncovering our past

By Kevin Olson

One Sunday after church many years ago, a fellow congregation member and I were chatting, and the subject of archaeological discoveries came up. At one point in the conversation, I said something like, “Isn’t it interesting that they have to dig for these things?”

Like one day it is just a normal wash pan and then slowly, over hundreds of years, it gets buried.

Christian catechesis, though not totally buried, was taken out of the dirt and put back into everyday use during Martin Luther’s day.

Instruction and teaching have always been a part of Christianity. The Apostles (Galatians 6:6), Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine, and Pope Gregory all had catechisms of various sorts and Luther was, of course, acquainted with them. He began his Catechism sermon in November 1528 with the words: “These portions, which you heard me recite, were called by the ancient fathers the catechism, that is, an instruction for children” (*Luther’s Works*, v. 51, pg. 137). And in the preface to the *Small Catechism*, he makes another historical reference: “The honored fathers understood this well”.

So, why write another one?

Commentators have said that the catechism “sprang directly from the compassion Luther felt for the churches on account of the sad state of destitution to which they had been brought” (Friedrich Bente). Naturally it leads one to ask, why the sad state? Luther himself says the spiritual conditions found in the parishes were “deplorable, miserable” (see page 3).

Luther first mentions potential work on a

J. Bosboom, del.

catechism while corresponding with a fellow pastor in February 1525. To say it had been a busy few years since the start of the Reformation would be a laughable understatement. Every part of society was feeling the effects of Luther’s stand. Both Christian and secular historians agree that this was a pivotal moment, broadly speaking, in the life and influence of the Western Church and, more narrowly, in the life, identity, and independence of the German people.

If you were a layperson in the Holy Roman Empire during the latter part of the Middle Ages, your sole exposure to

the Bible was through official Church channels. You couldn’t read or write your own language much less the Latin you heard during worship. Your standing in society, and more importantly before God Himself, was controlled by the Church from birth to death. Even your standing in the afterlife was controlled by the Church. Perhaps you had memorized some parts of the mass—maybe the Lord’s Prayer or the Nicene Creed. But knowing and understanding the core truths of the faith, the “what is this?” and “what does this mean?” as Luther would put it, were buried under layers



The events that led Martin Luther to write his new Catechism



between October 1528 and April 1529, during which he said:

"Hence all things were so confused and wild, owing to the discordant teaching and the strange new opinions, that no one was any longer able to know what was certain or uncertain, what was a Christian or an unchristian. The old doctrine of faith in Christ, of love, of prayer, of cross, of comfort in tribulation was entirely trodden down" ("Admonition to the Clergy," 1530).

This call for help, and the subsequent visits, played a major role in convincing Luther to write his catechism.

Back to that observation I referenced about having to dig for stuff from antiquity. After I made the comment, we both sort of chuckled and then drifted off into another subject; perhaps my observation wasn't all that interesting. I suppose though, in a way, it should be a little convicting. Every era of the Church attracts dust and has a turmoil of its own. Perhaps congregational life has felt a little wobbly for you these past few years. Revisit the *Catechism*. Learn again why we are in such great need. Learn again what God, in Christ, has provided for His Church. Learn again how to ask that it be provided among us.

Olson is a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D. "Children Receive Catechesis in Church," by Johannes Bosboom (1830). "Portrait of Martin Luther" by Abraham Jacobsz. Hulk (1774).



Kouf lith v C.W Mieling


of ceremony, formalism, and civic strictures.

Fast forward to 1523. You are a member of a German parish. Perhaps one Sunday the pastor, having recently obtained a copy of Luther's New Testament, reads I Corinthians 2:13: "And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual." For the first time you hear Scripture in your mother tongue. You begin to realize these truths predate the Empire. You begin to understand spiritual wisdom originates

with God and, as it turns out, He doesn't necessarily need to use Latin.

Set against the technological progress and reform efforts of the prior two centuries, one can see why both civic and congregational cohesion was beginning to wobble.

In the midst of all this turmoil, a core group of German parish pastors asked for help. They asked for training materials from the Wittenberg theologians in the basics of Christianity. They also asked leaders, both civil and spiritual, to visit the churches. Luther himself participated in these visitations



In the year of our Lord 1736, the spring breeze of Pietism was blowing through the Church in Denmark, and had even won the favor of the royal court of King Christian VI. Its most enduring legacy was in the field of education—schools were built, literacy was on the rise, and the chief subject of instruction was the Christian faith, as summarized in *Luther's Small Catechism*. Danish court preacher Erik Pontoppidan, later bishop of Bergen in Norway, was commissioned to write a textbook for general use. Space has allowed us to include the majority of his preface to *Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed*, “Truth unto Godliness,” which became the layman’s systematic theology text for 150 years, and the basis from which H. U. Sverdrup compiled his abridgment which we still use today. In this preface, Pontoppidan reflects on his times—scientific knowledge was increasing rapidly in the 1700s, but was attention to God’s Word increasing too? Pontoppidan brings us back to the basics, the “one thing needful”—to sit at Jesus’ feet and learn of Him.

Copenhagen, October 9, 1737

The God who desires that all men be saved, also desires that they should all come to the knowledge of the truth; yea, grow and go forth in the same [knowledge] according to the abilities and aids which are offered to them in one age of the world more than in another.

We live now in an age when worldly wisdom and all the arts which are founded thereon are elevated to a higher degree than our forefathers could have imagined possible. No one desires any longer for his knowledge to appear half-baked. That which brings one profit, each considers to be a benefit. Alas! How much more ought one to be so minded with respect to the knowledge of God and of our salvation, which—at least externally speaking—is our common profession, or that which we profess to know and deal with!

A proper, foundational, and sufficient insight into religious truths ought indeed to be the highest goal of his strivings, who would not be considered—temporally and eternally—among the number of fools, who trouble themselves about many things, but do not regard the one thing needful [Luke 10:41-42].

True indeed, that the knowledge of God does not always and with all [people] draw forth His true fear, love, and obedience. There is such a thing as wit without conscience, knowledge without power; this puffs up, when instead it should build up [I Corinthians 8:1]. The experience of our time has the greatest of all examples to show on this point.

[When] I look at our forefathers, then it seems to me: they did more than they knew, but we know more than we do. They resemble fruitful Leah with weak eyes, we a barren Rachel with a reputation for beauty. Knowledge of the truth retains no less of its inestimable value, for [so] our Lord Jesus estimates (John 13:17), one is not counted blessed because he knows without also doing what he knows, so He still sets forth knowledge as that which is required for the faith, without which it is impossible to please God in all their works [Hebrews 11:6]. That faith, many very simple folks show, in walking according to the little light they have—let us surely conclude—that their walk would nevertheless be far better if their insight into the truth was more perfect ...

By Pastor Brian Lunn

PRECURSOR

As true as this is, so also our time has visibly advanced beyond our forefathers! Therefore, this author, through this explanation of the blessed Dr. Luther's Small Catechism, has striven to spread the same advantage of the clearer knowledge of the saving truth among the simple, common people here in the country. The reason which has given rise to this opportunity is particularly this, that nearly every diocese has had hitherto its own unique catechism, and certain pastors have found it in their localities useful in one respect, or in another respect insufficient; as they have desired, so they have by honest solicitude authored for themselves, and introduced into their congregations certain written questions. Although the doctrinal foundation might be the same, nevertheless the different doctrinal forms do not seem to be as useful as a general and necessarily sufficient Explanation of the Catechism, along with the scriptural quotations everywhere attached, arranged according to the most gracious written royal command issued to me, and tested by the proper authorities according to the form of sound words [II Timothy 1:13]. ...

May the Lord Himself press His seal hereon through His outpouring of grace upon all the readers'—especially the young ones'—hearts! What I unavoidably had to, but never myself chose to do, I have done, as well as I could. The defective part thereof is therefore solely my own. As for the rest, it is the Word—which on that day shall judge its impenitent and unbelieving despisers and nay-sayers, but make the souls blessed—which the believer meekly receives by its implanting [James 1:17].

—E. Pontoppidan

Translated and excerpted by Lunn, who serves Word of Life Free Lutheran, Upsala, Minn.



THE PROCESS

teaching the catechism

By Pastor Matthew Pillman

At 9 a.m. every Sunday morning, students filter into my office. Each carry three required items: a Bible, a binder, and a small blue book. We know this book as *Luther's Small Catechism and Explanation*. Over the course of the next 50-60 minutes, students get the chance to delve into Scripture following the structure of the catechism. At the end of class, they are sent home with assignments and memorization directly from *Luther's Small Catechism*.

Our confirmation program currently takes students through a three-year process. In their first year, students get an overview of the Bible. This includes memorization of Scripture including the Ten Commandments and Lord's Prayer. During their second-year, students are asked to memorize Luther's meanings to each of the 10 Commandments, articles of the Apostles' Creed, and the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. In the third and final year, students wrap up catechism material with a look at the sacraments. These students will also spend time learning about prayer, personal devotions, missions, and apologetics.

Luther's Small Catechism takes a central (though not exclusive) role in our catechesis. Published in 1529, Luther's catechism is nearing 500 years of use in the protestant church. Why would we still use such an old textbook? Does it resonate with students today? Is there still value in extensive memorization? These are important questions that we should be asking (and answering) in the world of Christian catechesis. From the context of teaching confirmation in a local AFLC congregation, I will seek to tackle these questions one at a time.

Why use it?

When students begin their second year (the class I teach), our church gives them their very own *Small Catechism*. Though the most recent printing was in 2007, students are well aware that the content originates from 20 generations previous.

So why use it? We feel that *Luther's Small*

Catechism accurately and effectively teaches the biblical truths that we hold near and dear in conservative Lutheranism. Sure, there are more recent catechisms, curriculum, or even video series that we could use in confirmation—to be fair, we do use some of these as supplemental materials. But there is no primer-style, concise explanation of the fundamentals of faith that compares to the biblical work that Luther distilled for children. We find that the biblical truths that were held so dear in the 16th century Reformation must be instilled in 21st century students who are enveloped in post-modern ideas.

Does it resonate?

Yes and no. First, let's consider what does not resonate with today's students.

The catechism presents a foreign learning style, layout, and language. The question-and-answer learning style coupled with memorization is unique in today's education system. The layout is straight forward, but does not include many helps or illustrations that might be common in today's information- and entertainment-heavy environment.

As for the language used, there are many terms that we have to define for our students. There are likely a couple of reasons for this. First, our current education system does not have high expectations of literacy. Just a few days ago, I heard students express great struggles in reading a 250-page novel that had been assigned by their middle school teacher. Second, we cannot assume any spiritual background among many of the confirmation students. In some cases, parents expect confirmation to be a one-shot-does-it solution to the spiritual discipleship of their children. This leaves students entering confirmation with little previous

exposure to biblical language and concepts.

There is much that does resonate with students. The 10 Commandments are under clear attack in our culture on issues such as marriage and life. The Creed affirms central doctrines such as creation and the deity of Christ. There are many such applications that resonate loud and clear on the spiritual battlefield today.

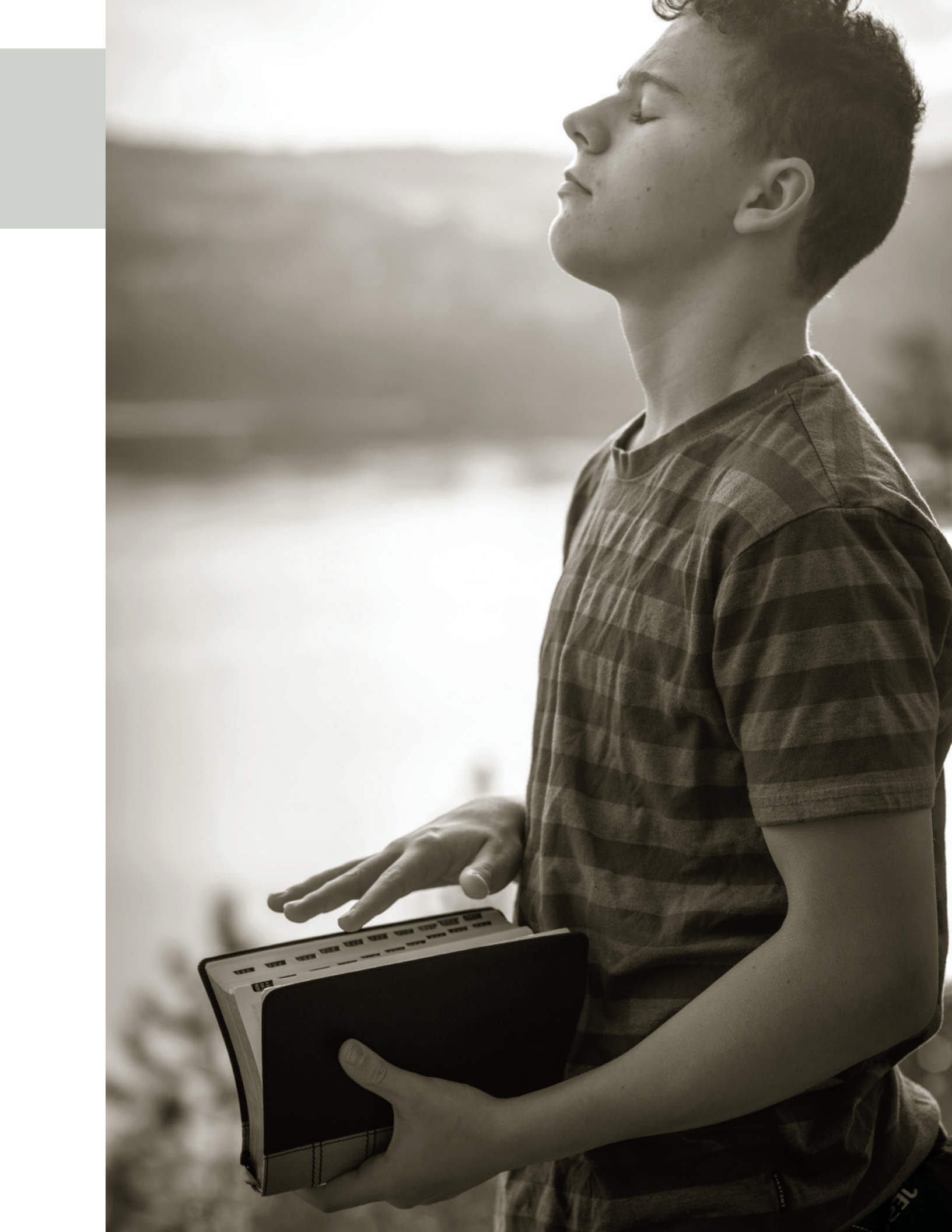
What about memorization?

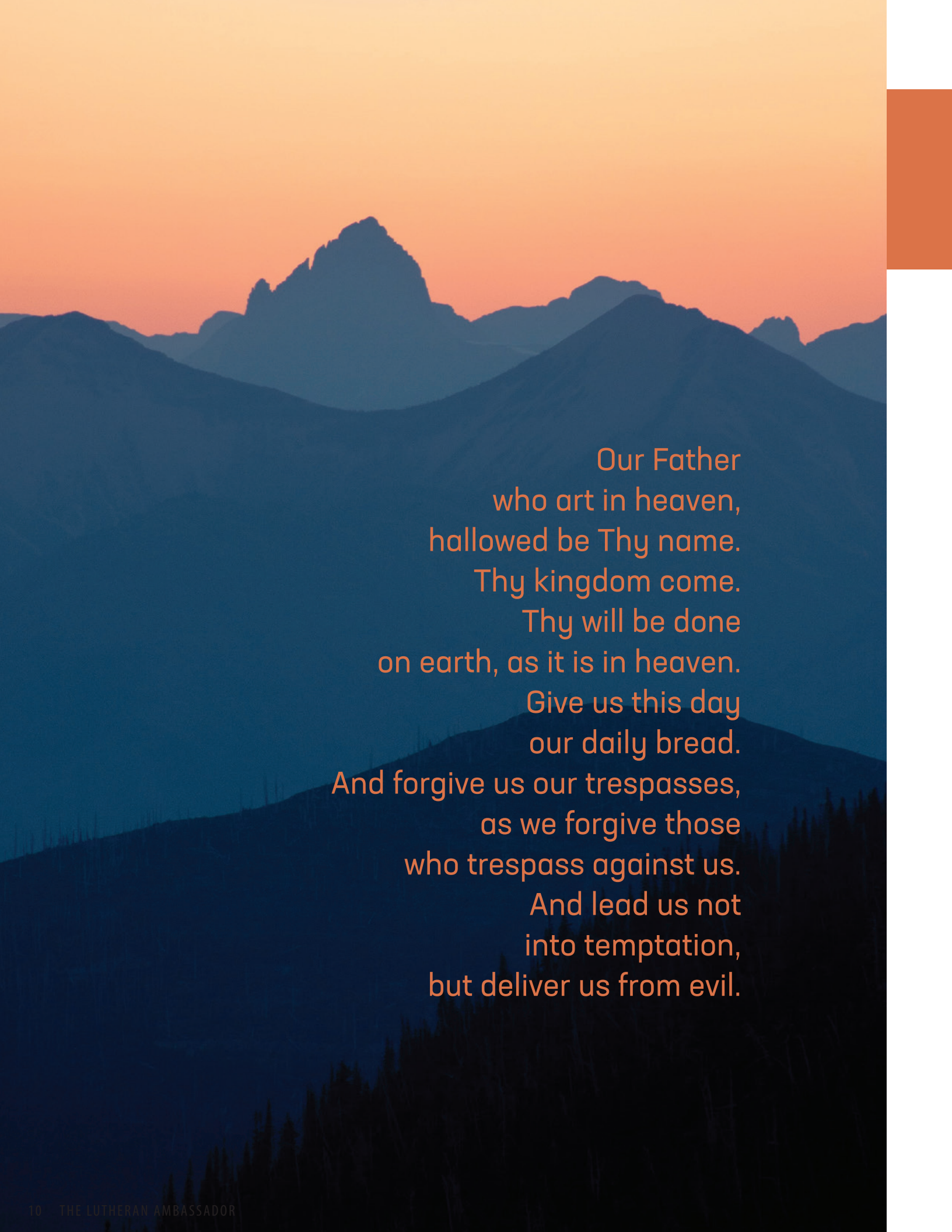
An important piece to using the catechism as Luther intended is memorization. This is a daunting task for many.

Why do we still encourage memorization? Through memorization students are able to solidify the concepts concerning faith and holiness that will serve them well the rest of their lives (see Deuteronomy 6:4ff). Take for example the sixth commandment: Thou shalt not commit adultery. Seventh grade students are already being indoctrinated with an LGBTQ+ agenda long before they begin confirmation. This type of indoctrination will only increase. By memorizing the meaning to the sixth commandment, students know God's intention concerning marriage.

I am thankful for *Luther's Small Catechism*. By its use I feel that local congregations are equipped to "continue in what [they] have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom [they] learned it and how from childhood [they] have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make [them] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (II Timothy 3:14-15, ESV). Praise the Lord!

Pillman is the associate pastor at Christ the King Free Lutheran, Pipestone, Minn.





Our Father
who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day
our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not
into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

OUR ROADMAP

to the Father's heart

By Tim Herset

Unimaginable crowds have been coming to Montana's Glacier National Park to drive the Going to the Sun Road. It is understandable; pavement leads to Logan Pass at 6,647 feet, high atop the Crown of the Continent, providing easy access to God's gracious, creative glory. In 2020, restrictions closed the road from the east. The west entrance became a gridlock stretching miles onto U.S. Highway 2. Relying on smartphones, people sought an alternate route. The directions were simple: turn left, turn right, and go 26 bone-rattling miles north to Polebridge. With no cell service, no fuel, and very limited food, they found a dead end. "Hey Siri" did not get them where they wanted to go.

We have more access to more information than any humans in history. The impacts on our prayer life are yet to be known, but it is more common to hear, "Hey Siri," than, "Our Father," while out in the world.

God spoke to His precious people after they followed their own hearts down yet another dangerous detour: "Go stand at the crossroads and look around. Ask for directions to the old road, the tried-and-true road. Then take it. Discover the right route for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16).

God spoke to His precious people after they followed Him and developed a desire to pray like Him. In Luke 11:1-4 and Matthew 6:5-13, Jesus gave a reliable road map for us to pray in community and as individuals; we know this as The Lord's Prayer.

The Church has followed Jesus' guidance for prayer while writing their own prayers in response. These texts (accessible to us using our fingerprints on the phones in our pockets) supplement the words of God from the Word of God, enhancing our prayers and drawing us closer to our Father's heart. They are celebrations and laments, reorienting us by reminding us of

the righteousness of God. They approach Scripture with two familiar questions: What does this mean? How is this done?

"Our Father who art in heaven ..." These five words remind us who we are: sons and daughters, image bearers of the Father.

"Hallowed be Thy name" redirects our focus from our own pious performance to the perfect holiness of the Triune God who refines us and aligns us with Himself.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven" reveals to us the destination but also the road that takes us there. We learn the already/not-yet reality of His kingdom through selfless surrender while standing firm in the power of Holy Spirit. It's risky to pray this way as God disrupts our ways of doing things.

"Give us this day our daily bread" helps us trust that we are not out in the world alone, we have a loving Father who provides the resources for our journey.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" is not a natural prayer for human beings to pray. To quote Martin Luther, "We pray in this petition that our Heavenly Father would not regard our sins nor because of them deny our prayers." As we pray, we remember someone who ruffled our feathers, and we receive grace to go reconcile with them.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil ..." Rather than rushing through these words by rote, slow down and pause between phrases. Our hurried and worried way of living—a dangerous temptation

for disciples—leads us to depend on popcorn prayers: randomly telling God about the things running around in our minds. Dallas Willard urges, "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life." As our souls adjust to the pace of Jesus, we are delivered from evil.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen." We come back to our God who reigns above it all—new technology and trends included. He protects us with His power and grabs hold of our hearts with His glory until we get to see Him face to face.

While Jesus' words in The Lord's Prayer are sufficient for sustaining our prayer life, much like a paper map reliably gets you where you need to go, many resources are available today. Here are a few of my favorites:

- The Psalms have historically been where God's people go for words when they have no words.

- *Luther's Small Catechism* is not just for confirmation class, but can enrich what you may have memorized in middle school.

- Northumbria Community has preserved (online) powerful prayers from the traditional Celtic Christians.

- *Every Moment Holy* is a two-volume collection of prayers for specific circumstances overflowing with praise for God.

"Hey Siri" could probably find more, but may not be the most reliable source.

Herset is a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont.

Forgiveness
Life and
Salvation

THE SACRAMENT

By Pastor Steve Mundfrom

When Martin Luther organized the traditional catechetical elements for his new catechism in 1529, he departed from the long-standing order of the usual parts. Previously, the Creed had come first and the Ten Commandments last with the Lord's Prayer in the middle, as St. Augustine had laid out his catechism more than a millennium earlier. This older gospel-law arrangement meant that the law was essentially a guide for life (since it was at the end), and the way one comes to faith was unanswered (since the Creed was at the beginning).¹

In Luther's better theological understanding, the law comes first and convicts us of sin, and the gospel/Creed follows, showing us where to look for a solution to our sins. The Lord's Prayer, which follows, teaches us to trust God by asking for His gracious gifts. Truly the gospel is in the center of Luther's catechism, as it is in the very center of the Christian life.

Accordingly, Luther's teaching about the sacraments is also fully governed by the gospel,

the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. While other reformers abandoned the ancient teaching that the sacraments confer salvation, and instead opened the door for their use as a human work of sanctification, Luther remained faithful to the biblical and patristic understanding that the sacraments are true means of grace. God is at work in them for our salvation.

In explaining baptism, Luther first cites Matthew 28:19, "Make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." And for the Lord's Supper he begins with the words of institution, "... My body ... My blood, which is shed for you, and for many, for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28). Disciples are made in baptism. Sins are forgiven through the Lord's Supper. These are not inert church ceremonies which Christians can somehow fill with meaning as they choose to be baptized and declare their commitment to Christ. These sacraments are the power of God whereby He assures us of His commitment to our salvation in the death and resurrection of Christ. Yes, truly the power of God.

But how does that power work? Is it magic? Is it irresistible omnipotence?

While Luther found a better arrangement for his catechism, his thinking about how the sacraments work is very Augustinian. St. Augustine had said, "Take away the word, and the water is neither



The top half of the page features a large, rustic loaf of bread on the left, partially covered by a red diagonal overlay. To the right, a circular inset shows a pair of hands being washed under a stream of water. The background is a textured, light-colored surface.

NTS

more nor less than water. The word is added to the element, and there results the sacrament, as if itself also a kind of visible word.”² Luther agreed, saying for baptism, “It is not the water indeed, that does such great things, but the Word of God connected with the water and our faith which relies on that Word of God.” And for the Lord’s Supper he says, “Through these words, the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given in the sacrament.”

Nothing less than the power of God’s Word is at work here in these precious gifts. The connection to the Word is absolutely essential. The Word directs us continually to the correct, biblical understanding of salvation by grace through faith which operates in the sacraments. It ensures that we always see Jesus—Who is the Word-made-flesh—in the sacraments, giving them their saving power. And it means that the only proper outcome of both our baptism and our eating and drinking at the Lord’s table is faith in Jesus. In the same way that we hear and believe (Romans 10:17), so we are washed and believe, and we eat and believe. The aim of God’s Word is always faith in Jesus Christ, both telling us what to believe and creating true faith in our hearts through law and gospel.

Luther’s Small Catechism makes it so clear to us what the sacraments are—the power of God for our salvation “by grace through faith.” But Luther didn’t stop there. He also teaches us how to use these precious gifts. For baptism he directs us to “daily

sorrow and repentance” citing Romans 6. And for the Lord’s Supper he says, “Fasting and bodily preparation are indeed a good outward discipline, but that person is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words,” citing again the Words of Institution.

Luther’s profound view of the Christian life is evident here. The Christian life is not epic, life-changing, mountain-top events. The Christian life is doing the same ordinary, God-directed, life-giving “little” things day after day, week after week (Luke 16:10). Acknowledge your sins and rest in the promises of Christ given to you in the gospel and in the sacraments. Do this every day. Do this week by week (or month by month). That’s how these gracious sacraments become an extension of the good news in our lives, and we how are assured of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Mundfrom, a member of Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn., is a faculty member at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary.

-
1. Charles P. Arand, *That I Might Be His Own*, (Concordia, 2000, pages 124-125).
 2. St. Augustine, *Lectures on the Gospel of John*, 80:3; (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, volume VII, page 344).

CHRISTIAN LIFE

Luther's Table of Duties

By Pastor Jason Gudim

Scroll through the early pages of Ambassador Publications' edition of *Luther's Small Catechism*, and you may notice something absent, especially if you're familiar with other versions of the *Small Catechism*: there is no Table of Duties. While the Table of Duties was not included in the earliest editions of the *Small Catechism*, it was added early on in the distribution of the catechism. It was also adopted as an official part of the *Small Catechism* when the *Book of Concord* was originally being assembled in 1579-80.

The contribution of the Table of Duties to both the content and flow of the catechism is immense. But before covering how the Table of Duties is beneficial to the catechism, it is necessary to introduce it to those who may be unfamiliar with it.

Simply put, the Table of Duties is a listing of various Bible verses that apply to various stations, or vocations, in life. It covers biblical counsel for pastors and parishioners, government authorities and citizens, husbands and wives, parents and children, servants (think employees) and masters (employers), young people, widows, and all people in common.

But, and to be consistent with the language of the catechism, what does it mean? Why is it a part of the catechism in the first place?

The value of the Table of Duties, over and above its rote quoting of Scripture, boils down to the doctrine of vocation. "Vocation" comes from the Latin word *vocatio*, which simple means "calling." The doctrine of vocation was developed by Martin Luther during the time of the Reformation as a response to the Roman Catholic teaching that being a priest, a nun, or a monk was a "higher calling," and thus earned or merited God's grace more than normal, everyday vocations or callings.

In light of the biblical reality of salvation

by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, Luther taught that every calling in life was done in service to God, insofar that we are loving our neighbors in those callings. As such, the doctrine of vocation is the Reformation's answer to the question, "What do I do with my good works?" If I don't earn my salvation through my good works, what's the point?

The doctrine of vocation teaches us that God doesn't need our good works (because He's God), we don't need our good works (because God has given us everything we need for life and salvation in Jesus Christ), but our neighbors do need our good works. Think about it this way: as you pray the Lord's Prayer and get to the part where you ask God to "give us this day our daily bread," God doesn't magically place a meal on your table when it was previously empty. God provides your literal, actual daily bread through countless people who work to deliver it from farm to table. In the same way, God uses your good works to bless your neighbor. Thus, the doctrine of vocation allows us to understand the law, and especially the second table of the law (commandments 4-10), in a Christian context that doesn't slip into works righteousness.

Beyond the value of the content of the doctrine of vocation, however, the Table of Duties also contributes to the order and flow of the *Small Catechism*. Catechisms existed for hundreds of years before Martin Luther wrote his catechism, but Luther wrote his catechism with a very specific and intentional order.

The *Small Catechism* moves from law (the Ten Commandments), to gospel (the Apostles' Creed), to the maintenance of our faith (the Lord's Prayer, baptism, confession, and Holy Communion). It would seem logical, then, that the Table of Duties places vocation as the culmination of the Christian life. And while it's possible to make this argument, I think it's better to see that the doctrine of vocation, as delivered by the Table of Duties, actually makes the catechism a cycle that repeats itself over and over again for every Christian.

As we are confronted by our sins and failure to obey the law in the Ten Commandments, we are moved to repentance and receive forgiveness for our sins in the gospel (again, communicated by the Apostle's Creed). Our faith is sustained by the Lord's Prayer (where God is already delivering to us what He asks us to pray for) and the sacraments (which are the gospel physically applied). Having freed us by the gospel, God then calls us to go out and love our neighbors in our vocations. This love is defined and given boundaries by the law (as expressed in the Ten Commandments), and the cycle begins again.

The assurance of salvation that God gives you in the gospel is what allows you to love and serve the neighbors God has placed in your life. This is the shape and structure of the Christian life that the catechism delivers to us from Scripture.

Gudim serves Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis, Minn.

of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. I Timothy 3:2-4

He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. I Timothy 3:6

He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. Titus 1:9
What the Hearers Owe Their Pastors

The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. I Corinthians 9:14

Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Galatians 6:6-7

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." I Timothy 5:17-18

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. I Thessalonians 5:12-13

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17
Of Civil Government

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Romans 13:1-4

Of Citizens

Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's. Matthew 22:21

It is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Romans 13:5-7

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior. I Timothy 2:1-3

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good. Titus 3:1

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. I Peter 2:13-14

To Husbands

Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. 1 Peter 3:7

Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Colossians 3:19

To Wives

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Ephesians 5:22

They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. I Peter 3:5-6



A CLASSIC REMADE

OUT-OF-PRINT LUTHER DEVOTIONAL GETS NEW LIFE

REPRINT

According to Merriam-Webster, the word *busy* has the following definitions: “engaged in action,” “being in use,” “full of activity,” “foolishly or intrusively active,” or, “full of distracting detail.” We often say we are busy, but

do any of those descriptions fit your meaning of that word? If you are finding yourself with a very full schedule and are looking for a devotional for such a season of life, the latest release from Ambassador Publications, *Luther for the Busy Man: Daily Devotions from Luther’s Sermons on the Standard Gospels*, will be an excellent fit. Taking just three minutes a day, the devotional will introduce you to the writings of Martin Luther and point you to Christ while guiding you through the Word of God.

Martin Luther lived from 1483-1546, but *Luther for the Busy Man* was first released as a devotional by the Lutheran Church of Australia in 1974 as a hardcover volume and as a paperback edition in 1987. For many years it was out of print, but now it is readily available from AFLC Parish Education’s publishing group,

Ambassador Publications, as both a hardcover and paperback edition reprinted with permission from the Lutheran Church of Australia. How fortunate we are to have this devotional to connect us to Luther’s writings from centuries ago available in the 21st century.

Luther for the Busy Man opens with a foreword by John T. Pless of Concordia Theological Seminary of Fort Wayne, Ind. A preface follows, written by

Dr. Wade Mobley, president of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary, as well as the original preface from the editor of the 1974 edition, E. W. Wiebusch. An introduction by Dr. James Molstre, dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary, describes the general outline for the devotional, that of the church year.

The three cycles of the church year are Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. *Luther for the Busy Man* breaks these into easy-to-digest entries. The first cycle, Christmas, is described as “a time of anticipation” and is separated into devotionals for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. The second cycle, Easter, is described as “a time of repentance” and covers Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. The third cycle, Pentecost, covers Ascension, Pentecost, and Trinity. Through these entries of the church year, we are pointed to Christ and are reminded of what God has done through Him.

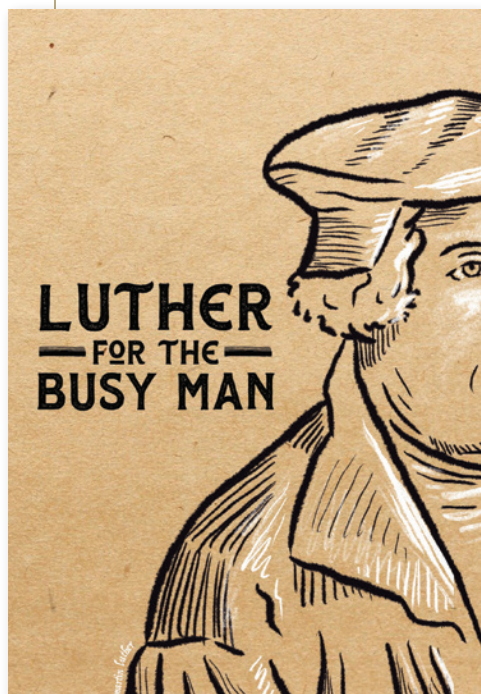
Molstre notes in his introduction that “the church year is divided into three cycles which roughly correlate with three of the major Jewish feasts.” Prior to each section of devotionals, there is an introduction for that portion of the church year that explains when a specific celebration is observed. The entries that follow contain a passage of Scripture, a daily Scripture to read, and end with a prayer. The main devotional material is, of course, taken directly from Luther’s writings.

At the very end of *Luther for the Busy Man* you will find a chart that outlines Luther’s sermon index. This index lists the specific day of the church year, the sermon text, and where it can be found in LFTBM; the very last page contains a chart for key days in the church year.

This devotional is for Christians who are seeking to be immersed in God’s Word. Consider picking up a copy of *Luther for the Busy Man* and be encouraged by Martin Luther’s writings, which ultimately point us to Christ through God’s Word.

By Timothy Larson

Osakis, Minn., is a 2009 graduate of the Free Lutheran Bible College and the secretary of the Georg Sverdrup Society.



Luther For the Busy Man

Classic devotional reprinted by Ambassador Publications. Hardcover (\$25), Softcover (\$15) Visit ambassadorpublications.org

FLY

FREE
LUTHERAN
YOUTH



I continue to hear people mention what life was like a few years ago. I don't think this is a new concept by any means, but I do think that due to the events of the past 24 months, this occurrence has picked up steam even more than usual. We talk about how we lived, what we were able to do, and why life was better that way. Deep down, we just want to see that way of life restored. These conversations are normal and sometimes even therapeutic, but the amount to which we talk like this brings on a greater question. What does real restoration look like?

To be restored means to return to a former condition, place, or owner. We see restoration in many ways all around us. One of the most frequently mentioned is when people restore a house. There is a beauty we find when looking at a house that was once a masterpiece, then broken, and finally returned to its whole, original state—it is truly astounding.

Restoration is an amazing concept, but it is in its truest form when done by God. In Revelation 21:5-7, our Savior King Jesus says He is making all things new and restoring *us* to Himself as sons and daughters

RESTORED: BROUGHT BACK HOME

BY CALEB HOLT

of God. The theme of the 2023 Free Lutheran Youth Convention is “Restored.” There is much excitement as we anticipate getting together July 3-8, 2023, in Estes Park, Colo., to worship our Heavenly Father and learn more about restoration through Scripture.

What makes this theme so beautiful in the life of the believer is that there are really two stages of restoration. We see that there is an “already” and a “not yet” aspect of restoration in our lives. First is the already. With God sending His son to die for us, by grace through faith we have life in Christ right now on this side of eternity. As Galatians 2:20 states, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Christ’s work on the cross is immediate in our lives today and we can live daily in the fullness



and freedom that He brings.

Then there is the part of restoration that has “not yet” taken place. We still deal with a broken world where temptation, sin, and death are all around us. The weight of the world is heavy. But we do not lose hope. The beauty of true restoration in Christ is that God is bringing us back to himself. As Revelation 21 highlights, the dwelling place

of God will be with man and He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. We will be His. One day we will be in His presence, *fully* restored.

Often in life we can wish for things to be different or what they were previously, but the only thing that will bring full peace and joy is when we are brought back to Christ, Who has made all things new.

Holt, a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., is the second vice president of the 2023 FLY Committee.

FLBCS Spotlight Conference puts focus on missions

The Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary hosted the annual missions conference Feb. 7-8, featuring messages by Pastor Matthew Ballmann. Ballmann serves Trinity Lutheran, San Antonio, Texas, a new AFLC church plant. Ballmann's theme was the "Holy Calling of Self-Sacrifice," including a focus on singleness and marriage, ministries foreign and domestic, congregational life, and vocation.

Videos of the services can be found on the FLBC Vimeo page (vimeo.com/showcase/9264240).



TOP: Pastor Matthew Ballmann, San Antonio, Texas, spoke to Bible College and Seminary students during the Spotlight: Missions conference. ABOVE: Isaac Impola, second-year FLBC student, introduced a ministry presentation. MIDDLE: Pastor David and Angela Breidenbach gave a presentation on SON Network. MIDDLE RIGHT: Pastor Andrew Olson gave a presentation on Lutheran Bible Translators. BOTTOM: Students Angela Meyer and Kevin Bump (left) and John Helland and Corrie McNear took part in discussion groups.



An AFLC Reawakening Conference took me to sunny Salinas, Calif., in early January. I left my home in Montana which was 10 degrees Fahrenheit and had a foot of new snow with blizzard conditions. And I arrived in Monterey, Calif., to 60 degrees and cypress trees to greet me. I enjoyed a visit to Pebble Beach, a lighthouse, the Carmel Mission Basilica, the Monterey Zoo, and beautiful views of the Monterey Bay area complete with clam chowder at the Old Fisherman's Wharf.

Our AFLC is an extended family. What a warm welcome we received from our host family, Chris and Renate Bunn, and the hosting church members of St. Ansgar's Lutheran in Salinas. (They host Ebelskiver fundraisers instead of lefse fundraisers at this Danish-heritage congregation.)

If you have not been able to attend one of these events, here is our perspective. Each of our AFLC ministries is invited to share about the work they do. Pastor Lyndon Korhonen, president of the AFLC, starts us off with a short devotional and call to prayer. Pastor Randy Nelson is next, and he shares about AFLC Discipleship and Evangelism. Then the rest of

CONNECTING OUR CHURCH FAMILY

BY LAVONNE WEST

us representing various AFLC ministries are given a half hour presentation time. In the WMF presentation, we gifted those present with WMF Bible studies and then gave an outline of the history of the WMF and highlighted on-going projects. There is a time for worship songs and prayer. And then the day concludes with a question-and-answer time.

Members of St. Ansgar's Lutheran really outdid themselves in the meal department, which was complete with fresh pies from the farm stand that belongs to the Bunn family.

One special gift for the churches in attendance is a guest speaker from the pastors who share about their ministry on Saturday. For this event, Pastor Korhonen gave the message at St. Ansgar's Lutheran, and installed Pastor Patrick VandenBos, a 2021 graduate of the Free Lutheran Seminary who began serving the congregation in June 2021. Pastor Adam Osier, dean of the Free Lutheran Bible College, traveled to Camarillo, Calif., to preach at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran. Pastor Jason Holt, director of AFLC Youth Ministries, shared at United Lutheran



in Manteca, Calif., and Pastor Nelson went to Our Saviour's Lutheran in Patterson, Calif.

As I listened to Pastor Korhonen preach about "passing the baton," I took time to whisper a prayer for the one who will be called into his position during the 2022 Annual Conference. Our AFLC leadership is a precious treasure.

When I shared with my board the highlights of this day, I likened this second Reawakening event that I have been able to

present to the story of Mary and Martha. I was able to be less focused on what I had to share and could soak in the information shared by the others.

We love to connect with all of our AFLC family at the Annual Conference every year. In a Reawakening event, the time together is priceless. I was there to give, and as it always happens when we do, I receive blessing upon blessing.

West, a member of Stillwater Free Lutheran, Kalispell, Mont., is the president of the Women's Missionary Federation.

Thorpe Scholarship supports future congregational leaders

The Free Lutheran Bible College is pleased to introduce a new scholarship opportunity for students returning for their second year at FLBC. The Thorpe Scholarship for Leadership Development is awarded to students who have demonstrated past leadership and both the aptitude for and likeliness to continue Christian leadership in the future.

This scholarship is endowed by the estate of Pastor Gordon Thorpe, the high school pastor of longtime AFLC leader Pastor Robert L. Lee. Each scholarship awarded will cover half tuition for the second year of FLBC, which is currently \$3000.

This scholarship is open to second-year students who will be selected by the FLBC scholarship committee through an application process that includes an essay, interview, and recommendation at the end of students' first year of study. A number of students (initial target of four) will be selected yearly. These students will meet in a not-for-credit leadership development cohort with FLBC staff and the president of FLBCS. At the end of the school year the cohort will compile a journal documenting leadership lessons learned.

"We are grateful for the financial support of Pastor Thorpe and the opportunity to engage FLBC student leaders through this new avenue," said Josh Johnson, director of communications for FLBCS. "As we recruit young leaders to FLBC we recognize a desire in them to serve in the local congregation. The new scholarship will enhance the training FLBC offers to the next generation of servant leaders."

FLBC students planning to return for a second year can apply for this scholarship through the FLBC.edu website. Applications for returning students will be accepted through March 15.

Registration opens for FLY Beyond

Registration is now open for FLY Beyond, the national youth equipping conference, which will be held July 17-21 at the Association Retreat Center near Osceola, Wis.

The theme "Upward," from Ephesians 4:11-16, will frame the five-day camp aimed at equipping high school students and recent graduates. The daily scheduled will include a morning Bible study, an apologetics workshop led by Tim Barnett, recreation, and evening worship featuring Pastor Ryan Tonneson. For more information, visit aflc.org/youth/fly-beyond.



Presenting ministry in the Last Frontier

Representatives of the AFLC Alaska Mission would be delighted to have the opportunity to come and share stories of God's life-changing work in the hearts of the precious people of Southwest Alaska. We would love to come to speak at your WMF district rally, at your Bible camp, a weekend mission conference or on a Sunday morning or an evening with your congregation.

To find out more and to schedule a speaker, contact Pastor Jeff Swanson at 907-439-3598.

Annual Conference

June 15-18 • Association Retreat Center

The AFLC's 60th anniversary Annual Conference will be held June 15-18 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis. The conference theme, "God Rewards the Faithful," comes from Hebrews 11:6.

Registration for the conference will be available beginning Feb. 1. To register, please visit aflc.org/about-us/conferences. To register over the phone, call Chanel Nelson in the AFLC president's office at (763) 412-2001. Registration will close on June 6. Walk-up registration will be available for late registrants.

As you register, please refer to our conference schedule (subject to change). A full version of this schedule will be available on the conference web page on Feb. 1.

Reservations for housing and meals are available through the ARC (arc-aflc.org/2022-annual-conference), or by calling the ARC at (715) 294-2877.

WMF Day will be held on Wednesday, June 15. Registration will be handled by the WMF. Visit their website for details (aflc.org/women/wmf-day).

2022 Annual Conference schedule

Wednesday, June 15

- 9 a.m. Conference committees meet
- 7:30 p.m. Ordination service

Thursday, June 16–Saturday, June 18

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m. Devotions
- 8:45 a.m. Business session
- 10:25 a.m. Break
- 10:50 a.m. Business session
- 11:40 a.m. Prayer
- Noon Lunch
- 1:15 p.m. AFLC Department Electives
 - Thursday and Saturday
- 1:15 p.m. Corporation Meetings and Lecture Series
 - Friday
- 2:15 p.m. AFLC Department Electives
 - Thursday and Saturday
- 3 p.m. Break
- 3:30 p.m. Worship and devotions
- 3:50 p.m. Business session
- 5:30 p.m. Dinner (Thursday and Friday)
- 7:30 p.m. Evening service
 - Thursday Mission Festival service
 - Friday 60th anniversary celebration communion service
 - Saturday Testimony service (4:30 p.m.)



THEIR TIME TO BLOOM

BY JONNI SLIVER

It is March and spring has arrived—or it is well on its way. Gardeners are peeking alongside their houses for the first signs of crocus or other perennials, the first promise! Perennials are special plants. Some plants start as a seed planted in the ground, blossom majestically for a season, and then are gone. Others that you plant grow, but they don't always look so spectacular to begin with. Ah, but these don't die at the end of the season; they come back stronger and more beautiful the next year and even stronger the next! These are perennials. It takes time to see what they can really be.

Some people are like perennials. They take time to develop roots and become firm—to grow! So, as they begin

their lives, their prospects aren't that great. We see someone like that in Acts 13-15. John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, was a young Christian who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first mission journey, but all did not go well. We aren't told why, but Mark, as he was called, went home partway through the journey.

Whatever the cause, Paul wasn't impressed with Mark, because when Barnabas wanted to take him on the next journey, the plan was vetoed (Acts 15:37). But Barnabas felt that Mark needed a second chance and continued to nurture him. Like a good perennial, Mark matured! Years later, Paul asked Timothy to send Mark to him, as he was a useful colleague (II Timothy 4:11). And you and I are blessed regularly by Mark because he was used by God to write the Gospel of Mark!

I was recently reminded of perennials as I visited with Cleber. Nine years ago, he was a 7-year-old boy who came to the Miriam Home as a small, very damaged child. His mother had severe mental problems and had tormented him for years before literally kicking him out of the house because he was "broken." Cleber's view of life was completely based on lies, and for someone looking on, his prospects didn't look promising at the beginning of his stay with us. We



Cleber (right) and his parents, Claudineia and Juliano.

worked hard to help this little boy understand the truth of who he was as a child of God. We were more than excited when a family from one of our churches in Curitiba decided to adopt him.

Juliano and Claudineia did everything you can imagine to nurture their child. At times it looked like this precious plant just was not going to grow, but they did not give up!

Today Cleber is 16 years old and a precious servant of God, sharing the Word in the youth services and participating in the praise team on Sundays. He is big brother to two foster sisters and takes his responsibilities very seriously. It is so exciting to see Cleber as strong, confident, and convinced that he is loved by God and his family.

Do you have a perennial in your life? Someone who has heard the truth, but hasn't responded as you hoped? Continue to pray, continue to share, continue to believe that the seed you planted may take longer, but God can still bring life to it.

Sliver is an AFLC missionary serving at the Miriam Home in Campo Mourão, Brazil.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Ellen Dalager, a member of Our Savior's Lutheran, Argyle, Minn., is spending the spring semester of her senior high school year in Campo Mourão, Brazil, serving as a Journey Missions mission assistant with AFLC missionaries Jonni Sliver and Pastor John and Hannah Lee.

Jared and Erica Trost and their family, members of Emmanuel Lutheran, Kenyon, Minn., will serve as Journey Missions mission assistants with the Ambassador Institute in Uganda. Jared, who is a hydrologist, will help with a water well ministry. The family will be in Uganda Feb. 23 through April 6.

Members of the FLBCS Board of Trustees and staff took part in the **Association for Biblical Higher Education** annual conference Feb. 16-18, where they attended training workshops provided by the accrediting agency.

Seminary students receive internship assignments

Four third-year students at the Free Lutheran Seminary, Plymouth, Minn., have received one-year internship assignments for June 2022 through May 2023.

Joe Frech will serve Grace Free and Zion Free Lutheran congregations in Valley City, N.D., under the supervision of Pastor Dennis Norby. Joe Larson will serve Prince of Peace Lutheran, Beulah, N.D., under the supervision of Pastor Kent Sperry. Scott Pierson will serve St. Paul's Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., under the supervision of Pastor Micah Hjermstad. And Alex Woodworth will serve Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., under the supervision of Pastor Nick Dyrud.

Interns will observe and participate in the preaching, teaching, and visitation ministries of the church as well as learn administrative duties and other assigned tasks the supervising pastor deems appropriate.

JANUARY MEMORIALS

Bible College

Ruth Claus

Vince Larson

Butch Smith

Sherman Benson

Merrily Westlake

FLAPS

Pastor Paul Nash

General Fund

Sherman Benson

Home Missions

Ralph Engelland

Pastor Paul Nash

Parish Education

Sherman Benson

Lorraine Dostal



Pastor Alvin Grothe

Pastor Alvin Grothe went home to be with the Lord on Jan. 30, 2022, at the age of 96. He was at his home in Astoria, Ore.

Born on July 14, 1925, in Badger, Minn., he was the son of Adolph and Alma (Peterson) Grothe. After graduating from high school in Badger in 1944, he served with the 7th Division Occupation forces in Korea. Seeing the needy children of Korea had a life-long impact on him. It was one of the things God used to develop his passion for world missions and his concern for people around the world. After his honorable discharge he returned to Badger and began farming and carpentry work. He married Frances Tanner in 1952.

Grothe was active in Badger Creek Lutheran, following the example of his parents and grandfather, who was a charter member. In 1962, Grothe attended the organizing conference of what became the AFLC. Soon after, the Grothes heard God's call to become missionaries to Brazil. At the 1964 Annual Conference the Grothes, along with the John and Ruby Abel family, were commissioned as the first AFLC missionaries. After some Bible school training, the Grothes, along with their six children, traveled to the new AFLC mission work of Brazil in 1965. While there, he put his carpentry skills to use and oversaw the construction of church buildings for the Lar Parana and Santo Rei congregations. He also oversaw the construction of the first building on what became the campus of the AFLC Bible school in Brazil. He also pastored the Lar Parana congregation. In October 1967, because of health problems his wife was experiencing, Pastor Grothe and family returned to the U.S. Frances passed away January 1968. While struggling with sorrow and grief, Grothe did deputation work, carpentry, and waited on the Lord for direction. He attended the Free Lutheran Seminary, beginning classes in September 1969. In June 1969 he married Loretta Larson. They served the AFLC congregations of Sunnyside Free Lutheran in Stacy, Minn., and Hope Lutheran in Wyoming, Minn., while attending seminary. After graduating from seminary, they continued to serve those congregations until 1975, when he accepted a call to Bethany Free Lutheran, Astoria, Ore. He served there until his semi-retirement in 1991. He served as interim pastor in Spokane, Wash., and Warroad, Minn. He served on both the AFLC World Missions Committee and the Home Missions Committee.

He is survived by his wife, Loretta, his sister, Elva, six children, 15 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren, and two great-great-grandchildren.

The service was held Feb. 12 at Bethany Free Lutheran, Astoria, Ore., with Pastor Craig Johnson officiating. Burial will be in Badger Cemetery, Badger, Minn.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-January 31, 2022

FUND	REC'D IN JANUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$37,144	\$37,144	\$44,874
Evangelism	9,779	9,779	18,115
Youth Ministries	23,086	23,086	17,509
Parish Education	11,465	11,465	10,767
Seminary	21,190	21,190	20,883
Bible College	31,794	31,794	33,417
Home Missions	54,538	54,538	36,578
World Missions	41,962	41,962	37,679
Personal Support	71,868	71,868	94,144
TOTALS	\$302,827	\$302,827	\$313,966

For additional financial information for each department, go to www.aflc.org/giving

THE CATECHISM AND EVANGELISM

Many of us know *Luther's Small Catechism* as our main textbook during confirmation instruction, and portions of it were customarily assigned as memory work. It was one of our seminary professors, the late Dr. Iver Olson, who spoke of the role of the catechism in his own personal spiritual awakening, noting the importance of the order of topics in the book.



Pastor Robert Lee

The catechism begins with the law of God, summarized in the Ten Commandments. This is the right place to begin. Our old nature

encourages young confirmands to look them over quickly and tell themselves that they haven't done so badly—they don't worship other gods, have never killed anyone, haven't stolen anything, are obedient to their parents (mostly), go to church on Sundays (usually), try to tell the truth, etc. The coveting part doesn't seem to apply to them (houses, servants, wives, cattle), and most are not sure what adultery means (one of my confirmation students thought it meant acting like an adult).

Dr. Olson told how his pastor carefully explained each commandment and the ways in which they apply to our lives. Look at the positive meaning of the commandments. Concerning the first, I may not have worshiped idols, but have I feared, loved, and trusted in God above all things? Concerning the second, I have not taken God's name in vain, but have I called upon Him in every time of need and worshiped Him with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving? Consider, too, what Jesus taught about murder and adultery (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28), that angry words and lustful thoughts also make us guilty of breaking the fifth and sixth commandments. If any shreds of self-righteousness remain, consider James 2:10, that if you stumble at only one point, you are guilty of all.

Ah, then we need to hear the

gospel, and it is no accident that the gospel-centered Creed is part two of our catechisms. It begins with creation and how abundantly God has provided for us ... "purely out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me." The second part is redemption, and it's all about Jesus ... who He is, what He has done to redeem me, "with His holy and precious blood, and with His innocent sufferings and death; in order that I might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." Part three (of sanctification) teaches us about the Holy Spirit's work in bringing us to faith and preserving us in union with Jesus Christ in the fellowship of other believers. [A couple of us who taught the Principles of Congregational Life class in the Bible school/college offered extra credit to any students who would come to us after class and recite the meaning to the Third Article. Sadly, we were not overwhelmed with takers.] These words are especially rich!

The Creed is followed by the Lord's Prayer, which His disciples today still find as our faithful guide. The place of the sacraments in our lives is developed in parts four and five, and previous issues have focused on the commandments (January 2021) and the creed (November 2020).

Perhaps it's past time for us to dust off our catechisms and look to the Spirit of God to renew His work of law and gospel in our hearts and lives. And a special word to pastors: Your privilege in teaching this book to young people is a great one.

The Tale of Two Acres (True North Publishing, 2021) by Miriam Dynneson Ramse tells the interesting and inspiring story of the Nogales, Ariz., mission and the

ministry of her parents, Pastor Lawrence and Gola Dynneson. This was the AFLC's first missionary partnership, introduced at our second annual conference (1964) as a work with both world and home mission possibilities.

Drawing much from Gola's diaries, family memories, and even from Lawrence's poems, the missionary journey of the Dynneson family begins with two Midwestern Bible school students who were convinced that they were called to serve the Lord in a town on the Mexican border more than 70 years ago. A pastor was needed, so Lawrence and family traveled north so he could complete college and seminary training, returning to Nogales, where a

Perhaps it's past time for us to dust off our catechisms and look to the Spirit of God to renew His work of law and gospel in our hearts and lives.

congregation was officially established in 1965.

Readers who may be unfamiliar with the Nogales mission will appreciate the opportunity to get acquainted with it, while those who have followed the work over the years will enjoy reading the familiar names and learning more about it. There are lots of names in the book that are familiar to AFLC readers, and I especially enjoyed reading about the involvement of the Dick and Clara Gunderson and the Gerald and Margaret Mundfrom families. And there are lots of pictures, too.

Copies of *The Tale of Two Acres* may be ordered by contacting Miriam Ramse by email at miramse1211@gmail.com.

something to share

THE BUD HAS BLOSSOMED

BY JOYCE ERICKSON

The bud has blossomed.” These words sank deep like they had weight. The phrase wasn’t from a specific verse, nor was it the topic of the sermon

that Sunday. But the words burned in my heart and became a recurring theme in my thoughts over the next days and months. I appreciate how the Holy Spirit impresses things upon our hearts that convict, teach, encourage, equip, and prepare us.

Jesus often used word pictures and real-life examples to help us understand spiritual truths. The idea behind “the bud has blossomed” is that the final outcome of an action has now come to pass. Many times, results don’t come forth immediately but take time to develop or come about through a process or series of smaller steps.

The phrase ties in with Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” Before the reaping there is a bud, and before the bud—way before the bud—there is a seed. A little seed. A seemingly insignificant seed. But that little seed, if it

is watered and nourished, will eventually sprout and blossom.

I think the reason those words were weighty that day was because I am at that stage in life where buds have blossomed. I’m reaping “rewards” from things I have sown that seemed insignificant. I have been surprised by something that has sprung up where I didn’t realize anything had been planted. Some habits such as comparing myself to others and people-pleasing have produced some deeply-rooted weeds of insecurity. Other habits such as thanking others have grown into beautiful flowers that have actually reproduced.

The bud-to-blossom concept has been something I’ve had the privilege of sharing with a pre-teen girls’ Bible study group I co-lead. When we were studying Proverbs 31:12, “She does [her husband] good, and not harm, all the days of her life,” it was good to point out that “all the days of her life” included the days when the Proverbs 31 woman was a pre-teen. It was an opportunity to cast a vision for what the girls could be cultivating in their lives

now that would blossom into a beautiful gift such as faithfulness or thankfulness for a future husband or for her family and friends.

Experiencing some long-term effects of what I’ve sown has helped me realize the necessity of living in daily repentance and faith. Jesus taught us how the bud blossoms into desirable fruit in John 15:4, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.” Daily meditating on God’s Word and practicing His presence throughout my day—asking Him for help with daily decisions and thanking Him for each task I’m given—will blossom into beautiful fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). By God’s grace, and only by His grace, the buds will blossom and produce good fruit.

Erickson is a member of Rose and Spruce Free Lutheran Churches, Roseau, Minn.