

The Concordia Lutheran



“The Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35
“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105

Vol. LXIV

September-October 2020

Nos. 9-10

By God's grace,
we celebrate our
Reformation
Concordia!

— 1 Corinthians 1:10

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932**.

To show, **on the basis of Scripture**, what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead Godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or false church body, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "perfectly joined *together in the same mind and in the same judgment*."

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.



Now that the kids are back in school... kinda...

*“Ye fathers, ...bring up your children in the nurture
and admonition of the Lord.” —Ephesians 6:4*

“For all its faults,” a teacher was recently heard to say, “the American educational system is, without a doubt, one of the great blessings of our country and one that is envied by many other nations. After all, without a good secular education, real success is hard to come by in this world. Nothing is more important to our children.” While Luther himself valued secular education and, in particular, training in the arts, in the use of language, and in music, he also made it clear that such secular training alone is wholly inadequate to equip a child for life—even for life only here in this world. Of course, in Luther’s day, there was no such thing, properly-speaking, as “public education” in which every child was sent to school to learn his “three R’s” and to be equipped to take his place “as a functioning member of society;” but neither was there a purely secular education devoid of religious training. Most schools, including colleges and universities, were operated by the church; and, depending upon the confession of the sponsoring church or denomination, the child who had an opportunity to go to school was also trained in the church’s doctrine and practice. Such a “parochial” education was therefore of real value to a child only if he were taught the precious truths of God’s Word, but of real detriment to those who were brought up in error.

Sadly, for several years now, no congregation in our fellowship has been able to establish and maintain a Christian day school, in which the teaching and application of God’s Word in its purity is the number one priority, and where the secular subjects, taught by competent and dedicated Christian teachers, are appropriately relegated to secondary importance; therefore, all the children of our beloved Conference must attend public schools in their respective localities or be home-schooled by their parents (as is legally permitted in virtually all states today). And yet, regardless of the school setting in which our children are educated—even “virtually” on-line during the pandemic we are experiencing—we who are parents (and particularly the fathers) still bear the primary responsibility under God to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” This means that we not only have the duty of teaching them the objective truths of God’s Word day in and day out (Deuteronomy 6:6-7), of applying those precious truths to their faith and life, and of seeing to it that they are regularly and consistently in the House of God for instruction and for joint worship and praise of God; but we must also warn them of spiritual pitfalls, snares and traps that are laid before them by the world (Matthew 18:6-7) to distract them from the truth, to pervert the truth in their understanding, and to supplant the truth altogether with the chaff of human reason (Jeremiah 23:28).

But let no one be deceived into thinking that having his children in a Christian day school will “insulate” them from the world, or that home-schooling them himself will prevent worldly ideas and perversions from touching and affecting them! The perversions are resident, first of all, in the Old Adam of sin, which is active in every one of our children and even in us who are their parents; and they are ever-present in society round about them, whether in school, on the playground, logged onto the Internet, or watching television. We as parents cannot monitor our children’s every waking moment, BUT we can and must “bring them up,” yes, “train up [our children] in the way [they] should go” (Proverbs 22:6), so that by their skillful use of God’s Word they “have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14) both NOW and when they are OLDER and no longer under our authority and immediate oversight in the home.

Consider the following as only a few examples of perversions that demand our attention and concerning which we

should warn and educate our children in plain terms so that they are alert to them and can answer regarding them:

1) The public school teacher is taught to regard every child as fundamentally good by nature and perfectible by education and by a proper social environment. The secular world, therefore, denies both original and actual sin, hinges “right” and “wrong” not upon the precepts of God’s Word but upon the alterable laws of men, upon subjective judgements on the basis of motive and circumstance, and upon the end result of an action rather than the action itself. Thus the end is made to justify the means in many cases, and “situation ethics” rules the day. What we as Christians judge to be “*sins*,” that is, transgressions of God’s holy Law (I John 3:4), the world regards as “unwise decisions,” “mistakes,” and “poor judgment.” Moreover, evil thoughts are not judged to be “wrong” by secular society, only overt acts that harm someone else.

2) The secular educator, under the influence of the philosophy of John Dewey and others, considers the child as nothing more than a “higher order” animal-with-potential, evolved from lower forms of animal life and primitive savagery, but now, together with the whole world, its institutions, and its religions, as having reached an advanced stage of physical and social evolution and as progressing toward a future state of near-perfection in society. All a child needs, say the secularists, is the opportunity to develop his potential.

3) Public education, while intended to be neutral in matters of religion, pushes Universalism, namely, the view that one religion is as good as another; that all people should mutually “respect” one another’s faith; that “religious freedom” in the civil sphere implies “religious tolerance” in the spiritual sphere; and therefore that any emphasis upon differences in creeds, engagement in religious controversy, and antagonism toward error in Christian apologetics constitutes “intolerant bigotry” and is therefore “un-American.” “After all,” they say, “there’s a great deal of good in ALL religions.” This is basically the religion of the lodges and of the Scouting organizations: Antitrinitarian Universalism.

4) The public school, anchored in the law and in “civic righteousness,” promotes “character building” by self-motivated positive behavior. The child is taught to observe outward morality because it is “the right thing to do” in an orderly society and is essential to self-worth and self-esteem, to social and material success, to respect from others, and to the betterment of mankind. Moreover, to be “community-minded,” empathetic, compassionate, helpful, and altruistic as a member of society is what makes a person “good” and truly “human” and distinguishes him from sociopaths, psychopaths and amoral beasts.

5) Because of its “ethical” philosophy that equates “wrong” with “harm done” to others, the secularist denies that “*lust*” and “*covetousness*” are evil (Romans 7:7). Moreover, he minimizes the seriousness of “victimless crime” and thus refuses to condemn as intrinsically evil such abominations before God as homosexuality, fornication, pornography, adultery, drunkenness, cursing and other filthy language, witchcraft in its various forms, elective abortion, and even suicide (among many other sins).

6) In its effort to stem the rising tide of what used to be called “illegitimate” teenage pregnancies (now non-judgmentally called “unplanned” pregnancies), public education has also taken upon itself the role of teaching children, even very young children, about “human sexuality;” and educators express the hope that what they call “proper information” about sexual physiology will permit children and young unmarried adults to make “wise” and “appropriate choices” with regard to sexual behavior. And, although some schools still teach and strongly advocate abstinence as appropriate behavior and the only “sure” method of preventing “unplanned” pregnancy, yet, at the very same time, they disseminate information about birth control, so-called “safe sex,” and even elective abortion to address the problem. Premarital (and extramarital) sexual activity is never censured on MORAL grounds (as it was for hundreds of years even in public education); but, much like homosexuality, it is accepted as a legitimate “choice” of behavior, the unpleasant “outcomes” of which (illegitimacy, disease, and even death) society must seek to control. Christian parents MUST resist and actively counteract this amorality by training up their children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6) on the basis of God’s Word, normed by His Law, motivated by His Gospel, and fruited to His glory (Ephesians 5:3-4; I Thessalonians 4:1-7; I Corinthians 10:31).

Now we cannot (and would not) expect the public schools to teach our children what we know WE should teach them from the Word of God; for in a pluralistic society the dominant denomination in the community would then control what is inculcated in the classroom (as at Luther's time). Therefore we are grateful that, by God's grace, the Scriptural principle of the separation of church and state is still upheld by our courts as integral to our religious liberty according to the First Amendment of our Federal Constitution. Nevertheless, in the context of our present discussion, it is not the "establishment" of Roman Catholicism that we fear, nor the teaching of Reformed theology in the classroom, nor the posting of the Ten Commandments on the walls of our schools, nor even the practice of publicly-mandated devotional exercises at the beginning of the school day (for these have been ruled against time and time again); but we need to be on guard against the teaching of indifferentism regarding religion, of Universalism as a "world view," of secular humanism as the accepted "operational philosophy," of situation ethics as the standard of right and wrong, and of religious unionism (or ecumenism) as the practice of all of these rolled into one! We as Christian parents have our work cut out for us! For our children's sake, out of concern for their immortal souls, and in cheerful obedience to the ordinance of Him who first loved us and desires that we be strengthened and preserved steadfast in His Word and faith unto our end, let us not "*provoke [our] children to wrath*" against us for our indifference and carelessness, "*but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4), so that "*when [they] are old, [they] will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6), all for the sake of "*Him which died for [us] and rose again*" (II Corinthians 5:15b).

— D. T. M.

The Marks of True Concordia in Christ's Church

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." — I Corinthians 1:10

As we celebrate each year on October 31st the Festival of the Reformation in gratitude to God for the great blessings He bestowed upon His Church through the work of Martin Luther, notably Luther's insistence on the so-called "Formal Principle" of the Reformation, namely, *Scripture Alone* (Ephesians 2:20, etc.), we also recognize that, unless the "formal principle" is only lip service to the Holy Scripture as "the only source and standard of Christian doctrine and practice," we must "*keep the unity of the spirit*" (Ephesians 4:3) by "*hold[ing] fast the form of sound words*" (II Timothy 1:13) in its truth and purity.

Strange as it may seem, our title-text is seldom if ever cited with regard to "Christian unity" — *Google* it once. And yet, in the clarity that only the Holy Ghost can provide through His precious Word, this text perfectly describes both external and internal *unity* — true CONCORDIA — among those who are "*brethren*."

The Apostle Paul begins his first letter to the church at Corinth with a prayer of *thanksgiving* — thanks to God on behalf of the congregation there for the rich measure of His grace given to them in Christ Jesus. For that grace had enriched them as Christians. We read that they had been enriched by the Lord "*in all utterance*" — they were enabled to speak up boldly, confidently and fearlessly concerning their faith. And they had been enriched also "*in all knowledge*" so that they knew what they were talking about, were convinced of its saving truth, and could speak authoritatively "*as the oracles of God*" (I Peter 4:11). In fact, these Corinthians had been so enriched by the wondrous grace of God in them that Paul tells us *they were not lacking in any gift* (I Corinthians 1:7).

But now as we get to the verse upon which we focus in this article, we find that, although these Christians had been so enriched by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, they were still far from perfect. Their flesh was still actively warring against their spirit and tempting them to disunity, to divisions, to heterodoxy. And so the Apostle Paul had to *admonish* them for their *lack* of true unity, as this was evident in how they spoke and in the opinions they advocated. It is this admonition of the Apostle in which we see the marks of true Christian unity, evident in perfect agreement in the doctrines of God's Holy Word and in perfect uniformity of practice, that is, the consistent *application* of doctrine to our faith and life. For it is purity of both doctrine and practice which marks *true Christian unity*, true *CONCORDIA*, among brethren.

Having just expressed his thanks to God for the richness of His grace to these Corinthian Christians, and having at the same time enumerated for their benefit various spiritual blessings which had been bestowed upon them, Paul now pleads with them not to throw away their priceless pearl of unity. "*Now I beseech you*," he says. "*I beg you!*" Note the urgency in this fervent plea: If you truly want to keep the "*unity of the Spirit*" (Ephesians 4:3) in which you have been enriched by the manifold grace of God in Christ Jesus; if you want that unity also to "*shine [forth]*" to others, so that they too may glorify God for it, then *please HEED this urgent admonition!*

Notice that the Apostle does not command or threaten them with the clenched fist of the Law, but he rather appeals to the Corinthians (and also to us, for whose learning this is written) by the motivation of the Gospel, urging them and us to consider as Christians how *disunity* and *division* in the church grieves our dear Lord and Savior. That is the motivation to which a Christian responds in his New Man of faith; for the Bible tells us that we who are under grace, that is, in a true *state of grace*, are not "*under the Law*," and that, instead of acting out of fear, "*the love of Christ constraineth (or forces) us*" to do God's will gladly, from the heart.

Moreover, the Apostle calls the Corinthians "*brethren*." They were already in true Godpleasing fellowship together in "*the unity of the Spirit*;" but this blessed fellowship was being threatened by those who, even *occasionally* or *casually*, spoke contrary to the true doctrine of God's Word. Therefore Paul lovingly addresses them as "*brethren*" to gain them from such lapses in unity, so that true one-mindedness, true *CONCORDIA*, may be preserved.

And finally, the Apostle introduces his admonition "*by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ*." This was not just some idle phrase or optimistic whim, nor was it the expression merely of a goal to strive for. But the use of our Savior's Name as authority for this admonition shows that it is indeed His holy will that His Name be *hallowed among us* by the teaching of His Word in its truth and purity and by our living according to it as the children of God (Cf. the *First Petition* of the Lord's Prayer, Catechism Q/A 219). For false doctrine (even in so-called "non-fundamentals") and wishy-washy, inconsistent practice does nothing to hallow God's Name but only profanes it! And we pray that our heavenly Father will ever preserve us from such profanity of His precious Name!

Now the substance of the admonition itself: Paul says, "*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing*." All the brethren are to "*speak the same thing*." —What thing? Since these words are written in Jesus' Name, we go to Him as the Authority for the clear-cut answer and hear Him say in John 8:31, "*If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed*." And Peter adds in his first epistle, "*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*" (I Peter 4:11), that is, in accordance with God's Holy Word. For *SCRIPTURE ALONE* is the perfect measuring stick of doctrine. All other speaking, contrary to or supplementary to the Word of God, is "*teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matthew 15:9), "*profane and vain babblings*" (I Timothy 6:20) which "*eat like a cancer*" (II Timothy 2:16-17) to destroy the precious "*unity of the Spirit*" (Ephesians 4:3).

But can Christians in this life really and truly "*speak the same thing*"? Aren't we allowed some latitude to digress here and there in "liberty" because of an "honest" difference of opinion, or even because of a weakness in our flesh?? This is precisely what the "loose," liberal compromisers and accommodationists in church circles today will throw at you when you speak of real unity in doctrine. The answer, of course, must be a resounding "NO!" For the Savior's Word allows no such thing as "latitude" to veer off the straight course into the by-ways of error. "*If ye continue in*

My Word,” says Jesus, “*ye shall know the truth*” (John 8:31-32). And that goes equally the other way around: If you don’t continue in Jesus’ Word, you won’t know the truth, you won’t be sure of anything, but you will be like children in a paper boat on a breezy pond, “*tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they [greedy wolves] lie in wait to deceive*” (Ephesians 4:14). Through Jeremiah, the Lord says: “*He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word faithfully*,” (23:28) “*...that ye all speak the same thing*,” says Paul in our title-text. Yes, true unity among “*brethren*,” though essentially a matter of the heart, is *recognizable* by clear and unmistakable oneness in doctrine and in the unwavering profession of the same, the “*fruits*” by which the Savior Himself teaches us to discern between true and false prophets, saying, “*By their fruits ye shall know them*” (Matthew 7:20).

And the purpose for which “*brethren*” are all to “*speak the same thing*” now follows, as Paul continues: “*...that there be no divisions among you*.” Divisions are splits, cracks, and gaps in the unity. As soon as they appear, the unity is destroyed, just as a fine piece of china or crystal becomes worthless when it is chipped or cracked. What causes such divisions or splits among Christians? Those who like to “go with the flow” of do-it-yourself doctrine nowadays accuse YOU and ME of causing divisions in outward Christendom because we, by God’s grace, are completely “unbending” and “inflexible” in our stand on the Word of Truth. But what does God’s Word say about the cause of divisions? Paul writes to the Romans: “*Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them*” (16:17). Who is the cause of divisions and offenses? He is the false teacher who departs from the “*doctrine which [we] have learned*” from the Holy Scriptures. If indeed he ever did, he no longer serves the Lord Jesus Christ, but his own belly — his own personal and selfish agenda, and fulfils the purpose of the devil. —Perfect unity, on the other hand, has its model in the perfect unity of God Himself, for the Lord Jesus prayed to His heavenly Father for the unity of His disciples —including you and me— saying in John 17: “*That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee*.” THAT is the true unity, the true CONCORDIA, without any divisions, splits or gaps, in which the Holy Spirit will preserve also us by His grace, when we cling in *uncompromising loyalty* to His precious Word!

But not only is oneness in doctrine and in its faithful profession a mark of true unity, but also perfect uniformity in practice is essential, lest we belie the confession of our lips with the very opposite in application. In this sense, the old adage holds true that “*actions speak louder than words*.” This does not mean that a kind of “Christian perfectionism” is taught in this text; rather, just the contrary. Note first of all the Apostle’s words themselves: “*...but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*.” Oneness in mind and oneness in judgment (or opinion) has the very same source or fountainhead as oneness in doctrine and profession: The *perfect, infallible, and all-sufficient* Word of our God and Lord. The only way that doctrine can be different from practice (that is, simply-put, the consistent *application* of doctrine to our faith and life) —the only way these could be at variance with one another is if there is a conflict between what a person says and what he does. Either the profession of his mouth is shown to be a *sham*, a *lie*, and an empty *smokescreen*, OR his conquering flesh has defeated the willingness of the spirit to put his actions where his mouth has been, and some earthly consideration has taken priority in his life. In either case, the *true unity* is broken where there is inconsistency between doctrine and practice, and the Lord Jesus asks such “two-timers” and “fence-sitters,” “*Why call ye Me ‘Lord, Lord!’ and do not the things which I say??*” (Luke 6:46).

The question often bandied about as to whether truly *orthodox*, consistently *orthodox* practice is even possible here in this world among sinful human beings is like the question we considered before regarding doctrine. Our practice MUST be consistently orthodox, or we belie our doctrinal profession; and our hypocrisy becomes as transparent as a sheet of plate glass! Both doctrine AND practice are included when Jesus tells us to “*continue in [His] Word*.” It is the consistent application of the Word, not our so-called “sanctified opinions” and “history of orthodoxy,” that makes our practice right and true. And this is all-important for the preservation of our precious unity! —Without truly orthodox practice, the Word of God, specifically His Law, is not applied to the sinner to bring him to the knowledge of his sins and to his knees in humble contrition. Those who cause divisions and offenses by departing from Scripture are not marked, not admonished, and, when admonition proves fruitless, also not avoided. The works of the flesh are not reproved, but the poor sinner is permitted to continue on and on in them to his own detriment.

All of these scenarios are *common* today in churches and church-bodies because of inconsistent, lax, or decidedly FALSE practice.

Where, however, “*brethren*” are “*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*,” Christian discipline is maintained according to the Savior’s ordinance for the gaining of erring brethren back again to the true unity of the Spirit; false and pernicious doctrine is challenged and checked, so that wolves (from without or from within) are not permitted to destroy the precious unity; and the members of Christ’s body are exhorted, not only by words but also by the actions of dear “*brethren*” in sound, orthodox practice to serve as examples, as lights and beacons, as savory salt, to edify and strengthen one another to the glory of God and to the praise of His wondrous grace!

Now, many people will seem to *tolerate* at least the preaching and teaching of the pure Word of God. They will *hear* it (at least with their ears); and they will surely have someone in mind whom the words of the sermon fit to a “T”. But let the orthodox application of God’s Word be directed at them, and you hear charges of “tyranny,” “legalism,” and “arrogance” leveled against a pastor who is faithful in practice as well as in doctrine. In such cases, those who decry or reject sound practice are themselves breaking the precious unity of the spirit; for they are no longer “*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” on the basis of God’s Word.

“*Now I beseech YOU, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” Paul exhorts each and every one of US, that we examine ourselves according to this text and look diligently for the marks of true Christian unity right in our own midst, in our own fellowship, in our own CONCORDIA Lutheran Conference. For merely having called properly-trained and faithful pastors to preach and teach the Word of God in its truth and purity in our local congregations does not let US “off the hook” as to our own responsibility for Christian unity. For each and every one of us individually is besought by the Apostle Paul to “*speak the same thing*,” to be ready to give a straight answer from the Word of Truth concerning what we believe and teach, and, to that end, to “*know the truth*” according to which doctrine is to be judged. And this ability will be ours only if we “*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ*” (II Peter 3:18), by gladly hearing and learning His Word.

Moreover, just as we rightly expect from our pastors faithful and consistent orthodox *practice* in accordance with the Word of God, it behooves us in turn to submit to their rule with the Word, to support their orthodox practice in the face of opposition, and to insist that our “*brethren*” do the same. But that alone does not fulfil our individual responsibility to “practice what we preach” as faithful confessors of Christ’s Word. For as cases arise regarding a brother or sister—or even regarding ourselves—we must judge on the basis of the Word and not on the basis of emotion and private opinion, family ties and personal friendships. For we too must be “*perfectly joined together*” with our brethren in “*the same mind*” and in “*the same [opinion]*” in the application of God’s Word, judging “*righteous judgment*” (John 7:24) for the preservation of the precious unity of the spirit among those who “*speak the same thing*,” among those who have and earnestly desire, by God’s grace, to continue in true CONCORDIA with one another.

May God graciously pardon us where we have ever compromised true unity with one another in doctrine or in practice by not always “*speak[ing] the same thing*,” by not consistently applying what we profess to be the full truth of God’s precious Word, by “safely” straddling the fence in cowardly indecision when principles of Holy Scripture were being challenged, debated, ignored or undermined, or by failing to stand up for “*brethren*” who courageously put their own necks “on the line” for the sake of God’s truth. And may He grant us, like the Corinthians of old, to be “*enriched*” by Him through His grace in Christ Jesus—enriched “*in all utterance*” and “*in all knowledge*” by regular growth in the doctrines of His Word—so that “[*we*] *all speak the same thing*” according to the only source and standard of faith and life, with “*no divisions among [us]*,” and that in our application of sound doctrine we are “*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*,” always “*endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit*” for our Savior’s sake. Then the *formal principle* of the Reformation will be “alive and well” in our churches, and our blessed unity together, our precious CONCORDIA, will continue “*in the bond of peace*” to the glory of His Name.

Important Dates in

Luther's Life

- 1483** Luther was born on November 10 at Eisleben, Germany, to Hans and Margarethe Luther —nine years before Columbus discovered America. He was baptized the day after his birth.
- 1487** Luther attended a school for boys in Mansfeld from the time he was five years old until he was fourteen, but he was never taught the love of God to poor sinners in Christ Jesus.
- 1496** After a year of high school in Magdeburg, Luther was sent to finish his secondary and junior college education at St. George's, a school in Eisenach.
- 1501** Luther entered the university in Erfurt, intending to study law. After receiving his bachelor's degree one year later, he went on for his master's degree, which he earned three years later.
- 1505** After a brush with death in a thunderstorm, Luther vowed to St. Anne that he would become a monk and give his life to the Roman Catholic church in return for his deliverance. He gave away his earthly possessions and entered the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt. He thought that by making this sacrifice he would earn peace with God. He was 21.
- 1507** Luther was ordained a Roman Catholic priest, endowed by the Pope (he thought) with the awesome power to forgive and retain sins and to administer the sacraments. Surely *now* he would find peace with God for his troubled conscience.
- 1508** Luther began to teach philosophy at the University of Wittenberg. His career was blooming, but he continued to be troubled by his sins and saw no solution to his guilt and no way to satisfy God's justice but through his own works of merit, sacrifices, and penances.
- 1510** Luther made a pilgrimage to Rome, traveling on foot some 850 miles, hoping there to have his doubts of salvation removed. But he was shocked by the abuses he saw there and returned to Wittenberg more confused than ever.
- 1512** Luther earned the degree of Doctor of Theology, the highest degree for a student of the Bible. Yet he really knew *nothing* because he had no understanding of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ.
- 1514** Finally, when he was thirty years old, Luther, in his study of the Scriptures, came to realize that poor sinners could *never* find peace with God by their own works and that God, because of Christ's satisfaction of divine justice, had unilaterally reconciled all mankind — including the "*ungodly*" (Romans 4:5)— unto Himself and had declared all men righteous in His sight as His free gift to the undeserving. This gift was received only by faith, only by confidence in God's mercy, without the deeds of the Law; and even saving faith itself was God's gift through the means of the Gospel. After vainly searching for it in the Church of Rome, Luther found the way to heaven in God's precious Word, Romans 1:16-17.
- 1517** Luther nails *95 Theses* or statements to the church door in Wittenberg, questioning the church's *sale* of forgiveness in letters of *indulgence*. It was October 31, 1517, the date which we today recognize as the beginning of the *Lutheran Reformation*.
- 1520** Because Luther continued to write and to preach about errors in the church of Rome and refused to be silenced by warnings and threats, the Pope *excommunicated* him from the church, branding him a false teacher, a traitor, and a heathen. Luther publicly burned the letter in open defiance of the Pope and his

claim of power over God's Word.

- 1521** The emperor, Charles V, thought that he could solve the problem by hauling Luther before a conference of princes, dukes, and bishops of the Church in the city of *Worms*. At this meeting, the Pope's representative demanded that Luther take back everything he had written and gave him 24 hours to think it over. The penalty for refusing would mean death for Luther. Luther declined, saying that his conscience was captive to God's Word. On his way back to Wittenberg, under sentence of death, Luther was kidnaped by friends and hidden away safely in a castle called the *Wartburg* near Eisenach. There he stayed in disguise for almost a year and translated the New Testament into German for his people.
- 1522** Luther returned to Wittenberg to restore order to a reformation in chaos. Some of those who at the outset followed him became *fanatics* and began to vandalize churches, destroy works of art, and cause hysteria. This was followed by the *Peasants' War* of rebellion against the rich nobility and civil authority, in which Luther sided with the princes.
- 1525** Luther married Katharina von Bora, a former nun, with whom he established under God a Christian home and the Lutheran parsonage. Their marriage was blessed with six children.
- 1529** Frustrated by the lack of diligent teaching on the part of the pastors and by the lack of interest in learning on the part of the people, Luther wrote two *catechisms*, his *Small Catechism* or *Enchiridion* for the instruction of children and those new to the faith, and his *Large Catechism* for the people in general, and for pastors and teachers who themselves needed further instruction in order to teach others.
- 1530** The *Augsburg Confession* was written by Philip Melancthon for the Lutheran theologians as a testimony of their doctrinal position over against the papists. This was presented to the emperor with Luther's blessing, even though Luther, still an "outlaw," was not permitted to attend the meeting.
- 1534** Luther's translation of the entire Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, into the German language of his people was finally completed and published.
- 1537** Luther drafted the *Smalcald Articles* in order to address the errors of the Reformed and Crypto-Calvinists. These articles were signed by the Lutheran theologians assembled at a meeting in the city of Schmalkalden, even though they were not officially received into the Book of Concord until later.
- 1546** In the raw winter early in the year, Luther, who had been in ill health for some time, was called upon to come to Eisleben to settle a controversy among the princes of Saxony. After getting them to reconcile, Luther was too sick to return to Wittenberg. He died in the town of his birth on February 18, confiding in his Savior and in the doctrines of God's Word that he had preached.



— D. T. M.

Sola Scriptura in 2020??

(The *Formal Principle* of the Reformation)

“Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me.” —II Timothy 1:13

The Reformation of the church under Martin Luther was not only a momentous historical event, recognized even by the secular world as one of the most significant movements in the annals of recorded time. It was much more than a powerful catalyst in the cultural, social, and intellectual *renaissance* of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; and Luther himself was much more than “the father of modern standard German” and the “liberator of the common man,” as he is commonly referred to by historians. For, as we well know, the Lutheran Reformation was a singular gift of God’s grace to wretched sinners steeped in spiritual ignorance and captive to the Very Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2), the Roman Pontiff. Through His chosen servant, God restored to outward Christendom “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (II Corinthians 4:6) and thus demonstrated His earnest desire that “*all men be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:4).

But it was not Luther’s intellect, his vision, his charisma, his down-to-earth manner, and his way with words that accomplished the “reformation” of the church. It was the **principle** upon which he stood with God-wrought boldness and unflagging consistency, namely, that there is only **ONE legitimate source** of spiritual knowledge (*principium cognoscendi*), and that is God’s own, verbally-inspired revelation to man: **Holy Scripture**. This is, demonstrably and undeniably, **God’s principle** (not merely Luther’s), set forth in the plain and simple “*words which the Holy Ghost teacheth*” (I Corinthians 2:13), and is therefore not subject to human speculation, interpretation, compromise and exception as are “*the words which man’s wisdom teacheth.*” Thus, with Luther and all truly orthodox theologians, we “*hold fast the form of sound words*” (II Timothy 1:13) according to St. Paul’s injunction and insist on maintaining, without accommodation or compromise, the “**FORMAL PRINCIPLE**” of the Lutheran Reformation: **SOLA SCRIPTURA** [SO-lah skrip-TOOR-ah], which is simply stated in the words: “**Holy SCRIPTURE ALONE is the only source and standard of Christian doctrine and practice.**”

This principle is *absolutely essential* to true doctrinal **theology** (*theós* = God; *lógos* = word) which **MUST** express and be based solely upon the **Word of God**. God Himself being the Author of His Word, the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments are predictably consistent in testifying of themselves that they are *identical with* “the Word of God;” and they testify not only of their *authority* but also of their *inerrancy*, of their *integrity*, of their *efficacy*, of their *sufficiency*, and of their *clarity*. Note and look up the following passages as only a few representative examples: I Peter 1:25; II Peter 1:21; John 5:39; 8:31-32; 10:35; 17:17 and 20; I Corinthians 2:13; 14:37; Ephesians 2:20; II Timothy 3:15-17; Psalm 119:105, 130; Deuteronomy 30:10-14; and so on. (Cf. Graebner, A. L. *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*, pp. 3-15.)

Moreover, our precious *Lutheran Confessions* (comprising the *Book of Concord of 1580*) are replete with these and many other testimonies to the same **FORMAL PRINCIPLE**, culminating in the classic declaration of our spiritual fathers in the *Formula of Concord* (which we printed out in full on the back cover of the July-August issue):

We have no intention of yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and unity (which, moreover, is not in our power to do). Nor would such peace and unity, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression, have any permanency. Still less are we inclined to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and manifest, condemned errors. But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance, that unity according to our utmost power, by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Ghost is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in new obedience, and thus justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ. (*Formula of Concord*, Thorough Declaration, XI, 95, *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 1095)

In contradistinction to this principle, the formal principle of the **Church of Rome** actually *suppresses* the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures of the Apostle and Prophets, yea, the Word of Christ Himself, and substitutes for its authority “*the commandments of men*” (Matthew 15:9). It declares that the Scriptures, only according to the interpretation given to them by “holy mother church” (*Council of Trent*, Session IV), are a source of Christian doctrine, but **not** Scripture *alone*. It *also* includes as its authority the canons, decrees and traditions of “holy mother church,” thus making the Pope both the source and standard of what is to be taught and believed. And, lest anyone imagine that this position of Rome has in any way, shape or form changed or been mollified since the time of the Reformation, we can state unequivocally that the Roman Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2) continues to be absolutely consistent in his rejection of *sola Scriptura*, and that in the year 2020 —five hundred years after the Reformation was in full swing — Rome *still* rejects Christ and His Word as the supreme authority in the Church.

The **Reformed** bodies today (of which there are *many*, both Calvinistic and Arminian), *still* reflect the position of the Anabaptists and others of Luther’s day in that they give “lip service” to the divine authority of Scripture but pervert its clear teachings by subjecting them to rationalistic “mental gymnastics.” Rome “filters” Scripture through the sieve of papal decrees, encyclicals, and traditions, while the Reformed interpret the clear passages of God’s Word subjectively, according to human reason, and thus put a “spin” on them that, in many cases, turns them 180 degrees around. Scripture clearly teaches, for example, the *real presence* of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper according to the Savior’s own words and those of the Apostle Paul by inspiration of the Holy Ghost; the Reformed challenge this doctrine still today and teach only a “symbolic” or “spiritual” presence. According to the rationalistic axiom, “the finite is not capable of the infinite” [*finitum non capax infiniti*], they hold that the finite body (and blood) of Christ — composed of a finite number of cells — cannot be present everywhere at the same time, in an infinite amount, “for us Christians (of all times) to eat and to drink [as] instituted by Christ Himself” (Luther: *Small Catechism*, Sixth Chief Part). Moreover, Scripture clearly teaches that “*Baptism doth also now save us*” (I Peter 3:21), *washes away* and *remits* sins (Acts 22:16; 2:38), while the Baptists state the very opposite: “Baptism is a symbolic witness of your faith in...Jesus Christ. It does **not** save you [our emphasis], but it shows your obedience to the example and teachings of Christ.” (Sunday School Board of the *Southern Baptist Convention*, 1981). The Calvinists still today hold themselves captive to human reason, denying universal grace (*gratia universalis*) in order, *they* say, to embrace salvation by grace alone (*sola gratia*). And the Arminians, *also* holding themselves captive to human reason, come to the **opposite** and **synergistic** conclusion, embracing universal grace but denying *sola gratia*. *Sola Scriptura*, if they lay claim to it at all, is denied *in practice* by **BOTH** Reformed camps which take Scripture captive to *reason* in opposition to Romans 10:5.

While we would like to think that, as “children of the Reformation,” the **Lutheran** bodies still hold fast to the **FORMAL PRINCIPLE** of *SOLA SCRIPTURA*, the sad fact of the matter is that most so-called “Lutheran” church bodies, both here and abroad, subscribe to it only as a *general concept* or *axiom*, subject to a whole host of conditions and definitions and interpretations and applications. To “liberal” Lutherans (who form the vast majority of those still laying claim to Luther’s name, though not to his doctrine), *sola Scriptura* cannot mean much when they, in the same breath, deny the verbal inspiration, inerrancy, clarity, and real authority of the Bible; when they interpret Scripture according to “higher criticism” and treat it as a compilation of human writings; when they teach contrary to its clear words and speak of its injunctions as “the views” or the “personal opinions” of the Spirit’s penmen; when the church’s purpose serves a purely social agenda, and Christian doctrine is neither taught nor practiced; and when, “for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility and unity” (*op. cit.*, *Formula of Concord*) or mere “political correctness,” they refuse to condemn (and in many cases actually countenance and even encourage) homosexuality, abortion, sexual activity apart from marriage, unscriptural divorce, the incumbency of women in the pastoral office, same-sex marriages, and an almost endless list of other unscriptural (and anti-scriptural) practices. Tragically, such is the condition of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in *Germany* today, in the heartland of the Reformation, as this writer witnessed it firsthand in personal conversations with “Lutherans” in Wittenberg, Eisleben, Eisenach, Erfurt and Schmalkalden. And it is no different in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of *America*, as we well know.

Surely, however, the **FORMAL PRINCIPLE** of *SOLA SCRIPTURA* is confessed and practiced by the so-called “confessional” or “conservative” Lutheran bodies in the United States, isn’t it?? Oh, if that were only the case! For they would all speak the same thing; there would be no divisions among them; and they would be “*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (I Corinthians 1:10 — See the article on **CONCORDIA** or

unity in this issue), as are, by God's grace alone, the flocks and pastors of our precious **Concordia** Lutheran Conference. To be sure, plenty of lip-service is paid to *sola Scriptura*, but we find more authority ascribed *in practice* to the decisions of synodical officials, boards and committees; more credence given to the views and pronouncements of seminary faculties and theological scholars; more weight ascribed to "the will of the majority" (perceived, polled, or balloted) than to the Word and will of God; and more effort (and money) expended in the pursuit of *political* correctness, influence and control than in *doctrinal discipline* and the preservation of *spiritual unity*. All one has to do is listen to the news, read the paper, and glance through synodical web sites to observe the obvious: Those who ignore the clear Word of God and obviate its authority, thereby continuing to "*cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned*" (Romans 16:17), "*serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*" (v. 18).

Synods with what they call "room for disagreement" are not true fellowships but unionistic charades; resolutions on matters of doctrine are passed by simple majorities (and dissenters from the truth are not dealt with); and, in a notorious, well-publicized case, the president of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod's Atlantic District, who was suspended from his office because he participated publicly in joint prayer with Muslims, Sikhs and Jews after 9-11, was *re-instated* by an appeals panel, **not** because he repented of the sins of unionism and syncretism and of the public offense he gave by his disgraceful conduct, **not** upon his expressed sincere and earnest purpose, with the assistance of God the Holy Ghost, henceforth to amend his sinful life (Confessional Service, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, CPH, 1941, p. 48), but **because** "there is not sufficient reason or evidence **according to the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws** for suspending Rev. [David] Benke" (Our emphasis). Reportedly not a single reference to Scripture was cited, only the resolution of the Synod adopted in 2001 (#3-07A), which, the panel stated, expressed "the collective will of the Synod." The chairman of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations stated: "This is rather a recognition of what it is that **the majority of [the Synod's] members understand the Scriptures to teach.**" [Our emphasis]. What, we wonder, does the *minority* of the synod's members "understand the Scriptures to teach" on the First and Second Commandments? What, we ask, is the **source and norm of Christian doctrine and practice** in the Missouri Synod *today*? Anything *objective* and *clear* in and of itself?? Certainly NOT *sola Scriptura*! Certainly not even twenty years later in 2020! —From this graciously preserve US, dear heavenly Father, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

—D. T. M.

Justification by Grace through Faith

(The *Material Principle* of the Reformation)

The psalmist exhorts us: "*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities.*" (103:2). We are to bless, praise, honor, and thank God for His countless gifts, blessings, and benefits; we are to remember and not forget all that He has done for us, particularly the forgiveness of our sins. This is why the Apostle Peter declared: "*I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth*" (II Peter 1:12). Likewise, we will not be negligent in reminding our readers of that great, priceless gem which was restored through the Reformation, namely, the doctrine of God's justification of all sinners by His grace in Christ Jesus, received and enjoyed through faith in Christ. Without shame, for the sake of our only Savior, we proclaim and defend this "material principle" of the Reformation, the central teaching of the Christian religion, on which our eternal salvation from sin and hell is built. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith,*" writes Paul to the Ephesians, "*and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (2:8-9).

Why was this divine work of justification so **absolutely necessary** for *all*? Take note of how God, in His Word, answers this important question: “*There is no difference, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:22-23). “*Ye shall be holy [without sin], for I the Lord your God am holy*” (Leviticus 19:2). “*Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in **one** point, he is guilty of **all***” (James 2:10). “*There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not*” (Ecclesiastes 7:20). “*Sin is the transgression of the Law*” (I John 3:4). In Psalm 5 we hear this true testimony concerning the one and only God: “*Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Thee. The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight; Thou **hatest** all workers of iniquity*” (v’s. 4-5). In Romans 1, the apostle announced that “*the **wrath** of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*” (v. 18). And the Prophet Isaiah included himself when he wrote down these words: “***We** are **all** as an unclean thing, and all **our** righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” (64:6). So, what must we conclude? “*By the works of the Law shall **no** flesh be justified*” (Galatians 2:16). No one, absolutely no one, can be justified by what he does, by his compliance with the Law of God. Away with “indulgences,” mass cards, merit badges, “good” works used as “brownie points” with God, climbing the “ladder” to the “33rd degree” —all intended to “earn” heaven, to set the “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6) of human righteousness before a holy and just God, actually expecting Him to accept them!

How did God justify the entire human race, the whole world? Concerning “*all [who] have sinned and come short of the glory of God,*” the apostle says of them: “*Being justified **freely by His grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 3:24). Instead of giving all sinners what they justly deserved (Romans 6:23; Galatians 3:10; etc.), God gave them what they did **not** deserve: Righteousness (Romans 3:21; Jeremiah 23:6; II Corinthians 5:21), forgiveness for their sins (II Corinthians 5:19), and reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:19), all because of and on account of Christ’s perfect satisfaction of divine justice in the place of sinners. “*God was **in Christ**, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19). This ***sola gratia*** (solely by God’s grace in Christ Jesus) was (and still is) that glorious, wonderful teaching restored through the Reformation for all subsequent generations to hear, know about, believe, and praise. No one was left out when God, for Jesus’ sake, justified all (Romans 5:18; 3:24). This precious, God-given teaching is what we in the Concordia Lutheran Conference joyfully identify with our orthodox Lutheran fathers as ***objective, general, universal justification***.

How abhorrent (Romans 12:9) when Lutheran theologians, who claim to be orthodox and faithful, detest and attack not only the doctrine of ***objective justification***, but also those who faithfully teach it (Jeremiah 23:28; Luke 10:16), support, and defend it. Consider the testimony of a so-called “independent” in outward Lutheranism today, Pastor Gregory Jackson, the pastor of A Mighty Fortress Lutheran Church, Glendale, Arizona, as he “speaks” on his congregation’s web-site in regard to Isaiah 60: “The Objective Justification fanatics are all like that. They are dead to the Law. They hide behind Gospel forgiveness to explain away all their shameless acts. They are already forgiven, so they can do whatever they want. But watch out if you annoy one of these characters. They say everyone is forgiven without faith but they excommunicate without hesitation. They cannot explain the contradiction. If everyone is forgiven, how can they refuse forgiveness and send to Hell someone who disagrees with their cult?” (Cited from page 2 of his web document.) Since the Word of God is all true (John 17:17; II Timothy 3:16), including what it teaches on ***objective justification*** (Romans 3:24; 5:18; II Corinthians 5:19; etc.), an attack on the Scriptural teaching of objective justification, plus an attack on those who teach it, is an attack on **God Himself** (Luke 10:16). Despite being labeled as “fanatics” and of being falsely accused by Pastor Jackson of abusing the forgiveness of sins, we of the Concordia Lutheran Conference cannot and will not stop proclaiming and rejoicing in God’s justification of all sinners by His grace in Christ Jesus, His general amnesty or forensic pardon of “***the world,***” received through faith.

Yes, **faith** is the actual receiving **means** of this objective justification announced in “*the Gospel of the grace of God*” (Acts 20:24), the “*good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people*” (Luke 2:10). Therefore, it is ***justifying*** faith, that is, confidence in the mercy of God which remits sins for Christ’s sake, totally apart from the works of the Law, confidence whereby the sinner **lays hold on** and **clings to** the assurance of God’s forgiveness of **all** mankind and thus personally receives full absolution from all guilt and punishment by faith. This is ***subjective, individual***

justification. *“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law”* (Romans 3:28). What clear, plain, and yet profoundly comforting words we gratefully and joyfully repeat from Ephesians 2: *“By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast”* (v’s. 8-9). This ***sola fide*** (solely through faith), without any human works, was also restored during the Reformation. What a relief this restoration was for consciences then and is for consciences yet today!

The Council of Trent, which was the Roman Catholic response to the Reformation, met “off-and-on” between 1545 and 1563. Its purpose was to “overthrow” the restoration of pure, Biblical teaching through the Reformation. This attempt at “overthrow” was evident in Canon 12 (from this Council) which declared: “If anyone saith that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ’s sake, or that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified, let him be anathema [cursed, damned].” God, in His rich mercy, did not allow this vicious attack on His Word of truth to be successful. ***Sola fide*** still stands today! Hallelujah!! *“He that believeth on Him [the Son of God] is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”* (John 3:18).

Now, for the believers in Jesus, the saints (I Corinthians 1:2; I Peter 2:9), having the overflowing benefits (Psalm 23:5-6; 103:2) of ***sola gratia*** and ***sola fide***, should they boldly go forward and live in sin because they have the forgiveness of sins (as Gregory Jackson falsely accuses us of teaching)? The apostle put it this way: *“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound”* (Romans 6:1)? And how did he answer that question? *“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein”* (Romans 6:2)? As the Reformation so wonderfully brought home to us, *“the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead, and that He died for all, that they which live [the believers in Christ] should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again”* (II Corinthians 5:14-15). Indeed, to do less, and to desire to do anything less, would show callous disregard for and despisal of the forgiveness of sins which Christ merited for *all* and which God granted to *all* mankind for Jesus’ sake. “From this preserve us, heavenly Father!” (Luther).

—R. J. L.

(Reprinted from September-October 2002)

Luther's Hymnody

Luther was very devoted to music. Mathesius (a friend of Luther and author of a popular history of Luther’s life) relates that Luther often sang at and after meals. It was a pleasure to him, as regularly as possible, to gather his household and friends about him to pass the time in singing and listening to music. The musical director at the court in Torgau, Johannes Walther, was often called to attend these musical evenings. He wrote: “I have sung with him through many a pleasant hour and have often seen how the dear man’s spirit was cheered up by singing, so much so that he hardly ever became tired of chanting.”

Luther was himself personally gifted with both musical and poetical talent which he used to advantage in composing and writing hymns. Up to his time, singing in the public services of the Roman Church was restricted to chanting by the clergy and responses in Latin by the church choir. The ordinary worshiper had little if any knowledge of that language and thus benefitted little from such singing. Encouraged by various passages in the Bible which admonish the believer to *“sing unto the Lord”* (eg. Psalm 30:4), Luther contended that every attendant at divine services ought to participate in the singing as part of his worship and, in hymns of his mother-tongue, ought to confess his faith and render praise and thanksgiving to his God and Lord.

Shortly after he had returned from the Wartburg Castle (where he had translated the New Testament into German) to his parish in Wittenberg, Luther began to write hymns. This led to the publication in 1524 of the *“Achtliederbuch,”* the first Lutheran hymnal, containing, as the title indicated, only eight hymns. Four were by

Luther, three were by Paul Speratus, and one by Justus Jonas. In 1524, later in the year, appeared in Erfurt the “*Enchiridion or Handbook of Spiritual Songs and Psalms*” containing twenty-five hymns, eighteen of which were written by Luther. In the same year again Johannes Walther, together with Luther, issued a “*Spiritual Hymn-booklet*” for choir singing for the young in five parts with thirty-two German hymns. Twenty-four were by Dr. Luther —two-thirds of all that he created for congregational hymn-singing. In time, Luther added twelve more hymns including “*Ein’ feste Burg ist unser Gott*” and “*Vom Himmel hoch*”. Luther’s method was to versify psalms, to translate and adapt Latin hymns, to improve and to spiritualize folk-songs, and to write original hymns, for some of which he wrote the music as well as the lyrics.

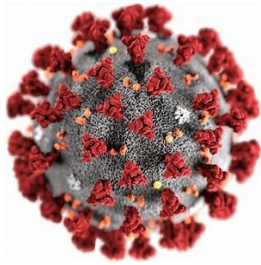


“*Ein’ feste Burg*” first appeared in Klug’s *Gesangbuch* (Hymnbook), Wittenberg, 1529, entitled “*Der XXXVI Psalm, Deus noster refugium et virtus*” (The 46th Psalm: God is our Refuge and Strength). The hymn is more than a metrical paraphrase of Psalm 46, however; it is really an original production on the theme of the Psalm, with some phrases reminiscent of the actual Biblical text. The tune is also Luther’s composition. It appeared in Klug’s *Geistliche Lieder* (Spiritual Songs), Wittenberg, 1529 (1st Edition), and in *Kirchen Gesenge* (Church Hymns), Nürnberg, 1531. Dr. Louis F. Benson, an author on hymnody, said of it: “Such a hymn with such a tune spreads quickly, as may well be believed; yes, as quickly as if the angels had been the carriers. But they were men who spread Luther’s hymn of faith and courage from heart to heart and from lip to lip.” The music critic, James

Huneker, remarked: “This hymn thunders at the very gate of heaven in its magnificent affirmation of belief.” Frederick the Great, Emperor of Prussia in the 18th Century, called it “God Almighty’s Grenadier March;” and Thomas Carlyle, the translator of this “Battlehymn of the Reformation” as we have it in our hymnal (*TLH* 262), noted: “It is evident that to this man all popes, cardinals, emperors, devils, all hosts and nations, were but weak, weak as the forest with all its strong trees might be to the smallest spark of electric fire.”

— D. T. M.





“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

—Philippians 4:6

Lord God, dear heavenly Father, may it please Thee according to Thy merciful providence to regard our beloved country in this time of peril as we experience a virtual pandemic of the virulent Coronavirus even now threatening each and every one of us with exposure and infection. Even as we exercise prudent measures to contain this virus and to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and our neighbors from contagion, keep us from anxiety, depression and despair, and cause us rather, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to let our requests come before Thy throne of grace, commending ourselves to Thy special fatherly goodness for Jesus our Savior’s sake, that it may please Thee in Thine own best time and way to comfort us in this time of chastening and to relieve us from our various necessities, granting us meanwhile patience under our sufferings and a happy issue out of all our afflictions according to Thy promise that all things work together for good to them that love Thee, to them who are the called according to Thy gracious purpose. We ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ, our precious Redeemer, our only Mediator and Advocate at Thy throne. Amen.



Churches in Fellowship

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Olu-Ama (Kula), Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abule Egba, Lagos, Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

HOLY TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH

Idama, Nigeria

The Rev. Innocent Karibo, Pastor

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Idama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: kanboinnocent@yahoo.com

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

Abalama, Nigeria

The Rev. Bateinm Bestman, Pastor

Thompson Compound Abalama Abalama,

Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. CLEMENT'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Elem-Sangama, Nigeria

The Rev. Timothy Biobele Aaron, Pastor

St. Clement Lutheran Church,

Elem-Sangama Arch-Deaconry

Elem-Sangama, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: tbaaron2@gmail.com

ST. MATTHEW'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Port Harcourt, Nigeria

The Rev. Onimim Frank, Pastor

76 Abba Street, Mile 1 Diobu

Port Harcourt, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: PH-djreal17joe@gmail.com

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Kula, Nigeria

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Kula, Rivers State, NIGERIA

ST. PAUL'S NYEMONI LUTHERAN CATHEDRAL

Abonnema, Nigeria

The Rev. Nimi B. Fyeface, Pastor

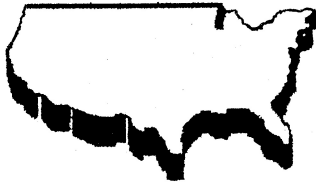
The Rev. Faith N. J. Asembo, Co-Pastor

P. O. Box 123

Abonnema, Akulga, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-Mail: njohnfyeface@yahoo.co.uk

E-Mail: faithasembo1@gmail.com



Directory of Member Congregations

www.concordialutheranconf.com

PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Central Avenue at 171st Place, Oak Forest IL 60452-4913

Sunday School & Bible Class 8:30 a.m.

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor

17151 South Central Avenue, Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913

E-mail: pastormensing@yahoo.com

On the Web at
PeaceEvLutheran.com

Office Telephone: (708) 532-4288

Pastor: (708) 532-9035
Pastor's Cell: (708) 601-3943

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sixth and Tangent Streets, Lebanon, OR 97355

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:00 a.m.

Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

483 Tangent Street, Lebanon, OR 97355

E-mail: revbloedel@gmail.com

Telephone: (541) 258-2941

Pastor: (541) 258-2941

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

5350 South Fountain Street, Seattle, WA 98178

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

On the Web at
StLukes-CLC.com

Telephone: (206) 723-1078

(Pastoral Vacancy at present)

NOTE: Services are also held in **Victoria, British Columbia**, on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call for current location.

Worship Service 7:00 p.m.

Adult Bible Class 4:30 p.m.

Adult Catechism Class 8:30 p.m.

ST. MARK'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:00 a.m.

Worship Service 11:00 a.m.

The Rev. DAVID J. MENSING, Pastor

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411

E-mail: d_rnensing@hotmail.com

On the Web at
StMarksEvLutheran.com

Telephone: (708) 757-6859

Pastor: (708) 655-7549

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

300 North Ridgeland Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.

Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302

E-mail: robertjlietz@gmail.com

On the Web at
TrinityEvLutheran.com

Telephone: (708) 386-6773

Pastor: (708) 386-4145

(During the current pandemic, please call the respective pastors regarding **assembled** or alternative **"virtual"** services.)

Here we still stand!

with the fathers of the Lutheran Reformation:

“We have no intention of yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and unity (which, moreover, is not in our power to do). Nor would such peace and unity, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression, have any permanency. Still less are we inclined to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and manifest, condemned errors. But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance, that unity according to our utmost power, by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in new obedience, and thus justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ.” (Triglotta, Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration XI, p. 1095)