

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

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Greetings and Blessings in the Name of Our Lord, Jesus Christ!

I must admit it is a daunting task to embark on the road of writing these newsletters every two months, though, I have actually come to enjoy them. It is much like Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," although, I don't fancy myself much of a lover of poetry. This is an opportunity to discuss topics in such a way that ignores the ways of the world and when the road diverges, to take the one less traveled by. As Confessional Lutherans, we often find ourselves on that very road.

The other way is beaten down, trodden underfoot by the feet of mainstream "Christianity." It's easier, less pitfalls and potholes to trip you up and a smoother ride all the way to the end. It has always been interesting to me how the devil takes what should be the easy path and makes it look more difficult. Our road is harder because the devil throws more traps in our way. The Word of God terrifies him and forces him to find ways to upend our reliance on it, to turn back and go down the seemingly "easier" road that is more traveled. The irony in that is the fact that the road the adversary seeks to send you down is the more difficult one.

He seeks to send you down the road of "you" instead of the windy, pitfall-filled road of Christ. Following Christ is difficult. It is not glamorous and easy as the modern church would have you believe. Matthew 5:11, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account." Luke 21:12, "But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake." Persecution and oppression are our lot for being faithful to the Lord, for being faithful to His Word alone. And that is where the devil loves to lurk. He uses

the false church and the governments of the world to accuse and oppress those in the one true faith, to lead them to believe that Christ hasn't done enough for them and they better get their act together and "step it up."

Luther points this out in the Large Catechism, where he writes about Baptism:

From this fact everyone may readily conclude that Baptism is a far higher work than any work performed by a man or a saint. For what work can we do that is greater than God's work? But here the devil is busy to fool us with false appearances and lead us away from God's work to our own works. (LC IV, 10-11)

The Reformation, which we will observe on October 26th, is that bumpy, difficult road that the devil sought to lead us away from, and still tries with all his might to pull us off course. It is easier for human reason to understand its own works and appropriate them unto the self than it is for one to accept that Christ's one vicarious work is sufficient for all men. Therein lies the point Luther makes above.

Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, our Lutheran (dare I say true Christian faith) motto, has nothing to do with ourselves and our works. Every ounce of the doctrine of justification is about Christ and His work—His willingness to die for the sins of the world. In the world we live in today which has made the "church" all about "self-identity" and emotion, the work of Christ takes a back seat. In the face of the devil's deceit that this is the way the church has gone and you better get on the bus or you'll find your church empty, we must have the courage of the Confessors as they stood before the emperor at Augsburg. We declare

the doctrine on which the church stands or falls, and we will stand along with them and the true Church. They declared on that June 25th afternoon in 1530:

[We] teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight (Romans 3 and 4). (AC IV)

The road less traveled by is the easiest one to walk, but that doesn't mean it is easy to endure. The "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," as another possibly famous poet writes (Shakespeare), are constantly hurled upon us by the devil and his demons. His goal is singular: despair you to the point of fear and turn you around to the harder path that only seems easier. To the great deceiver we have only "one little word" to say, which we will joyously sing of in Luther's hymn *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*—LIAR. That one little word fells the evil one and all his power. For the truth of God's Word destroys all lies and deceit, and that is why we will cling to it until the day we die, or the Lord returns on the clouds of heaven with all His angels, to bear us home to our eternal destination.

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference. (Robert Frost)

Yours in Christ,



Politics and Faith

Politics and faith have recently become more intertwined than any time in recent memory. Following the tragic assassination of Charlie Kirk, a well-known conservative political activist and outspoken Christian,

the idea of there being no separation between faith and politics has become ever-growing. In an online video that I watched recently, a well-known celebrity who supported Charlie's mission posted the Monday following his death that if your pastor didn't mention Charlie in his sermon on Sunday, then you have an obligation as a Christian to leave that church. This, I hope for obvious reasons, deeply troubled me, and thus has become the subject of my article this newsletter, as well as the subject of my Book of Concord study with the Elders.

A few things have to be differentiated in this discussion. As an individual, I have followed Charlie Kirk's platform for about a year or so, watching the videos he posts of his debates on college campuses and such. I found them to be engaging and politically well-thought out. It was a fantastic way to engage people in healthy debate in a society that desperately needs to reopen its lines of communication with one another. Charlie did an incredible job of presenting his faith as the foundation of his political beliefs as well. He would frequently reference Jesus being the Savior of the world, and would very often speak about the need to preach the Gospel as the way of salvation if we hope to better society and overcome the scourge of evil that has overtaken it.

Your faith should found your worldly views, political or otherwise, because it is the foundation of who you are. After all, it is no longer you who live, but Christ who lives in you (Galatians 2:20). You should take a stand against abortion because it is a violation of God's command to not murder and to care for the little ones to whom belong the kingdom of heaven. You should take a stand against homosexuality because it violates the created order of man and woman and the institution of marriage by God as being between one man and one woman. You should condemn the false ideology of transgenderism (gender dysphoria) because it is a violation of the truth of God's infallibility, that He would somehow create someone incorrectly and they need to fix themselves, denying that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14)."

However, that pendulum does not swing both ways. Your political stances and viewpoints should never be the foundation of your faith or what guides it. Neither is the Church a political grandstand to further the political ideology of the conservative movement. The Church of God is made up of individuals who are

encouraged to engage in the political sphere, but the church is not called to be political. It is commanded to preach the Gospel and rightly administer the Sacraments. The Confessors knew this to be true, and, at a time when the church was very much engaged in the politics of the day, they condemned such blurring of the lines between church and state. In the Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII on Church Authority, they write, “There has been great controversy about the power of the bishops, in which some have terribly confused the power of the Church with the power of the State...But they have also tried to transfer the kingdoms of this world to the Church by taking the empire away from the emperor (1-2).”

The authority of the Church is not a weapon to be used for the betterment of this world. The authority of the Church rests in the command of Christ in Matthew 16:19 when He gave the authority of the Keys to His Church. The following statements from the Confessors in AC XXVIII confirm this truth:

“...the authority of the bishops—according to the Gospel—is a power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments (5).”

“This authority is exercised only by teaching or preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments, either to the many or to individuals, according to their calling (8).”

“Therefore, the Church has the authority to grant eternal things and exercises this authority only by the ministry of the Word. So it does not interfere with civil government anymore than the art of singing interferes with civil government. For civil government deals with other things than the Gospel does (10).”

The Church of God concerns itself with eternal things—the things of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a place of peace and comfort where the things of this world cannot despair the believer. No matter the volatility of the society in which we live, the people of God can always come to His house to receive His divine gift of forgiveness by faith in Jesus Christ. And that truth is ever constant, never changing, and always sure. THAT is what the Church has been commanded to teach, preach, and confess. If your pastor preached anything other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the source of your salvation, taught anything other than faith in the forgiveness of sins that is undeserved and yet freely given, and failed to distribute that forgiveness through

God’s chosen means of His Holy Supper and Baptism then He, not I, encourages you to leave that church. Run to a church where the font is the source of life in Him, where the table of the Lord is the source of forgiveness in the very real presence of His body and blood, and where the Word of the Lord is preached in its truth and purity.

That is what you will find here at Trinity Lutheran Church every time we gather around Word and Sacraments, and we gather around those means of grace EVERY time we gather for worship. That is what I have been called here to do, and what I vowed before my Lord to do as His under shepherd. No political beliefs I have within myself or influence from outside pressures will ever change that charge. The Gospel will be preached. The Sacraments will be rightly administered. Comfort and peace in the forgiveness of sins is offered freely in these means, and therein lies the charge of the Church. What happened to Charlie Kirk, whom I believe had true faith and now resides in the heavenly glory with his Lord and Savior, is a tragedy of sin in the world. As a Christian who lives in this world, I condemn that political act of violence, and my faith forms that foundation. My charge as your pastor, though, is to preach Law and Gospel, not to condemn political violence from the pulpit on behalf of the Church. Again, the Confessors, “[The bishops] have no other authority according to the Gospel than the authority to forgive sins, to judge doctrine, to reject doctrines contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude from the communion of the Church wicked people, whose wickedness is known.” In the words of Luther, “Here I stand. I will not be moved,” because that is the Church’s charge from the one true God.

Services

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite national holidays. It’s not the gluttonous gorging of food in general that does it for me. It’s the turkey. My standard comment is that turkey is a “religion” in our household. When I was growing up, my dad would be awake at 5:30am every Thanksgiving, and the sole purpose of waking up that early was to begin preparing the turkey. When I was about 13 or 14 years old, I started waking up with him, to spend time with him, of course, but also to begin learning the art of the Thanksgiving turkey. I

won't bore you with the secrets of proper turkey preparation (or condemn you for doing it wrong), but, long story short, I love Thanksgiving. It is a reminder to spend time with your family and treasure those moments, like mine, sipping wine (yes, strange breakfast, I know) and preparing turkey with my dad while the rest of the house sleeps.

Thanksgiving, as excellent as it is and as I stated at the beginning, is a national holiday. It is not a church feast/festival like Epiphany, Ascension, and more are. It wasn't until 1941, when Thanksgiving was officially made a national holiday that a Thanksgiving Day (or Eve) service was added to the Lutheran church calendar. Since I was a young kid, I have always been irked by its inclusion in the calendar alongside such feasts of importance as those mentioned above, Easter, Christmas, the Circumcision of our Lord (more on that shortly), Pentecost, and more. National holidays do not deserve observance in our church service calendar. If we are to abide by such a philosophy then we must have a July 4th service, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Texas Independence Day, and all the others as well. There are too many other worthy festivals that get lost in the calendar that we ought to be celebrating instead.

With that being said, after consulting the Board of Elders and gaining their agreement, we will be forgoing the Thanksgiving Eve service effective immediately. I did not make this decision lightly and it was done with much prayer and consideration. The other side of this is that, in the future (not immediate), I would like to consider adding 3 additional services to our calendar. We currently celebrate Epiphany and Ascension on their closest Sunday. I am considering celebrating these significant feasts/festivals on their actual day. We would keep the congregation dinners associated with these festivals on the nearest Sunday, as we do currently. Epiphany is always on January 6th, and Ascension is 40 days after Easter (always on a Thursday). These are major feasts of the Church and deserve the same reverence and attention as we give Easter, Christmas, and Pentecost. The other member of what I would call the "Big 6" is the Circumcision of our Lord on January 1st (8 days after His birth). This is the first time our Savior shed His blood on our behalf, fulfilling the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham in Genesis 17.

If you have any questions or feedback about the Thanksgiving service or the potential of adding these other 3, I welcome the discussion and look forward to talking to you about it. As always, these are being considered with much prayer and consideration for how this affects all aspects of the congregation. Please don't hesitate to reach out. Blessings!

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article IV – The Gospel

We will now return to the Gospel, which not merely in one way, gives us counsel and aid against sin; for God is superabundantly rich [and liberal] in His grace [and goodness]. First, through the spoken Word by which the forgiveness of sins is preached [He commands to be preached] in the whole world; which is the peculiar office of the Gospel. Secondly, through Baptism. Thirdly, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar. Fourthly, through the power of the keys, and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, Matt. 18:20: Where two or three are gathered together, etc.

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article V – Baptism

Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in the water, commanded by His institution, or, as Paul says, a washing in the Word; as also Augustine says: Let the Word come to the element, and it becomes a Sacrament. And for this reason we do not hold with Thomas and the monastic preachers [or Dominicans] who forget the Word (God's institution) and say that God has imparted to the water a spiritual power, which through the water washes away sin. Nor [do we agree] with Scotus and the Barefooted monks [Minorites or Franciscan monks], who teach that, by the assistance of the divine will, Baptism washes away sins, and that this ablution occurs only through the will of God, and by no means through the Word or water.

Of the baptism of children we hold that children ought to be baptized. For they belong to the promised redemption made through Christ, and the Church should administer it [Baptism and the announcement of that promise] to them.

Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article VI – The Sacrament of the Altar

Of the Sacrament of the Altar we hold that bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ, and are given and received not only by the godly, but also by wicked Christians.

And that not only one form is to be given. [For] we do not need that high art [specious wisdom] which is to teach us that under the one form there is as much as under both, as the sophists and the Council of Constance teach. For even if it were true that there is as much under one as under both, yet the one form only is not the entire ordinance and institution [made] ordained and commanded by Christ. And we especially condemn and in God's name execrate those who not only omit both forms but also quite autocratically [tyrannically] prohibit, condemn, and blaspheme them as heresy, and so exalt themselves against and above Christ, our Lord and God [opposing and placing themselves ahead of Christ], etc.

As regards transubstantiation, we care nothing about the sophistical subtlety by which they teach that bread and wine leave or lose their own natural substance, and that there remain only the appearance and color of bread, and not true bread. For it is in perfect agreement with Holy Scriptures that there is, and remains, bread, as Paul himself calls it, 1 Cor. 10:16: The bread which we break. And 1 Cor. 11:28: Let him so eat of that bread.

Reformation 2017: What's at Stake? The Same Thing as Always

by John Preus
April 26, 2017

What's at stake in the 500th year of the Lutheran Reformation? The same thing as always: The Gospel. It's attacked everywhere. But if we lose Christ, we lose everything. That's why we risk everything to defend the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith in Christ alone.

How is this battle fought? On what front do we find the false doctrine of works-righteousness seeking to replace the doctrine of salvation freely offered in the obedience of Christ? Where does this error first begin to creep into the Christian mind and congregation?

Long before the doctrine of justification was officially condemned by the pope in the 16th century, and even before it practically ceased to be preached centuries earlier, the foundation of all truth had already been undermined. Scripture was no longer taught to be clear. Popes and councils had to determine its meaning. Christians began to look to philosophers and academics in order to learn what in the world the Bible taught. Behind all the political carefulness of retaining the status quo of scholarship and authority was a deafening agnosticism of what God's word actually meant.

Luther made his discovery of the Gospel by freeing the plain meaning of the Bible from those who claimed the Bible was unclear without committees and popes adding something to it. Luther, by the Holy Spirit, was able to learn the Gospel and preach it boldly by refusing to let God's Word be treated as up for interpretation by those who assume the authority to do so. He learned the Gospel by first securing his footing on the Bible.

The article upon which the Church stands or falls is the doctrine of justification. It is the chief article of Christian doctrine. For a Christian to imagine that he can stand on the article of justification while not also standing on the sure and clear Word of God is for him to sink into the mud of worldly confusion and pride until the Gospel becomes something other than what the Bible says it is.

Popes and councils, being composed of sinful human beings like ourselves, can (and do) err, as we all do in our earthly lives. God cannot. God's Word must therefore be known to be clear, lest we depend on something else. The Gospel is necessarily at stake. The Holy Spirit is no skeptic. He makes assertions. His assertions do not always sit well with our sinful flesh. But God speaks precisely in order that our sinful flesh might be crucified and give way to the assenting confidence of the new man who delights in the clarity of truth.

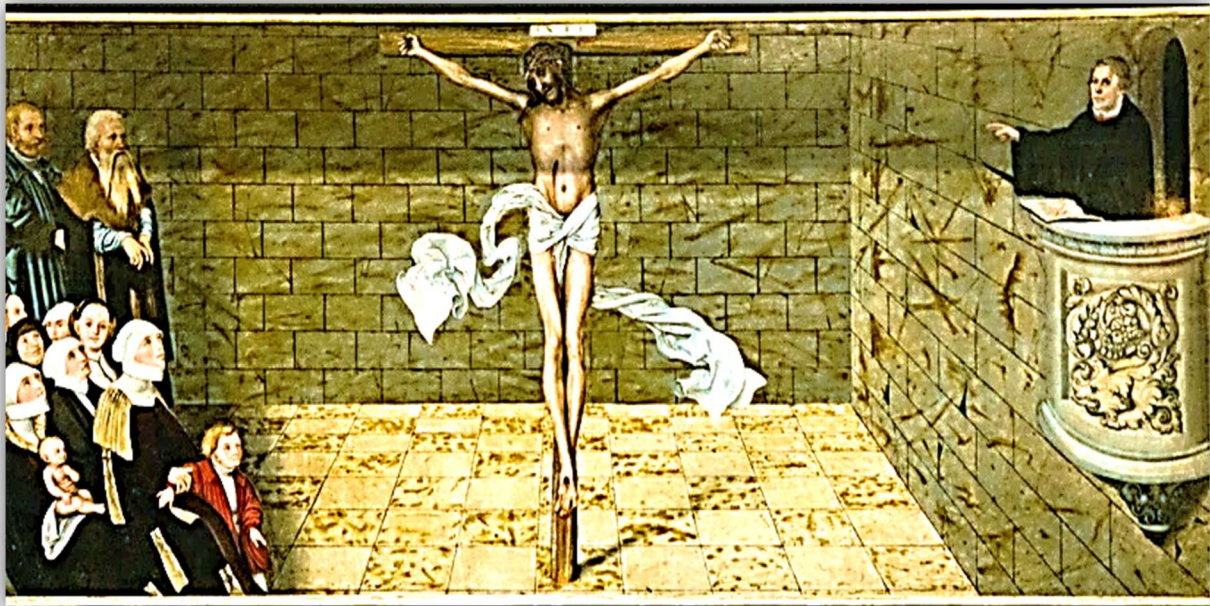
God has spoken. And we treasure His Word as our great heritage. We learn to know Him as our Father

through the grace of our Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit enlightens us by the words of the Bible and unites us together in no other way. If what He says ever seems unclear, this is our fault and reason for us to penitently implore Him for understanding even as we seek to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. What we must not do, since both history and Christian piety teach us not to, is appeal to human authority to settle our disagreements. Rather than cede authority to any human court or committee, we must commend ourselves to our mutual submission to God's clear word

until we are able to confess together with conviction that we have been taught by God.

The Rev. John Preus is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Clinton, Iowa.

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Deadline for all articles is the 15th of the odd months.

All articles must be approved by Pastor Josh Killion.

Articles with no author are written by him.

OCTOBER 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM	9	10	11
12 PARSONAGE INFO MEETING	13	14	15 NO BIBLE STUDY PASTOR AT ULMA	16	17	18
19 RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS	20	21	22 BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM	23	24	25
26 REFORMATION DINNER NOON	27	28	29 BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM	30	31	



NOVEMBER 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3	4 ELDERS MEETING 7:00 PM	5 BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM	6	7	8
9	10	11 VOTERS MEETING 7:00 PM	12 BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM	13	14	15
16 ELDER-LED SERVICE, NO COMMUNION	17	18	19 BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM	20	21	22 TRINITY RANGE DAY
23	24	25	26 BIBLE STUDY 7:00 PM	27	28	29
30						

