

THE 

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LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR



LUTHER'S
ROSE



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Ancient truths, ever new.

The Protestant Reformation was one of the most significant times in the history of the Christian church. It was a time of politics and intrigue, of discovery and betrayal. It had all the ingredients of a best-selling novel or a hit television show.

But does something that happened in Europe more than 500 years ago have any relevance to our Association today? Yes!

Looking back, the three trumpets of the reformers in the 16th century were, "Scripture alone," "faith alone," and "grace alone." These ancient truths are just as important for us to proclaim today as they were 500 years ago.

Are there still attempts to dethrone the Word of God as the final authority of faith and life? Do some elevate science, reason, or pop morality above the words of Scripture? The Bible is the only place with the words of life. These words alone are able to change reality by creating faith in your heart and delivering to you the righteousness of God. Our AFLC must continue to insist on "Scripture alone."



What about attempts to supplement our simple, childlike faith? To add, even unknowingly, boxes to check or hoops to jump through before we can be truly saved? We must always hold that our faith is a free gift from God. It is faith alone that trusts the promises of God, and faith alone receives forgiveness and justification.

Similarly, the entire process of salvation is solely because of God's grace. We are saved by grace alone, not any work, action, or posture of our own. We who believe were predestined for salvation solely because of the grace of God, as Paul writes in the first chapter of Ephesians. We are convicted of our sins and led to repentance solely because of the grace of God. We have received the righteousness of Christ and are being led into a regenerated life of obedience and good works solely because of the grace of God.

Scripture alone is our authority. Faith alone receives Christ's work. And all the credit for our salvation belongs solely to the grace of God alone.

These were common refrains at the time of the Reformation, but they were hardly new concepts. God used Martin Luther and the reformers to preserve and guard the church from particularly nasty late-medieval Roman Catholic teachings, but they were not theological innovators. Scripture clearly teaches these truths, and God has preserved his Church through all generations. As we remember the Reformation this November, we can praise God for guarding and guiding his Church.

We take a closer look in this issue at a familiar symbol. The different elements of the famous Luther Rose are all designed to summarize our faith.

Pastor Gideon Johnson introduces the Luther Rose and helps us see the meaning behind the black cross on the red heart. Pastor Luke Berntson writes on the white rose, which symbolizes the joy, comfort, and peace our faith gives us.

Lori Nelson writes about the sky-blue field that shifts our attention upwards and instills an eternal perspective. Our managing editor, Ruth Gunderson, concludes the series of articles by explaining the golden ring of the Luther Rose.

November is also the month of Thanksgiving, so Jen Thorson looked at Daniel 6 to help us see a biblical model of thankfulness that is not dependent on circumstance.

Also in this issue, Amy Skogerboe writes an *Encouraging Word* column, and Pastor Christian Andrews wraps up our *Building the Base* series by looking at the Lord's Supper. We pray these regular columns have been encouraging and helpful to you.

—Pastor Andrew Kneeland

There is no better nor more powerful remedy
in temptations than to diligently read and heed the
Word of God. [Martin Luther]

“

There will be three effects to nearness of
Jesus—humility, happiness, and holiness.

[Charles Spurgeon]

Above all knowledge, know Christ. [John Wesley]

We do not please the devil so much when we sin as
when we despair. [John Chrysostom]


Once an instrument of torment for the punishment of
sinners, (the cross) now shines in heavenly splendor for
all sinners as a sign of grace. [C.F.W. Walther]

God's Word is our great heritage and shall be ours
forever; to spread its light from age to age shall be
our chief endeavor. Through life it guides our way, in
death it is our stay. Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
we keep its teachings pure throughout all generations.
[Ambassador Hymnal #258]

LUTHER'S ACCESSIBLE TRUTH



BY PASTOR GIDEON JOHNSON



“Rare are those who can be both scholars and pastors.” Such is the assessment of Dr. R.C. Sproul when remarking on the reformer Martin Luther (*Life and Legacy of Luther*). For Luther was just that, both a scholar and a pastor. This is evident to anyone who has taken time to read just a sampling of Luther’s writings. They tend to be both highly scholarly and, at the same time, deeply personal and applicable.

Regarding the first affirmation, Luther was truly a first-class scholar. He was one who could just as easily call Scripture to mind as he could the writings of those great sages from the past such as Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas.

With that, Luther was also a first-class pastor. Which is to say, although able to understand and defend biblical truth with the ablest and brightest of theologians of his day, Luther also had both the desire and the capacity to communicate biblical truth to his people, to make deep and eternal truths accessible to the common man.

See, for Luther, the pursuit of truth wasn’t simply an intellectual endeavor nor a means of bolstering his pride. Rather, such a pursuit—and its right communication—was very much pastoral. It wasn’t for the sake of the university; it was for the sake of the laity. In fact, Sproul says that the initial spark of the Reformation—the posting of the Ninety-five Theses—is the supreme example of not only Luther’s scholarly prowess but of his pastoral heart. He writes,

To be sure, the Ninety-five Theses posted on the church door at Wittenberg were penned in Latin as a request for theological discussion among the faculty members of the university. But what provoked Luther to request such a discussion? Simply put, it was pastoral concern.

Luther’s people were being led astray by the teaching of indulgences by Rome, of salvation apart from or in addition to Christ. Therefore, as an act of true care for souls, of making the truth known, Luther did what he did. And the rest, as they say, is history.

But, of course, Luther’s pastoral concern didn’t end with the Ninety-five Theses. In fact, it only increased from there. As the Reformation began to sweep across Germany and throughout Europe and beyond, Luther continued to showcase not only his scholarly prowess but especially his pastoral heart, his true care for souls, in the measures he took to make biblical truth accessible to the people.

In his biography on Luther, Roland H. Bainton points out four ways in which Luther, as pastor, sought to communicate and make accessible biblical truth to his

people. Four means that we still use and benefit from today. This included his Bible translation, the publishing of his Catechism, the development of the Lutheran liturgy, and the writing and compiling of the hymnbook.

See, as it was with Jesus in using parables to communicate eternal truth, in Luther’s mind, “the true Christian Church is the work of the Word [which is to be] communicated by every available means,” wrote Bainton in *Here I Stand*.

BIBLE TRANSLATION

Any seminarian, pastor, or Bible scholar will tell you that translation work is very scholarly in nature. Yet for Luther, Bible translation wasn’t simply nor ultimately a scholarly endeavor. Again, it was pastoral. It was for the sake of the people that they might know the truth and that the truth might set them free (John 8:32). This much is clear when one considers how Luther put in such great effort to render the original language of the Bible into German. Bainton quotes Luther, “I endeavor to make Moses so German that no one would suspect he was a Jew.” Of course, when hearing this statement, some might accuse Luther of being overly loose in his translation. His point, however, is that he was being pastoral. He was showing a true concern and care for souls by seeking to give the German people a Bible that they could actually read and understand while still remaining faithful to the truth communicated by the original text.

Again, the point is that Luther’s translation work all came down to his pastoral concern for the people. After all, Luther didn’t need the German Bible. He could read and understand the original just fine. But the people did need it. Therefore, this is one way in which Luther used his scholarly abilities to make eternal truth accessible.

THE CATECHISM

Another one of those means Luther used to make eternal truth accessible, which is likely familiar for those who have grown up in the Lutheran Church, is his Catechism. And what is this catechism? A little book of instruction in the chief tenets of the faith.

Of course, you can argue all you want regarding who this book was for and who Luther intended to have teach its content. Regardless, the purpose of the book itself was simply to instruct young and old in the Christian faith, to communicate in short what God’s Word revealed in full, and to make accessible to all what was still at that time only available to some.

Continued on page 6



THE LITURGY

Liturgy is the form of our worship. But liturgy isn't just something we do. Liturgy is something that does something to us. In other words, liturgy isn't just the way we form our worship; liturgy is something that works to form us. It teaches us, directs our hearts, leads us to confess and believe what is true, and shapes and recalibrates our hearts toward what and how God would have us be. Luther knew this, which is why, when on a forced retreat in Wartburg Castle, he spent time reshaping the Roman liturgy. He did this by stripping away those things that lead people away from Christ and to superstition and reworking them in such a way that the liturgy would teach people about Christ and draw people to the Lord. Furthermore, this is why, as was the case with his Bible, he translated the liturgy into German. Because as a pastor, Luther's desire was not only that all things be done in an orderly fashion, but that they be done understandably and for the benefit of all, so that life-changing truth be made accessible to all.

HYMNODY

Music, like the liturgy, has a way of making truth accessible and memorable to everyone, both young and old. This Luther knew, and this is why he set out to put theology to music. Not simply because he enjoyed and benefited from music himself—which he did—but because he recognized the value of music in caring for and teaching others. As an example of this, consider the hymn he wrote based on the Ten Commandments called *These Are the Holy Ten Commands*. This hymn, which is catechetical in nature, contains in itself everything Luther desired to say about and instill in each person regarding the commandments.

In all these things, we can see Luther's pastoral heart to make truth accessible to all people by every available means. This is a good example for us as we continue to communicate God's eternal and unchanging truth to a dying and ever-changing world.

LUTHER'S ROSE

Among the many ways in which Luther, as scholar and pastor, sought to make truth accessible, his rose is one that may not immediately come to the mind of many. Sure, we may recognize it as something that looks nice on a catechism cover or in a picture frame, but what's the point of it? Well, it isn't just there to look nice. Rather, as has already been related, Luther's purpose in this was pastoral in nature. It was intended to communicate and make accessible eternal truth to the common man.

Thinking specifically of the central elements in the rose—the black cross and red heart—by these symbols and their colors, Luther was teaching and communicating, first, that our hearts, which were blackened by sin, have been restored to life through the suffering and death of Christ on the cross to all who repent and trust in him.

Second, the red heart was placed there to teach and remind us that it is only by faith in Christ—by looking to him and taking his promises to heart—that we are both made and kept alive.

Of course, the reason these particular truths were so near and dear to Luther and always on his heart to share is because, while being both a first-class scholar and pastor, Luther knew that he, too, was a sinner. He also knew that the only way of being set free from sin is by laying hold of the promise of God in Christ. In other words, the truths Luther sought to communicate by every possible means weren't, in the end, just academic or only pastoral for him. It was personal, which means I think we can be pretty confident in saying that everything Luther did to communicate and instill God's truth in others was really something he first sought to instill in himself. He didn't just preach to others. In all these things, he was first preaching it to himself.

Johnson serves Hope Free Lutheran, Killdeer, N.D.





First, there is a black cross in a heart that remains its natural color. This is to remind me that it is faith in the Crucified One that saves us. Anyone who believes from the heart will be justified (Romans 10:10). It is a black cross, which mortifies and causes pain, but it leaves the heart its natural color. It doesn't destroy nature, that is to say, it does not kill us but keeps us alive, for the just shall live by faith in the Crucified One (Romans 1:17). The heart should stand in the middle of a white rose. This is to show that faith gives joy, comfort, and peace—it puts the believer into a white, joyous rose. Faith does not give peace and joy like the world gives (John 14:27). This is why the rose must be white, not red. White is the color of the spirits and angels (cf. Matthew 28:3; John 20:12). This rose should stand in a sky-blue field, symbolizing that a joyful spirit and faith is a beginning of heavenly, future joy, which begins now, but is grasped in hope, not yet fully revealed. Around the field of blue is a golden ring to symbolize that blessedness in heaven lasts forever and has no end. Heavenly blessedness is exquisite, beyond all joy and better than any possessions, just as gold is the most valuable and precious metal.

Letter from Martin Luther
to Lazarus Spengler,
July 8, 1530



WHITE JOYOUS ROSE

BY PASTOR LUKE BERNTSON

In 1530, a seal was created to summarize Martin Luther's theology. At the center of this seal stands a black cross, in a red heart, in the middle of a white rose. Luther wrote, "Such a heart should stand in the middle of a white rose to show that faith gives joy, comfort, and peace. In other words, it places the believer into a white, joyous rose, for this faith does not give peace and joy like the world gives" (John 14:27).

The heart marked by the cross reminds us that we are saved through faith in Jesus. Jesus lived a sinless life for us. He died for us. He gives forgiveness and life to all who believe. No one can be saved by their own good works or sacrifices, but only by the good work, suffering, and death of Jesus. This faith, this joyful confidence we have in the Word and promise of God, marks our hearts with the cross of Christ and lifts us up, placing us into a joyous white rose.

There are many people who struggle with terrible anxiety of the heart. They are not sure of their salvation. For example, a child once said, "I can never be sure that I am saved because I can never be sure that I believe enough." Friends, faith is not a firm confidence in your own commitment. Let this child hear of a merciful Savior who has chosen to forgive his sins and to make him his own dear child. Faith is not the result of our efforts. Faith is the gift of God. By faith, we believe that God has mercy on us and smiles upon us, not because of our goodness or sincerity, but because of Jesus. As a rose opens to the sun, so our hearts rejoice when we hear of Jesus.

Faith is a gift. Ephesians 2:8–10 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not your own doing. This is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Our faith is God's work. Our salvation is God's work. We ourselves are God's workmanship. By faith, we work and live with confidence and joy, knowing that we have a gracious Lord who is working in and through us.

Along with faith, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

give us joy, comfort, and peace. We receive these gifts through faith in Jesus, who died for us. The cross is always at the center of Luther's seal and our lives. Concerning peace, Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27). Concerning peace and joy, the Scripture testifies, "For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). Concerning comfort, see how lavishly God gives it! The Bible says, "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word" (II Thessalonians 2:16–17). God is not content to give us the minimum amount of faith needed for our salvation. Rather, in love, God places us into a joyous, white rose of faith in which joy, comfort, and peace blossom.

The white rose of faith opens up to a blue sky, signifying hope. Christian faith is filled with hope. When we struggle with challenges and opportunities, we have hope because Jesus is our Lord. When we age, we have hope in the resurrection. When we see wickedness in the world, we have hope because Christ is on His throne. When we see sin within us, we have hope because Christ has died for us. When we baptize and teach, we do so in the confident hope that Christ is risen and that his command to make disciples through baptizing and teaching is still the means by which he is marking hearts with the cross of Christ.

Around the blue sky of Luther's seal lies a golden ring because the white rose of faith looks up with confident hope to see the fulfillment of all God's promises. In joyful faith, we wait "for our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). We live in the joyous white rose of faith as we wait for the glorious appearance of Jesus, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Berntson serves Hope Lutheran, Northome, Minn., and Bethesda Lutheran, Mizpah, Minn.

ALREADY

BY LORI NELSON

A sky-blue field symbolizes that joy in spirit and faith is a beginning of the heavenly future joy, which begins already, but is grasped in hope, not yet revealed.

I have spent a lot of my life waiting. There have been numerous lines and appointments and life events. I've waited for mundane tasks to be completed, and I've waited for a thrilling victory. As a mom, I've waited for a child to eat their dinner, and I've waited for that same child to learn to read. I've waited to hear if the news was good or if the news was bad. I've waited for friendships to form and waited until the last possible moment to say goodbye. I've waited to teach lessons, and I've waited as I was taught a lesson. I've waited expectantly and impatiently. I've waited with fear and anxiety. I've waited with hope and delight.

The Christian life has a great deal to do with waiting. In fact, the entire Christian walk will be spent waiting in hope for the Savior's return. At Christ's return we are promised an eternal home that will far outweigh this temporary dwelling. Our eternal home will not be wrought with the suffering we presently endure. The Apostle Paul's description of our waiting in light of our suffering is described in II Corinthians 5:1–2, "... we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling." Of course, there is groaning during this time of waiting. All things are not as they should be. All things are not as they will be.

We see a striking contrast between this earthly tent and our heavenly home. In this tent where we are waiting, we will suffer pain, loss, and grief. But in Revelation 21:4 John's words bring comfort that in our heavenly home, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

As we wait for this promised heavenly dwelling that will be ours through faith in Christ, we are not left alone, waiting in misery and fear. In John 14:27, Jesus promised to leave the Holy Spirit, saying, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." We need his presence to comfort and guide through many trials.

There is another contrast between these two realms that have been labeled "already, not yet." We see that God, in his

goodness, has given us a foretaste of what we hope for (the not yet), in granting us peace and joy for the "already." Paul offers this encouragement in Romans 15:13: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope." We are filled with peace and joy already, but they are based in hope because we do not yet have them eternally.

The disciple John lovingly reveals, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared" (I John 3:2). By faith in Christ, we are already adopted as his heirs, but we have not yet received our full inheritance. Our inheritance is not perishable and is waiting for us in heaven (I Peter 1:4). Through the washing of baptism, we are buried and already raised with Christ to walk in the newness of life (Romans 6:4), but we are not yet resurrected to eternal life with him.

We see in Revelation 19 that at Christ's return we will be invited to the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. It will be a celebration of the uniting of Christ and his bride, the Church. We are allowed a foretaste of this celebratory feast already when we join with other believers to receive the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. It was instituted by Christ "for the forgiveness of our sins. I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:26–29). Therefore, we already receive forgiveness for sins, although we are not yet free from sin. And in partaking of this gift, we remember that we are not yet with Christ at the banquet table, but he is already with us.

Our waiting in hope for the "not yet" isn't a waiting done in vain because it is based on the reality that Christ already died, rose, and ascended into heaven. He is already seated at the right hand of our Father. And the Father had this plan set in motion for us since the beginning. "And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified" (Romans 8:30).

Nelson is a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D.



WORLD

HEAVEN

I held a miracle in my cupped hands. A dried-up weed the color of the ashy desert where I stood suddenly moved. As I watched, it unfurled—bloomed—into a delicate flower. All it took was a splash of water.

“A resurrection plant,” said George, my tour guide.

What a mystery! I think of this moment on the bluffs above the Dead Sea often, when the things of God seem beyond my grasp. As a metaphor, it firms up the abstract. And like Scripture’s pictorial language, truths that transcend earth’s boundaries suddenly descend into its atmosphere.

Heaven is one of those mysteries. Eternity, too. How do you even grasp such concepts?



VEN

BY RUTH GUNDERSON

The Book of Revelation is an oft-referenced source for what theologians term the eschaton, the final event in God's divine plan. Chapters 21 and 22 cover the triumphal end: the new heaven and earth, the new Jerusalem, and the restoration of creation. It is mind-boggling—a city descends from heaven, massive and perfectly square, with gates made from a single pearl, radiantly shining “like a crystalized jasper stone” (21:11).

“The revelation of divine truth seems to tax the limits of human language,” writes Dr. Louis Brighton in *Revelation: Concordia Commentary*.

But with depictions of what we do understand, God helps us think about the transcendent. And his word pictures for heaven—from the Old Testament through the New—are consistent. Beginning in the Garden of Eden with its tree of life to a river reviving a desert, to a city on a hill, to a tabernacle, to Mount Zion—we read of them in Isaiah, Ezekiel, the Psalms, Zechariah, the Gospels, and on and on. John's vision in Revelation, then, becomes part of God's story arc, filled with concepts we can envision, though we understand them as shadows of their eternal realities.

Paul writes about this: “Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror ...” (I Corinthians 13:12a).

John's vision in chapter 21 is full of wonderful details. A new heaven and earth replace the old earth that “had passed away” (v. 1), nearly a word-for-word rephrase of Isaiah's prophecy (65:17). Then, the dazzling city descends, like a ready bride, an image of the beloved church found in Paul's letter to Ephesus (5:25–27). The city is described in tangible terms, though beyond any earthly replica (vv. 9–14) and measured (vv. 15–21), I think, to give us a sense of the concrete and ground us in the absolutes we crave. Last, John says he does not see a temple. No need. For God and the Lamb are the temple, and “the nations walk about by her light” (v. 24), a reiteration of Jesus' statement that he is “the light of the world” (John 8:12). What a thing to be face to face with the One who for now must “shield his people from the brilliance of his overpowering

holiness and awesomeness” (Brighton).

In five wonderful verses (chapter 22), the vision reaches its pinnacle with the “forever” setting of the restored Garden. There, a life-giving tree stands in the city. But unlike in Eden, the nations will partake of its fruit and healing balm, one aspect of the story arc resolved. Next to it, a river flows from God's throne and the Lamb.

The Sons of Korah prophesy about this very river in Psalm 46. In the middle of an end-times scene, where the earth is giving way, the mountains are falling “into the heart of the sea” (v. 2), and the “nations are in uproar” (v. 6), they write, “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells” (v. 4). The psalmists identify this river as the manifestation of the “refuge and strength” found in the opening verse. How can that be? Jesus answered that himself when he offered a Samaritan woman “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” and said, “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst” (John 4:14).

Of the holy dwelling place of God, Dr. Timothy Saleska writes, “... the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High no longer names only a *place* but a *person*. In Jesus, God is present for his people” (*Psalms 1–50: Concordia Commentary*). And the river that gladdens his city? It now transforms into the gospel of Jesus, “through which the Holy Spirit gladdens our hearts.” And the city? It “no longer names a geographical place but a *people* (John 4:21–24).”

The gospel of Jesus, a splash of water resurrecting a people who will dwell forever with their God—the arc complete. It is a glorious, never-ending golden circle, made possible by the saving work of Jesus, his black cross hidden within our red hearts.

Paul concludes, “All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely” (I Corinthians 13:12b).

Gunderson, a member of Living Hope, Rogers, Minn., is the managing editor.



MODELING

THANKFULNESS

BY JENNIFER THORSON

When we enter the scene in chapter six of the Book of Daniel, we find the prophet, who lived in captivity in Babylon, in an incredibly difficult situation.

Daniel had earned prestigious government positions because of his talent and integrity. While we don't know the exact nature of Daniel's relationship with the Babylonian ruler, King Darius, we can conclude that the king thought very highly of Daniel. He was an important advisor to the rulers who came before Darius, known for displaying wisdom and intelligence in interpreting God's messages to Babylon's kings.

Because of this, King Darius made him one of the most powerful administrators in the kingdom. Daniel was "trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent," explains the narrator (4:6).

This made many of the other administrators and satraps (governors) very angry. When these evil men wanted to entrap Daniel, they went to great lengths to create an embarrassing scenario in which he would fail to live up to his own commitment to the law of his God. They tricked the king into authorizing a law that no one was to pray to anyone except King Darius. The punishment was the lion's den, where the guilty would meet his end.

Daniel was a rule-follower, not prone to going against the structure and political order of the cultural times he lived in. But there was one thing that convinced him to step out of order: his commitment to God.

When Daniel heard of the decree, he knew that he and other God-fearing Jews were the target. With full confidence in God, Daniel went home and prayed to God as usual.

"Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before" (6:10).

Daniel knew the consequences of his actions, but he prayed anyway. His future was uncertain, but he prayed anyway. He lived out the same wisdom and intelligence he had displayed throughout his time in Babylonian captivity. He may have had a feeling of dread, knowing that these men would come after him. They were almost giddy at the opportunity to punish a man they despised for being a trustworthy follower of the one true God.

Daniel was caught in the act of worship and sentenced to the punishment the law required: the lions' den. When King Darius learned that his decree caused one of his

trusted advisors to suffer, he "was greatly distressed" (v. 14). Bound to his own laws, King Darius sent Daniel off with a desperate cry: "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

God made a powerful appearance during Daniel's captivity in the lions' den. Through Daniel's act of giving thanks, God's goodness and glory were on display for all to see. God showed himself strong on behalf of Daniel. "No wound was found on him because he had trusted in his God" (v. 23). The next morning, the king was overjoyed to see Daniel alive, and Daniel's adversaries were brought to justice.

In the end, King Darius also gave glory to God. Daniel's heart of gratitude and persistence in prayer, despite his challenging circumstances, not only strengthened his own faith but also had an impact on Darius.

We will never have the same experience as Daniel, but at some point we will find ourselves in a seemingly impossible situation. When we aren't sure what to do next, will we go to the Lord right away? Or will our circumstances rock our faith?

We live in a fallen world. Challenges will arise. Heartache will come. The inevitable difficulties we encounter as Christians present us with an opportunity to respond with thanksgiving and reliance on God. Where will we take our stand? Will we stand firmly on God's faithfulness, trusting he will give us a way out or a way through the trouble? Or will the opportunity to "give thanks in all circumstances" pass us by?

Putting the biblical teaching of giving thanks into practice can sometimes feel difficult. Thankfully, God does not leave us alone in this. He is merciful and gracious to us, moving our hearts to him in gratefulness and praise.

When we struggle to find reasons to be thankful in our circumstances, we can know without a doubt that he is strong in our weaknesses. Jeremiah 17:7 reminds us, "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him." We can be confident that God will lead us to a place of peace and assurance, just as he led Daniel through his time in the lions' den to a place of glorious deliverance.

Thorson is a member of Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D. Artwork: "Daniel in the Lions' Den," by printmaker Matthijs Pool (1705–1720), Rijksmuseum.





BEHOLD

FLY 2025 | JOHN 1:29



Convention update.

“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” —John 1:29

BY ALEX MONSETH

I have heard it said numerous times that the Free Lutheran Youth Convention is one of the best things we do as an AFLC. The gospel is preached. Souls are saved. Teens are encouraged in countless ways and strengthened in their confidence in Christ. Churches and youth ministries are knit more closely together. Leaders use their gifts for the glory of God, and new leaders emerge amidst all the opportunities to serve. All of this happens because the Spirit of God works through countless caring adults who give of their time to make FLY happen. It is not without the sacrifice of much time, resources, and talents from so many, but I believe we would all say it is worth it. The fruit of FLY is evident.

Do you want to get involved in making FLY 2025 happen this year? The 2025 FLY Committee would love to hear from you. Reach out by emailing fly@afc.org.

The 2025 FLY Convention will take place next summer at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colo., from June 30–July 5. The 2025 FLY Committee is hard at work planning and praying over the ministry that will happen in the mountains of Colorado. We wrapped up our fall prayer and planning retreat at the beginning of September, setting the course for the next months that lead up to FLY. We’re thankful to the Spirit for his work in the planning process.

While those dates seem miles away, registration for FLY 2025 opened on Oct. 1. The best rate for students lasts until Nov. 21, so we encourage you to sign up early this fall. Visit our website (flyconvention.org) for registration information and to find more about speakers, schedules, and other important details in the coming months. We can’t wait for what God will do at FLY 2025.

FLY 2025 Registration.

- **Student Deadlines:**
Nov. 21, 2024: \$549
Jan. 23, 2025: \$699
May 15, 2025: \$849
Walkup: \$949
- **Deposit:**
\$150 per student/non-refundable
- **Register online:**
flyconvention.org
- **Staff volunteers:**
Many positions are available. For more information, visit the website.

Monseth, a member of Hope Lutheran, Minneapolis, is the first vice president of the 2025 FLY Committee



Apprentice training.

BY ADAM MCCARLSON

Training is an important part of any job, and youth ministry is no exception. November marks the third month of the 2024–25 Apprenticeship Program year. AFLC congregations and their youth workers can apply together for the Apprenticeship Program. This partnership with AFLC Youth Ministries seeks to provide youth workers with theological and practical training to prepare them to care for the long-term spiritual lives of teens in a congregational setting.

The Apprenticeship Program carries out this training in a variety of ways over the course of a year. A veteran youth leader meets virtually with each apprentice throughout the year to go through 39 training modules, discuss various books or reading, and apply what is being learned to that youth worker's congregational context. There are also monthly cohorts where the apprentices meet together virtually for training and encouragement. Finally, the apprentices experience various youth-related events like Youth Workers' Weekends, the Free Lutheran Bible College's Campus Days, FLY Beyond, and the FLY Convention. All of this is designed with training in mind—training those youth workers who help AFLC congregations and families raise their teens in the faith.

There are two full-time apprentices enrolled in the Apprenticeship Program for the 2024–25 program year. Mathew Smith serves at Living Word Free Lutheran in Sioux Falls, S.D., and works with the congregation's worship and youth ministries. "I am hoping to gain insight on how best to serve both the congregation and the youth of the church and to build myself into the leader that Christ has called me to be," said Smith, who is serving in his first year at Living Word.

At Good Shepherd Free Lutheran in Camarillo, Calif., Victor Hembree serves as their youth leader. "I am ready to learn, grow, and glean from youth leaders who have been in the field for many years. I'm excited for this specific personalized training for youth leaders," said Hembree.

Another way the Apprenticeship Program provides training is through a modified program designed for seminary interns. AFLC Youth Ministries' Training Coordinator Jordan Langness hosts regular virtual meetings with them to provide training in youth and family ministry. This training targets those who will be serving our congregations as pastors and seeks to prepare them to support and champion healthy ministry to teens in a variety of settings across the AFLC. There are currently two seminary interns who are making use of the training that the modified Apprenticeship Program provides. Mikey Meester is at Our Savior's Free Lutheran in Stanley, N.D., and Troy Hanson is at Emmanuel Free Lutheran in Williston, N.D.



AFLC Youth Board.

The AFLC Youth Board met on September 30th, 2024 for All Boards. Elections were held for board officers and liaison positions were assigned:

- **Pastor Ryan Tonneson:**
Chairman, liaison to Youth Worker Weekends
- **Wendy Greven:**
Vice Chair, liaison to Youth Leader Small Groups
- **Pastor Matthew Nelson**
Secretary, liaison to FLY Beyond
- **Michele Smith:**
Financial secretary, liaison to Schools and Apprenticeship Program
- **Michelle Olson:**
Liaison to 2025 FLY Committee

McCarlson, a student at the Free Lutheran Seminary, is the director of AFLC Youth Ministries.



Funding our mission.

• THE ANNUAL CAMPAIGN

Establishing students in the word of God for life in Jesus Christ is a valuable mission.

Our seminary students are prepared for servant leadership in free and living Lutheran congregations. When you support FLBCS you may well be preparing your next pastor. Our Bible College students are prepared for life in Jesus Christ—wherever they may go. The Bible is our textbook because education is more than a career path. Each of our students will be members of congregations and servant leaders in their communities. They may become spouses and parents, too.

Like anything valuable, this mission is only accomplished through significant commitments of time, talent, and money. For every dollar that students pay in tuition, room, board, and fees, FLBCS needs an additional 50 cents to fulfill our mission. We can only do what we do with help from generous people like you and congregations like yours.

Many of you recently received our annual fiscal year-end update. Part of that brochure laid out a plan for funding our mission through an annual campaign. The annual campaign covers every student cost beyond tuition, room, board, and fees. With the exception of capital campaigns (like gifts directly to principal payments on the Student Life Center), every promise to give or gift we receive during the fiscal year goes toward the annual campaign.

For more on how to give to FLBCS or to see the latest progress on this year's annual campaign, please visit flbc.edu/annualcampaign or contact Sherry Mork (director of Donor Relations) at sherry.mork@flbc.edu.



Events at FLBCS.

- **Confirmation Refresh:**
Nov. 22–23
- **Christmas Concerts:**
Dec. 6–8
- **Seminary Symposium:**
Jan. 15–16, 2025
- **Campus Days:**
April 4–5, 2025

Bachelor of Arts in Bible Ministry

Students who complete our flagship Bible and Ministry program can now stay on campus for additional course work that allows them to earn a BA. Students can take a variety of additional courses, including advanced Bible and theology, practical ministry studies, and educational foundations such as logic, early Church history, philosophy, and research writing. Historically, about 15 percent of our students complete this kind of degree elsewhere. Now they can do so here. For a complete list of our bachelor's degree courses, visit our website at flbc.edu/academics.

What do we teach?

BY PASTOR ADAM OSIER

The Word of God does the work. I consistently and intentionally repeat this phrase in all my classes. Biblical theology, passed down through the ages and revitalized during the Reformation, teaches that it is the Word of God alone (*Sola Scriptura*) that generates faith in the hearts of sinners and guides them as they live out their Christian journey. This is what Paul says in II Timothy 3:16–17: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” The Word is living and active, always accomplishing what God intends (Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 55:11). When the Word is preached and taught, God works in profound ways.

This foundational conviction continues to shape the Free Lutheran Bible College program. It makes our program unique, even within the broader realm of biblical higher education. This isn’t just part of what we do, it is *all* that we do. We exist to establish students in the Word so that it can transform their lives. We witness their growth in faith as they prepare for service in their families and congregations.

To this end, the largest segment of our program’s required curriculum focuses on the exegetical study of the Word. Our qualified professors, trained in our seminary, guide students through the Scriptures verse by verse. From the Pentateuch to Revelation, students embark on a comprehensive exploration of the Word’s truth. They are nourished by it as they read, meditate upon, and memorize it. Professors draw from the depths of its truth, helping students make meaningful connections.

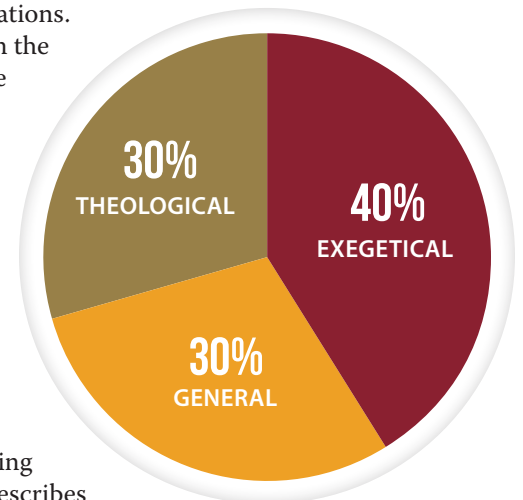
Another significant component of our program is theological studies. These classes take the truths of the Word and organize them into topical categories. In these classes, our professors delve into fundamental doctrines concerning God, humanity, the Word, justification, sanctification, the Church, the means of grace, the end times, and more. Our theological classes complement our exegetical classes, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the trustworthy and authoritative Word.

The final category of our required offerings is labeled “General Education.” By using the term “general,” we do not imply that it differs from biblical education. Rather, it describes a category of classes designed to serve the teaching of the Word in two key ways. First, some of these classes are offered to help students fully engage and communicate the Word they are learning. They help students learn to think (Logic), write (English Composition), and speak (Public Speaking). All of these are taught with biblical focus and application. Second, the remaining classes help contextualize the Word, illustrating its relevance both historically and in contemporary culture. Courses in history help students understand the biblical framework (History and Geography of the Bible) and the history of the Church (Church History). Others demonstrate how the Word applies to modern culture (Introduction to Christian Thought and Apologetics).

We also encourage students to explore areas of ministry that interest them. Open electives allow students to apply biblical knowledge to practical ministry contexts. We offer robust courses in music ministry, youth ministry, and missions, as well as classes in expository preaching, biblical education, counseling, and other practical ministry applications. Furthermore, we provide students with both the incentive and opportunity to practice ministry within their congregations.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of our program is its nearly exclusive residential setting. Our students live together, learning and embodying our core values of integrity, stewardship, whole-life discipleship, and life together. This environment serves as the essential training ground for a Christian faith that is practiced in community. In a world where education is often isolated from community, we offer a biblically grounded alternative. As Scripture teaches, “the Lord sets the solitary in families” (Psalm 68:6), and “as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17).

The teaching and application of the Word of God in this residential setting form the foundation of what the Free Lutheran Bible College has always been and must continue to be to remain faithful to its mission. May God keep us faithful in this endeavor.



Osier, a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is the dean of the Bible College.



Fall All Boards conference held

Members of AFLC ministry boards and committees gathered on the AFLC's Plymouth, Minn., campus Sept. 30–Oct. 1 for the fall All Boards conference. On Monday, boards met separately to conduct business. On Tuesday morning, the boards and committees met collectively for a joint session. Included in the schedule were the installation of new members (top left), updates from each of the ministries represented (bottom left, John Greven represents FLAPS), and a session on the “Role of Women on AFLC Boards,” presented by Pastor Micah Hjermstad (bottom center), AFLC president. The All Boards meeting preceded the AFLC Pastors’ Conference, held Oct. 1–3 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis.



Spotlight features Schaeffer scholar

The Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary hosted the fall Spotlight: Apologetics conference Oct. 7–8, featuring Christopher Talbot, campus pastor at Welch College, Gallatin, Tenn. Talbot, a scholar on Francis Schaeffer, spoke of his vision for the application of apologetics in the Christian life. Talbot is the author of *Remodeling Youth Ministry: A Biblical Blueprint for Ministering to Students* and co-author of *Christians in Culture: Cultivating a Christian Worldview for All of Life*.

Students in the Bible College and Seminary and campus guests heard four sessions held in Hauge Chapel: an introduction to Francis Schaeffer, “Ideas Have Consequences,” “Schaeffer’s Pro-Life Legacy,” and “Schaeffer: A Prophet for Today.” The sessions will be available on the FLBC Vimeo channel.

AFLC ministry departments host training event in ND

A group from various Free Lutheran congregations gathered Sept. 21 at the Ramada in Bismarck, N.D., for an event called “For the Congregation.” The regional event is part of an effort to live out the AFLC Fundamental Principles’ encouragement to find opportunities where congregations can together be mutually edified (Fundamental Principles #8). At “For the Congregation,” the 42 participants enjoyed workshops led by various AFLC ministry directors and fellowship through food, conversation, time in God’s Word, and raising their voices together in song.

Dr. Wade Mobley, president of FLBCS, led a workshop focusing on worldview and culture. He made the case that culture catechizes and that Christians should live out their vocations in a way that cultivates and redeems culture through Christ. Adam McCarlson, director of Youth Ministries, highlighted the role all members of a congregation play in ministering to teens, and called parents to prioritize active participation in the congregation and the things of the Lord in their family’s everyday life. Pastor Andy Coyle,

director of Home Missions, encouraged congregations to hold to their Free Lutheran beliefs, values, and practices as they seek to engage and reach those in their communities for Christ. Pastor Randy Nelson, director of AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship, helped us see the shift in America toward a post-Christian culture that is shaped by secular humanism.

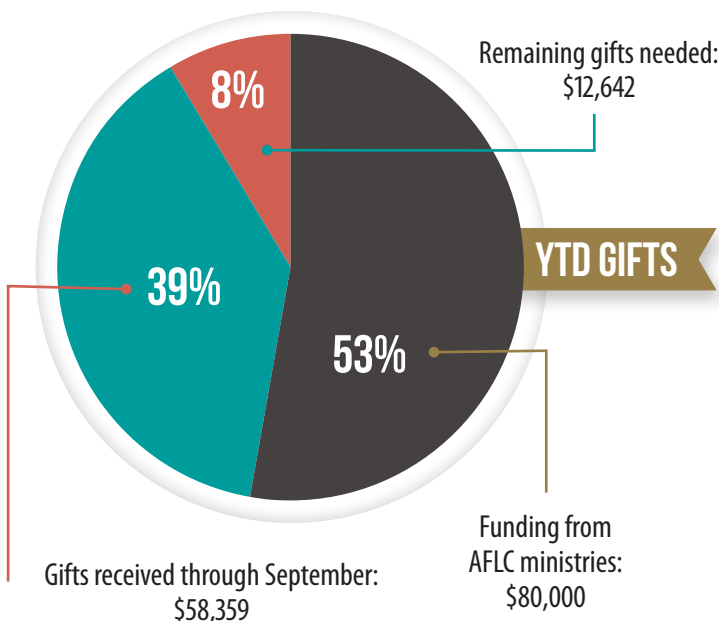
Marian Christopherson, director Parish Education, made available for sale a variety of resources and materials from Ambassador Publications to benefit and support congregational efforts. Dr. Earl Korhonen, executive director of World Missions, gave an update on the activity of AFLC missionaries. Music was led by Bria Larson and Nathan Kinneberg. Dr. Jason Holt and Alisha Kneeland, on behalf of the AFLC President’s office, helped organize and facilitate the event.

—Adam McCarlson, director of AFLC Youth Ministries



TOP: Pastor Andy Coyle led a session at the “For the Congregation” training event in Bismarck, N.D. ABOVE: Adam McCarlson leads a session.

Lutheran Ambassador 2024 financial update



The Lutheran Ambassador has been blessed this year by the donations received from individuals and congregations. As of September 30, 2024, we have raised 82% of our budgeted gifts! This publication is dependent on these donations, and we want to say thank you to those who have donated and continue to donate.

Over the last couple of years, we have seen higher production expenses due to inflation, which had caused us to go over budget. However, this year, we are currently under budget and are trending to finish out the year without a loss.

Along with gifts received, we are also funded by support from the other AFLC ministries. You can view the graph at left to see the source of our income and how much we need in gifts to end the year positively. Please continue to consider giving an annual donation to *The Lutheran Ambassador*. You can visit our website (aflc.org/lutheran-ambassador) for more information on donating.

—Katie Johnson, director of Business Management

PEOPLE & PLACES

AFLC Evangelism and Discipleship has launched its podcast “Living as a Disciple” on Spotify and its website (aflc.org/evangelism).

Members of **Lighthouse Church**, formerly named Lutheran Church of Roseau, Roseau, Minn., submitted a formal removal form from the AFLC congregational roster.

Pastor Don Gillespie, who served Zion Lutheran, Ashkum, Ill., has retired.

Pastor David W. Johnson has accepted a call as interim pastor at Grace Free Lutheran, Edinburgh, N.D.

Pastor David Lusk has accepted a call to serve Christian Free Lutheran, Wheatland, Iowa. He will start in early December.

Dawn Johnson, the executive secretary of the WMF, has announced plans to retire in December. Members of the WMF Board are seeking to fill this paid position. Contact Karen Peterson, president, for more information (wmfpres@gmail.com).



2025 Lutheran Ambassador schedule

Below is the 2025 schedule for *The Lutheran Ambassador*. Please be in prayer for each issue. Note the deadlines and special emphasis of each issue. If you have an idea regarding a general article, a certain issue, or have an interest in writing, please contact the editors. Email us at ruthg@aflc.org or call (763) 545-5631.

ISSUE DATE	DEADLINE	ISSUE THEME
January	December 2	The Gospels
February	December 16	Art
March	January 31	Biblical themes
April	February 28	Lent/Easter
May	March 31	Book Reviews
June	April 30	Missions
July	May 30	Church history
August	June 23	Conference Review
September	July 31	FLY Convention
October	August 29	Congregational Spotlights
November	September 29	Thanksgiving
December	October 31	Christmas

Please note, information regarding the Annual Conference, scheduled for June 11–14 at the Association Retreat Center, near Osceola, Wis., will be featured in the May issue, with a deadline of March 31. This issue will include the schedule, board and committee nominees, registration, and WMF Day schedule and registration. Other conference information will be printed as it is available, including registration, housing, and youth and children’s activities.

Support the AFLC’s magazine

The Lutheran Ambassador is free for all subscribers. Our ministry is subsidized by your gifts. Thank you! For information on giving, visit our website at aflc.org/lutheran-ambassador.

Book reviews sought for an upcoming issue in 2025

The May 2025 issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador* will feature book reviews. If you have read a recent release or a classic book that you think would inspire our readers and would be helpful tools for our church family, please contact us. And, if you are interested in reading and reviewing a book that fits one of these descriptions, let us know. You may email us at ruthg@aflc.org, or laeditor@aflc.org.

SEPTEMBER MEMORIALS

Bible College

Annette Fagerberg
Sharon Alt
Ruth Claus
Josh Molstre
Dennis Strand

Seminary

Josh Molstre
Marcella Sather

World Missions

Joanne Dahlin

General Fund

Ava Mead

WMF

Iona Saunders

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-September 30, 2024

FUND	REC'D IN SEPTEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% OF SUBSIDY	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$30,556	\$316,977	69	\$313,812
Evangelism	6,844	88,480	65	84,525
Youth Ministries	7,647	111,764	72	101,600
Parish Education	13,817	143,208	77	110,239
Seminary	13,271	203,851	71	198,972
Bible College	56,002	519,881	110	290,774
Home Missions	44,018	248,214	58	224,359
World Missions	48,363	303,902	63	270,095
Personal Support	51,183	597,925	77	544,287
TOTALS	\$271,800	\$2,534,201	75	\$2,138,663

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

Unchanging.

BY AMY SKOGERBOE

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

Fall can be hard. Nature throws down a glorious, colorful display; the old gives way to make room for the new; summer temps are dropping so that winter beauty and holiday anticipation can begin to rise; and yet ...

Fall is hard for so many of us, and at the core of that discomfort, I believe, is a human resistance to change. Grown children who still feel young leave home for the first time, transitions in schooling get underway, new jobs and ministries often begin, and the freedom of summer fades into structure and routine. What we have known or grown accustomed to is altered, sometimes for the good, and often just for the weird. Our rhythms are thrown off, the predictable is shook, and our confidence in what is well known is replaced by uncertainty in new endeavors.

Our family moved across the country this fall as my husband began pastoring in a new church. It's been simultaneously wonderful and deeply hard. We discover we are creatures of habit and comfort when God uproots us, yes? Unfamiliar faces and foreign roads rattle our status quo and stir anxious wonderings about our ability to adapt and restore a sense of belonging. Pastors' families know these feelings well, and I assume military families easily empathize. We get internally shaken.

In my mid-20s, I experienced the loss

of a grandparent for the first time. Having never faced the death of a family member, I felt my world shift profoundly. In the midst of that pain, I recall my Grandma James, a faithful and true believer, speaking comfort and soul assurance to me about the passing of loved ones being like leaves dying and falling from the trees in the fall. God purposed it. There is beauty in it, and there is a certain sadness; both are of God's hand and by his design. It happens according to his timing, and it is meant to be.

As an adult who has faced profound change both through loss and incredible new blessings and callings, I find myself returning to the foundational truth of the unchanging nature of God as the “anchor of my soul.” The sun rises and the sun sets, but the name of the Lord stands forever. When my sense of being grounded is rocked, the character of God and the reality of his presence in my life hold fast. As he moves our family, increasing the physical distance between us and those we've grown to love, I am firmly reminded that we are never alone, and we are always fully known.

During one of my greatest moments of felt anxiety over the pressures and changes of life, I reached out in desperation to a Christian sister and mentor who spoke words I'll never forget. Faith Nelson took me by the shoulders and addressed the fear that was flooding as tears down my face. “Amy, you are not okay right now, but you *will be*. I know that to be true not because I know who you are, but because I know whose you are. I know the One who

holds you.” I will never forget how deeply that truth poured over my anxious heart and scrambled mind like water over a raging fire. It stilled me then, and 20 years later, as I feel that familiar stir of anxiety and uncertainty threaten to pervade my thoughts and emotions again, I speak it back to myself, and I also speak it to you.

Friend, what change in your life is shaking you? If in vulnerability you find yourself acknowledging that in this moment you are simply not okay, I speak to you the words of comfort and truth that were spoken to me. You may not be okay in this moment, but I know the God who holds you, and because of him, I can tell you that you will stand again on solid ground. Your life and your legacy are founded on the Rock. Your today, your tomorrow, and your future may look different than what you expected or hoped for, and all that you have known in an earthly sense may be stripped away or simply changed. And yet, I say to you: You, my friend, will be so much better than okay. You will live the life, walk the roads, and have the relationships that he has purposed for you. Your future is utterly secured. Ultimately, you and I both will have the eternal peace that surpasses all the fear, pain, and unknowns we face here, and we will know fully and be fully known. Change will no longer cause us anxiety as we live our forever in the presence of the One who never changes.

Skogerboe is a member of Veritas Church, Prescott Valley, Ariz.

BUILDING THE BASE \ \ Part 6

The declarative “is” of Jesus.

BY PASTOR J. CHRISTIAN ANDREWS

In October 1529, Martin Luther wrote on a table with a piece of chalk, “*hoc est corpus meum*” (This is my body). He covered the writing with a tablecloth and awaited the anticipated moment when he would unbudgingly declare his allegiance to a plain reading of the words Jesus spoke in the upper room, instituting the Lord’s Supper. (Marbug Colloquy, Marburg Castle, Hesse, Germany)

Our desire to complicate issues is a product of our old nature demanding more of God than he reveals or, like Adam and Eve, questioning the truth of his Word. Understanding what happens at the Lord’s Supper is about receiving his words in faith: “This is My body; this is My blood; poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

A common misinterpretation of the words is based on a misapplication of “is.” We’ve learned that a metaphor is a comparison, often using the word “is,” so we assume Jesus’ words are metaphorical. Metaphors begin with an unknown, for

example, God. The unknown is compared to the known. Its purpose is to help us understand the unknown, for example, a fortress. When we say, “God is our fortress,” we are comparing the unknown, God, to the known, fortress. We are saying that God is like a fortress, providing security and shelter. Jesus did not make such a comparison. He started with two knowns: bread and the cup (the beverage in the cup). He did not make a comparison to help us know what bread and wine are. Instead, he used the verb “is” to declare a statement of fact, to show existence.

Since the clauses “this is My body” and “this is My blood” are not metaphorically structured, we are left to simply accept that Jesus meant what he said. The bread is his body. The cup (its content) is his blood. Beyond that, we need no further explanation. Yes, we want to find words to elaborate and define exactly what he meant, but there is no need for that. Jesus said, “Take and eat.” When we do, we are eating

his body. Jesus said, “Drink from it.” When we do, we are drinking his blood.

Jesus also said that the cup “is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” We eat and drink firmly believing this beautiful promise. The Lord’s Supper is not a meal to nourish our bodies. It is meal that brings healing to our souls. We receive the broken body of Jesus and his shed blood because we are sinners in need of a Savior. Eating the bread and drinking the cup in union with Christ’s Word received by faith result in the gracious forgiveness of our sins.

One of the beauties of our faith is the freedom to live in the mysteries. We don’t need to explain away Jesus’ words. All we do is apply the gift of faith he gives through his Word and believe the simplicity of his words. “This is My body.” “This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

Andrews, a member of the editorial board, serves Immanuel Lutheran, Springfield, Mo.