

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

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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*" (1 Corinthians 1:10)

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.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God!

Luther's Battlehymn based on Psalm 46

When Dr. Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-five Theses* or, what we would call today, “talking points,” to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517, he embarked upon a public debate with the Church of Rome that developed into a widespread movement which became known as the **Lutheran Reformation**. This was not a secession from Rome, nor was it a rebellion against Rome, nor did Luther intend to establish “another church bearing his name,” as some historians have erroneously claimed; but the Reformation was intended to “reform” external Christendom by bringing it back to its Scriptural “roots” in doctrine and in practice.

As we well know from our study of church history and particularly from our study of Luther's life and work, his unwavering stand on “Scripture alone” (*Sola Scriptura*) hardly made Luther universally popular, respected and admired — especially at first when it was sometimes “Luther alone” who stood up to be counted against the adversaries of the truth. Indeed, from 1521, when he stood before Emperor Charles V in Worms and refused to disavow and take back his writings and to cease his agitations against Rome, until his death in 1546, Luther was under the ban of the empire, technically a marked and wanted man, subject to arrest at any time and even to attack on the part of bounty-hunters; and yet, despite incessant threats, he was never arrested, or imprisoned, or exiled, or burned as a “heretic;” but he died a natural death in the city of his birth at the age of sixty-three years.

The hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” which later became known as “The Battle-hymn of the Reformation” and was called by Frederick the Great of Prussia “God Almighty's Grenadier March,” was originally entitled simply “The Forty-sixth Psalm, *God is our Refuge and Strength*” (“Der XXXXVI Psalm, *Deus noster refugium et virtus*”). It was written in 1529 when the German princes stood before the emperor at the Diet of Speyer to protest infringement upon their religious liberty and the persecution of their theologians. As a poetic paraphrase of Psalm 46, it proclaimed in song the confidence of the reformers in the Lord's protection and in the vindication of His Gospel. It first appeared in print under its original title in Klug's *Gesangbuch* (Hymnbook) published in Wittenberg in 1529; and the rousing melody, also the fruit of Luther's pen, appeared with the stanzas in Klug's *Geistliche Lieder* (Spiritual Songs) the same year. Luther and his co-workers often sang what they called “the 46th Psalm” together, especially in times of persecution, adversity and trial; and their spirits were renewed, confirmed and buoyed up by the assurance of their Lord's precious Word.

The translation of this hymn that we find in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941) as Hymn 262 is a composite that closely parallels the original and even has a remarkable line-by-line correspondence with the German text. Those who know German quickly recognize this and favor this translation over those by such poets as Thomas Carlyle and F. H. Hedge.

It is our particular purpose in this article briefly to “walk through” the stanzas of Luther's masterpiece of hymnody and to examine its Scriptural content, the application of those Scriptures to and in the lives of our cherished Lutheran fathers, and their comfort also to us in these latter days of sore distress. It is also our earnest recommendation that our readers commit this hymn to memory for their ready access when “the old evil foe” strikes his fearsome blow in their own lives.

“A mighty Fortress is our God,
a trusty Shield and Weapon.
He helps us free from every need
that hath us now o'ertaken.”

Psalm 46:1 — “*God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar*”

and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.” The troubles of which the psalmist speaks here are chiefly temporal calamities in nature, although their intensity and magnitude are described in such a way as to make them inescapable by mortal men. Only our almighty God, the Creator of all things and He who governs and controls all things in His kingdom of power, is able to provide us refuge as our “*Fortress*,” to help us as our “*Deliverer*,” and to protect us as our “*Shield*” (II Samuel 22:2–3).

“The old evil foe
now means deadly woe!
Deep guile and great might
are his dread arms in fight!
On earth is not his equal!”

Here Luther points out that our worst trouble consists of the spiritual trials and temptations brought upon us by the devil, whom he calls “the foe.” While this word is not used in Scripture regarding the avowed enemy of God and man, there are plenty of passages in which synonyms for “foe” are applied to the devil. Take for example I Peter 5:8–9 where he is called “*your adversary*.” He is also called the “*enemy*” (Matthew 13:39; Luke 10:19) or by its equivalent in Hebrew, “*Satan*” (I Chronicles 21:1; Job 1:6–12; Psalm 109:6; Zechariah 3:1–2; Matthew 4:10; 12:26; 16:23; Mark 4:15; Luke 10:18; 13:16; 22:3, 31; Acts 5:3; etc.). Note also that he is “evil,” that is, persistently sinning in wanton rebellion against God and doing that which promotes sin in the world in order to captivate man, God’s foremost visible creature, in sin and unbelief (Ephesians 6:12; I John 3:8). His “dread arms” or fearsome weapons are “deep guile” — deceit (Revelation 20:8), trickery (Genesis 3:13; II Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 6:11), lies (John 8:44 — “*devil*” meaning “liar;” Acts 5:3), and “great might” (Ephesians 6:12; I Peter 5:8 — “*as a roaring lion*”), whereby he *seeks to devour* the believers (I Peter 5:8). While wickedness abounds in the world and “*evil men and seducers wax worse and worse*” (II Timothy 3:13) as the Last Day draws near, there is none that compares to the devil as to his evil power and influence. “On earth is not his equal!”

“With might of ours can naught be done;
soon were our loss effected!”

Left to ourselves, we are powerless to defeat this “*adversary*.” Even Adam and Eve, in their pristine state of integrity, fell prey to his cunning approach, his daring attack, his unexpected ambush, though at that time they could have repulsed his onslaught and said “No!” to his temptation, exercising their free will for *good*. But they willingly yielded to his wicked manipulation, entertained his challenge to question God’s Word, listened to his suggestion that God had a hidden, selfish agenda for forbidding them to eat of the fruit, and permitted him to appeal to their *physical* eyesight (instead of to their *spiritual* eyesight) in assessing the desirability of the forbidden fruit; and they wantonly disobeyed God’s command. Apart from the strength and steadfastness that God’s Word affords our faith, we cannot “*resist him*” (I Peter 5:9); and without the “*whole armor of God*” (Ephesians 6:11), we cannot defend ourselves against him nor strike a blow to defeat him. Instead we would quickly be victimized by him and lose our faith entirely!

“But for us fights the Valiant One
whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, ‘Who is this?’
Jesus Christ it is, of Sabaoth Lord!
And there’s none other God!
He holds the field forever.”

“*The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14) was “*foreordained before the foundation of the world*” (I Peter 1:20), “whom God Himself elected” (Cf. I Peter 2:6), that is, chose and anointed (Acts 10:38, *et al.*), to be our Champion, our Redeemer, our “*Jesus*” (Matthew 1:21), “*the Lord’s Christ*” (Luke 2:26), to do battle with Satan “*for us*,” writes Luther, paying “*the wages of sin*” (Romans 6:23) in our place, “*that through death He might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them* [namely us and all mankind] *who*

through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15). “Who is this?” Luther asks; “Jesus Christ it is, of Sabaoth Lord.” He doesn’t translate that Hebrew word, even in his German original (“*der Herr Zebaoth*”); and our translators left it in Hebrew in our English version as well. *Sabaoth* [SĀ • bah • ōth], a three-syllable word not to be confused with the “Sabbath,” is the transliteration of a Hebrew expression meaning “*of hosts*.” Thus, “He is the Lord of Hosts! And there’s none other God!” “*The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge*” (Psalm 46:7). “He holds the field forever!” (Cf. Luke 1:33; Revelation 11:15b).

“Though devils all the world should fill,
all eager to devour us...”

Again Luther refers to I Peter 5:8, where Satan is pictured “*as a roaring lion [walking] about, seeking whom he may devour*.” Luther himself experienced this threat firsthand when he was summoned to Worms in Germany to appear before the emperor, Charles V, to answer for his writings and to recant, that is, take them back. He was warned by his friends not to go because the city would be full of “devils” lying in wait for him. But Luther is said to have replied in confidence of the Lord’s protection (cf. Psalm 91:11): “I shall go to defend what I have confessed, though there be as many devils in Worms as tiles on the rooftops.”

“We tremble not, we fear no ill;
they shall not overpower us.”

“*Therefore will not we fear...*” (Psalm 46:2). “*The Lord is my Light and My Salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident*” (Psalm 27:1-2).

“This world’s prince may still
scowl fierce as he will;
he can harm us none!
He’s judged; the deed is done!
One little word can fell him!”

“*The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*” (Ephesians 2:2) “may scowl fierce as he will; he can harm us none” (Cf. I Samuel 2:10; Psalm 71:13; Nahum 1:2; Philippians 1:28; I Peter 3:12-16). “This world’s prince...is judged; the deed is done!” (Cf. John 16:11). “One little word can fell him!” In the devil’s temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1ff.), the weapon that vanquished each and every temptation was “*the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*” (Ephesians 6:17b), as Jesus cited Scripture. “*It is written*,” He said time and time again. Interestingly (and significantly), that expression in the Greek of the New Testament is “one little word,” namely, *γέγραπται* [GEGG • grahp • tai], which means, “It was written, *has been* written, and even now *stands* written” [German: *Es steht geschrieben*] with continuing effect even to the present — a most power-packed “little word” that shows the continuing and continuous authority of Holy Scripture, “*given by inspiration of God*” (II Timothy 3:16).

So now, what about that “little word” in the Church of Rome in Luther’s day when he penned the lines of this hymn? What about that “little word” in the almost 500 years following the Reformation? And what about that “little word” still today, as it continues to shout out from the pages of Holy Writ the doctrine that **Scripture alone** (*sola Scriptura*) is the only source and standard of Christian doctrine and practice? Luther takes up that question in the fourth stanza and answers it in less-than-optimistic terms, singing:

“The Word they still shall let remain
and not a thank* have for it!”

The asterisk (*) calls to the reader's attention that this older translation, found in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-book* (Missouri Synod) of 1924, is true to Luther's original German [„...und kein'n Dank dafür haben"] and expresses the sad fact that the Word of God in its truth and purity is not only maligned and denigrated, set aside and ignored, even by the world of so-called “theologians” in their teaching and practice, but that one hears virtually *no gratitude* expressed “for it”! Even among professing so-called “confessionals” in the “conservative” element of the Missouri Synod today, we hear of appreciation for Luther, for Chemnitz, for Walther, and certainly for the *Lutheran Confessions* (which they hail as their indispensable source of doctrine, and which some have the audacity to represent as the norm of Holy Scripture itself); but where is the gratitude for “the Word” without which the *Lutheran Confessions* would be only so much hot air?? And where is the willingness, motivated by the Gospel, gratefully to *follow* the Word by rejecting and avoiding the heterodox (Titus 3:10; Romans 16:17-18) instead of staying within their ranks as mere talkers in a bogus “state of confession” or “protesting membership” that involves no separation when admonition is not heeded??

“He’s by our side upon the plain
with His good gifts and Spirit!”

The writer to the Hebrews exhorts us to “*run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds*” (12:1-3). We have nothing to complain about concerning the burdens we are called upon to bear, the battles we are enlisted to fight, the threats and intimidations we have to face, and the deprivation we are privileged to suffer — in comparison to what our Savior bore to save us as “*the Author and Finisher of our faith.*” Concerning the Lord’s Church, gladdened by that precious Gospel, the Psalmist writes: “*God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early*” (46:5).

“And take they our life, goods, fame, child and wife,
let these all be gone; they yet have nothing won!”

Here Luther summarizes in a brief series the plagues visited upon Job of old in Satan’s wicked effort to subvert his fear, love and trust in God, to get him to “*curse [God] to His face*” (1:11), to “*charge God foolishly*” (v. 22), to renounce his faith and die in his sins (2:9). What did Satan accomplish? What did he gain? What did he win? Nothing! Jesus assures us that “*the gates of hell shall not prevail against [His Church]*” (Matthew 16:18). And the Psalmist writes by inspiration of God: “*The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted!*” (46:6). “*He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire!*” (v. 9).

“The Kingdom ours remaineth!”

“*Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge!*” (vv. 10-11). Peter writes in his first epistle: “*But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that they falsely accused your good conversation in Christ*” (3:14-16).

We indeed are engaged in a fierce battle against the devil, the world, and our flesh every day of our lives. And we also have specific spiritual foes among “*the enemies of the cross of Christ*” (Philippians 3:18). There are “*grievous wolves*” (Acts 20:29) “*in sheep’s clothing*” (Matthew 7:15), belly-serving theologians who “*with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Romans 16:18). And we have had our share of “*perils among false brethren*” (II Corinthians 11:26b) arising out of our own ranks, “*speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them*” (Acts 20:30). But by God’s grace, “they have harmed us none” because Christ, our Champion, has fought for us with the sword of His Word and “holds the field forever.” Yet, we still have our work cut out for us. The battle is far from over, as St. Paul writes to Timothy: “*Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life*

Our Reformation Comfort in these Latter Days of Sore Distress

*“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure
to give you the kingdom.” —Luke 12:32*

By God’s unmerited grace and favor, because of His great love toward us in Christ, our Savior, we are *spiritual survivors* — survivors of a longstanding **state of open warfare** between the realms of light and the powers of darkness, between the Lord Jesus and Satan, between truth and error, between Christ’s Church militant and the very gates of hell itself! And we are **survivors** NOT merely because of our historical *Reformation heritage*, NOT just because we bear the name “Lutheran,” NOT because **we** (unlike so many who have “caved in” under pressure) have had the moral “guts” to **hold fast** in times of trial and to **weather** many a controversy over the years. No, the fact that we are **survivors** has nothing whatsoever to do with **US**; but it has everything to do with **WHOSE we are** and **WHY**. For “[we] **were by nature the children of wrath, even as others,**” St. Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 2, “**dead in trespasses and sins,**” and headed straight for hell! By our own reason and strength, we couldn’t even believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, much less come to Him. We couldn’t “make the decision for Christ” that so many in our day and time say they have the power to make when they “choose” to invite Jesus into their lives!

No, **God** chose **us**, the Bible says in the plainest of terms, “*when we were **dead in sins***” (Ephesians 2:5), “*when we were **enemies***” (Romans 5:10), “*when we were yet **without strength***” (Romans 5:6), **HE** chose **us** to be His own dear children and heirs of everlasting life, the “*sheep of [His] pasture*” (Psalm 79:13) and saved us “*by grace*” (Ephesians 2:8) as His free gift for Christ’s sake! **He** sent His only-begotten Son into the world and put Him “*under the Law*” (Galatians 4:4) in our place, so that by **His** perfect obedience to its precepts He might earn for **all men** perfect righteousness in the sight of God, and that by His all-sufficient suffering and death in our stead He might redeem us and **all mankind** from the curse of the Law, that is, from everlasting death, having been “*made a curse for us*” (Galatians 3:13), having endured the very pains of hell in our place.

It was Christ’s **perfect satisfaction** of God’s exacting justice on behalf of **all men** that enabled the Father to “*reconcile the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,*” the Bible tells us, declaring **the ungodly** righteous and forgiving the iniquities of the vilest sinner. And by confidence in that **accomplished justification**, we have those wondrous benefits as our very own and “*have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:1).

THAT’S why we are **survivors** in this bloody war! God **WANTS** us to survive! Because He loved the world so much that He gave His only-begotten Son to be its Redeemer (John 3:16), God has a “vested interest” in us. And so the Lord Jesus, our perfect **Good Shepherd**, tenderly assures us, “*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*” We’re “*little*” all right, and we shouldn’t wonder why! In comparison to the Savior’s “*little flock,*” “*many there be which go in at the [broad and easy ‘superhighway’] that leadeth to **destruction***” (Matthew 7:13), Jesus says, instead of following the pathway to heaven. Indeed, we are right now living in those very days, prophesied by St. Paul in II Timothy chapter 4, when “[people] will not **endure** sound doctrine,” they simply won’t put up with the pure teachings of God’s Word anymore, “*but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers [to tickle their] ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*” (vv. 3 and 4). **THAT’S** why we’re a “*LITTLE flock.*” People generally today **persistently resist** the Word and the Spirit of God, who genuinely wants all men to be saved; they **don’t want the truth that makes them free** (John 8:32); they **don’t want** what by God’s grace **we still have** as those who hear His voice and follow Him! (John 10:27).

But why does the Lord Jesus in our title-text say to us, His “*little flock*” and tiny remnant here in this world, “**Fear not**”? What’s to “*fear*” anyway? Is there really something or someone “out there” seeking to harm us, to weaken us, perhaps even to destroy us?? They don’t burn “heretics” at the stake anymore, as the Papists burned the Czech reformer,

John Hus, in the 15th Century! They wouldn't actively persecute us, as the enemies of God's truth persecuted Luther and his sheep at the time of the Reformation, would they? —O, be not deceived, fellow sheep and lambs of Jesus' "*little flock*"! For the Savior wouldn't mention **fear** in our title-text if "the only thing to fear were fear itself"! Make no mistake about it: There are **enemies of the truth** "out there" still today —in greater numbers than ever before— who would like nothing better than to "*deceive us and seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice,*" as Luther aptly warns us in the Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer. And so we rightly ask in the first place: What (or Who) is the Foe who, in the service of Satan, threatens Christ's "*little flock*" TODAY?

As we celebrate the **Reformation Festival**, as we look back on our "roots" and our great deliverance under Martin Luther, we may ask with good cause: **Is it perhaps still the Papacy?** In this age of so-called "religious tolerance" and of the "ecumenical movement," it is easy to discount the **Church of Rome** and its influence —until the Pope comes to town, thronged by millions (including many who are *not* Roman Catholics), and is praised and practically worshiped as a god, the "vicar" or substitute of Christ on earth. But when we cut through the "smoke and mirrors" of all the well-advertised "changes" that have taken place in the Roman Catholic Church to make it more like **ours**, we see that even the grandfatherly and seemingly harmless present "Pontiff," Pope Francis, still curses those who cling for salvation alone to the mercy of God which forgives sins for Christ's sake, totally apart from the works of the Law (Canons IX, XI and XII I particular, *Council of Trent*) —the doctrine plainly taught in God's Holy Word! And in so doing, this **Antichrist** effectively **murders souls** when they follow **him** and, in terror of his curse, forsake the **only way** to heaven! Yes, the Papacy is still an adversary to be reckoned with, as billions of people worldwide still swear their allegiance to "Holy Mother Church" and do the good works and penances prescribed out of fear of damnation if they don't! What spiritual abuse such people suffer at the hands of those whom they should be able to trust! And more and more people every day are being deceived by this cunning foe "*who sitteth in the temple of God*" (II Thessalonians 2:4) taking his toll of unwary souls! NO CHANGE has taken place in the Papacy which has lessened its danger to Christ's "*little flock*"! NO CHANGE WHATEVER!

But we must also ask: **Is the foe perhaps also the REFORMED camp in outward Christendom?** This question too we answer in the affirmative, since Reformed theology (the theology of Calvin, Arminius, and others) prompts man to look **within himself** for the assurance of salvation, instead of to the mercy and grace of God **OUTSIDE of himself**! They ask us: "Do you long for God's favor? Then examine your life as a Christian! Is it a **truly sanctified** life, a **Godpleasing** life, a '*Spirit-filled*' life?" —And the so-called "Charismatics" in the Reformed churches claim to test true, saving faith by one's ability to speak in *tongues*, to do *miracles*, to *heal*, and to "*feel*" the operation of the Holy Spirit within them, as if it were a drug-induced "high"! "If you're REALLY a 'born-again' Christian and an heir of heaven, such gifts of the Spirit should be evident in your life!" they tell you. And they thus **steal** from simple, believing Christians the assurance of faith and drive them to doubt and despair! And these "Full Gospel" fellowships, as they like to call themselves, are the "very latest thing" to lure unsuspecting souls away from the truth of God's pure Word into the byways of error!

What about the **cults**? Don't we recognize in the so-called "Witnesses of Jehovah," the Mormons, and the 7th Day Adventists, for example, **the FOES of Christ's "little flock"**? To be sure!! For they direct Bible-believing Christians to other revelations for authoritative teachings, placing angels and men of vision and self-proclaimed prophets **above** the rule of the Divine Word, so that the Holy Scriptures of God Himself must play "second-fiddle" to the "*commandments of men.*" And yet many of these cults, "in the name of Jesus," steal countless thousands of unsuspecting souls into their idolatrous, anti-trinitarian, completely unchristian religions every year —people just like you and me!

And let's not forget the huge synodical bodies today which **masquerade** under the name "**Lutheran**," whose doctrine and whose practice bear **NO RESEMBLANCE WHATSOEVER** to the Scriptural doctrine and practice of Luther and our orthodox fathers; who blatantly permit error to stand side-by-side with the truth; who think that insisting on **true unity** is "asking too much" nowadays in spite of the Savior's words in John 8, verse 31: "*Continue in My Word!*" and in spite of the Apostle's admonition in I Corinthians 1:10, "*...that [we] all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among [us], but that [we] be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*" —Such so-called "Lutherans" look down their noses at our little Conference of only five congregations and say, "No wonder you're so **little**! Your doctrinal position is too **rigid**! Lighten up! Allow for a little 'diversity' in doctrine and practice among your

people, and you'll grow! Look at US!" And if you think THEY'RE not "the enemy" of Christ's "*little flock*," try to count up the number of those who once were our brethren in the faith, who over the years were "snookered" by them and deserted our fellowship!! —And what do those poor deluded souls know of Christian doctrine anymore today?? Just ASK 'em, and then be deafened by their silence!! What a rotten shame in the sight of God!!

But by far the **WORST** enemy of all —the enemy that should strike the greatest fear into our hearts when we think of the destruction it can visit upon Christ's "*little flock*"— the **worst** enemy of **all** is **complacency and indifference**, the "enemy *within*," within our old sinful flesh! It will be our own **lack of interest** in hearing, learning, searching, and growing in God's Word that will be our undoing long before we *ever* fall prey to the enemies from *without*! Loss of "*first-love*" (Revelation 2:4) for the Savior, His Word, and His Church is such a debilitating and gangrenous disease that no one recognizes it in himself! And if anyone **else** even suggests that it might be setting in, the **DENIAL** is instantaneous and sometimes downright hostile! But like a drunkard, swearing sobriety with one hand on a Bible and the other on a bottle, the denial is meaningless! For the Lord's Apostle Peter says in his second Epistle chapter three that unless we "*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*," we run the sure risk of "*fall[ing] from [our] own steadfastness*" (3:17-18) in spite of our cocksure attitude of invincibility!

And WHERE anymore can we even **FIND** the full truth of Christ's saving Word preached and taught regularly and consistently in its purity —but in the congregations of our own precious fellowship? That's not a boast; that's a FACT! And yet the Lord warns us in Amos chapter 8 that we better not take that Word for granted, or we might find ourselves (like Germany after Luther's *Reformation*) experiencing a "*famine*" of hearing the Word of God! God says: "*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a **famine** in the land, not a famine of **bread**, nor a thirst for **water**, but of **hearing the words of the Lord**; and they shall wander from sea to sea and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord, and shall not find it!*" (vv. 11-12). In our Conference at present, we have NO students in our seminary program and none "on the immediate horizon;" and we currently have not ONE pastor to spare in case even one of our elderly shepherds is called home! Right now we actually have one of our pastors serving two of our congregations! Does anyone think that such a famine is purely theoretical?? Does anyone think that such a famine will never come in our lifetime?? Wake up and smell the coffee! We have the Lord's warning black-on-white We'll be our own worst enemies if we let that happen due to foolish complacency and indifference!

And yet, in spite of the foes that threaten Christ's "*little flock*," both from *without* **and** from *within*, the Savior in our title-text brings to our fearful hearts the most **assuring Gospel comfort** in the face of these lurking enemies. He says, "*Fear NOT, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.*"

*Tho' devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
we tremble not, we fear no ill,
they shall NOT overpower US!*

Thus sings **Luther** in his "Battlehymn of the Reformation." How can **he**, yea, how can **we** be so confident? Because "*it is [our] Father's good pleasure to give [us] the Kingdom*," Jesus tells us. Let us yet examine these words and their application in the three principles or pillars of the Reformation.

Salvation is by grace alone! Grace is "*the gift of God*," Paul writes in Ephesians 2, bestowed upon poor, wretched, vile, and undeserving sinners, "*not of works*" — "*not by works of righteousness which **we** have done*" (Titus 3:5), but "*purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in [us]*" (Luther, 1st Article). The **gift of salvation** was bought and paid for by Christ —*not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death*" (Luther, 2nd Article; cf. I Peter 1:18-19). And God declares it, with "no strings attached," to all men in the Gospel. He says: "Here it is! It's yours! Take it! *It is [My] good pleasure to **give you** the kingdom*, even though you don't **deserve** it, could never **earn** it, will never be able to **compensate Me** for it by holy works and penances, '*lest any man should boast*'" (Ephesians 2:9).

Salvation is through faith alone! **FAITH** is no meritorious work, but it is simply confidence of the heart in the mercy of God to poor sinners for Jesus' sake. It's like a poor beggar's hand that humbly reaches out —NOT to meet God

halfway, NOT to show Him our resolve to be better persons, NOT to gain His favor by a demonstration of sincerity, not to “trigger” His magnanimous, forensic act of *justification*— but simply to receive what has been given freely without condition. That’s the ONLY WAY we can *receive* the gifts of forgiveness and perfect righteousness before God, and thus be regarded as personally justified in His sight and at peace with Him, as we read in Romans 3, verse 28: “*A man is justified [that is, **declared right before God**] by faith, **without** the deeds of the Law.*” Not only is it “[our] Father’s good pleasure to **give** [us] the kingdom,” the kingdom of heaven with all its perfect joy and peace and rest, but it is God’s “good pleasure” that we receive it **through faith**, as Paul and Silas told the jailer at Philippi: “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;**” and again St. Paul writes: “**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!” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

And all this is sealed to us by **Scripture alone!** God’s precious Word is the **only source** and the **only standard** of what is to be preached and taught and believed by His people, “*the sheep of [His] pasture*” (Psalm 79:13), because **only the Holy Scriptures**, the infallible, inerrant, perfectly clear, and authoritative words of God Himself, penned by “*the apostles and prophets*” (Ephesians 2:20) by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, are “*able to make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (II Timothy 3:15). The canons and decrees of church councils, the encyclicals of popes, the writings of the fathers, the revelations supposedly handed down by angels, the personal opinions of great theologians, and the resolutions of synods and conferences— ALL of them count for NOTHING where our **faith** is concerned. WHY?? Because **Scripture alone**, “*the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone*” (Ephesians 2:20) is the **sole authority** in His Church. And when the enemies of Christ’s “*little flock*” try to pull us, lure us, or entice us away from that precious Truth, the Truth that makes us free (John 8:32), then, holding fast to our Bibles, we declare with Luther, as he stood before the Diet at Worms, “**Here I stand! I cannot do otherwise! God help me! Amen!**” And with St. Paul: “*I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord!*” (Romans 8:38-39).

What an ironclad comfort it is then to our trembling hearts, as our “*little flock*” is beset with enemies on every hand in these last days of sore distress! What a never-failing assurance it is for our faith as we “*continue in [Christ’s] Word*” (John 8:31), to hear Him say in our title-text, “**Fear not**, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give **you** the kingdom.” May His Holy Spirit, through the Word, continue to keep us steadfast in that faith and increase in us the zeal to “*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (II Peter 3:17-18), so that by indifference and unbelief we never stand in the way of His “good pleasure” regarding His “*little flock*,” against which the very gates of hell cannot prevail (Matthew 16:18). Thus, enabled and strengthened by His Spirit through the Gospel and the precious Sacraments, “*let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*” (Hebrews 10:23) to the very end, to the glory of His grace, for Jesus’ sake!

*The Word THEY still shall let remain,
and not a thank have for it!
He’s by OUR side upon the plain
with His good gifts and Spirit!
And take they our life, goods, fame, child and wife,
let these all be gone! They yet have nothing won!
The Kingdom OURS remaineth!*

—D. T. M

The Function of Faith in Justification

“A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law.”

Romans 3:28

Before we poor sinners consider the function of faith in justification, let us first remind ourselves from the Word of God where we and all mankind in our natural condition stand spiritually before a just and holy God. Scripture clearly teaches us that *all men* — *including us* — are, by nature, without any righteousness before God (Romans 3:10), without any spiritual good in heart and soul (Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:18a), continually inclined only to evil (Genesis 8:21; Romans 7:23), spiritually blind in both heart and intellect (Ephesians 4:18; I Corinthians 2:14), spiritually dead and captive in Satan’s power (Ephesians 2:1-2; Acts 26:18), and enemies of God, with a perverted will in constant voluntary opposition —unable and not desiring to change this opposition— both to the Law of God (Romans 8:7-8) and, with the loss of free will and knowledge in spiritual matters, even to the Gospel of Christ (I Corinthians 1:21, 23; 2:14; John 6:44a).

On account of this state of *total depravity*, Scripture clearly teaches that *all men* — *including us* — are, by nature, justly condemned by God as sinners (Romans 3:23, 5:18a, 19a), are under His wrath and alienated from Him (Ephesians 2:3; 2:12; 4:18), and are doomed to death and damnation in hell for eternity (Romans 5:12; 6:23; Ezekiel 18:20; Matthew 25:46a). “*Now we know that what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God*” (Romans 3:19). So we learn that we and all mankind cannot make ourselves right with God; for “*by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the Law is the knowledge of sin*” (v. 20), the Law which thoroughly and fully works God’s wrath and indignation on account of our sin (Romans 4:15).

Since we are therefore helpless to help ourselves, God grants full and free pardon to all mankind as the loving, free and unconditional gift of His favor to the wretched and undeserving. First, this justifying grace is grace *in Christ*, purchased and earned by the Redeemer’s *propitiation*, or satisfaction, of God’s justice on behalf of all mankind (I John 2:2) — having earned perfect righteousness for all mankind by His *active obedience*, that is, by His perfect keeping of the Law in man’s place (Romans 5:18-19), and having paid the penalty of their guilt by His *passive obedience*, that is, by His having suffered the pains of hell in man’s stead (John 1:29). Secondly, justifying grace is *universal*, in that the favor unmerited by us and the love of God earned by Christ Jesus extends not merely to some, but to all men without exception. Christ is the Savior of all men (I Timothy 2:5-6); God earnestly desires the salvation of all men (v. 4; II Peter 3:9); and Christ secured the salvation even of those who ultimately reject the grace of God (Titus 2:11; II Peter 2:1). Thirdly, justifying grace is *serious and efficacious*, in that God seriously desires to bring all men to saving faith by the Gospel and to preserve them by the same means through faith unto salvation (Matthew 23:37; Acts 2:38; 7:51).

Now, “saving faith,” simply defined, is God-wrought trust or confidence directed to an *object* (cf. Philippians 1:29), and *not* an act of virtue or a show of proper attitude on the part of the believer. What is the *object* of this trust or confidence? The object of *justifying* faith is *not* merely “God” as He exists; for even unbelievers “know” God based solely on their natural knowledge of Him (Romans 1:19-21); some even believe “*that there is one God,*” which “*the devils also believe and tremble*” (James 2:19). Neither is the object of justifying faith the Law of God, for “*no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God*” (Galatians 3:11).

No, the *object* of justifying faith is “*the Gospel of peace, ...glad tidings of good things*” (Romans 10:15), the wonderful news that, because of Christ’s vicarious atonement, by which He rendered to the Father complete

satisfaction for the sins of all mankind and perfect obedience to the just demands of His holy Law in the place of all sinners, God, as the gift of His mercy and grace, “*reconcil[ed] the world unto Himself*,” fully and freely forgiving their sins and imputing to all men righteousness in His sight (II Corinthians 5:19, 21; Romans 5:18–19).

The *function* of justifying faith is *not* to earn the grace of God (Romans 11:6), *not* to demonstrate one’s proper disposition to it (Ephesians 2:9), *not* to make God’s justification effective (Romans 3:24–26). Rather it is merely the *receptive instrument* by which one “lays hold on” the grace of God in Christ (Cf. I Timothy 6:12). Justifying faith is simply confidence of the heart in the mercy of God which remits sins for Christ’s sake, totally apart from the works of the Law, confidence whereby the sinner clings to the assurance of God’s forensic pardon or amnesty for all mankind and personally receives full absolution from all his guilt and from the punishment that he himself deserves and full assurance that he is accounted righteous before God. “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law*” (Romans 3:28). “*For 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*” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Note well how this teaching is in stark contrast to that of the Church of Rome, which anathematizes or curses the Scriptural function of justifying faith, stating in the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, Session 6, Canon 12: “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.” This dreaded curse is still the Pope’s official position today. Beware!

The role of faith in justification is not a new teaching, as, also in the Old Testament, justification was always by God’s grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith; for “*he [Abram] believed in the Lord; and He [the Lord] counted it to him for righteousness*” (Genesis 15:6; Cf. Romans 4:3). Christ’s righteousness was imputed to Abram *by faith*, not because of his righteous works (Romans 4:1–8). “*To Him [Jesus of Nazareth] give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins*” (Acts 10:43).

It is “*the righteousness of God without the Law ...being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets*” (Romans 3:21) that brings us undeserving sinners the divine assurance that “*being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:1). For the true and certain reason that *God* is faithful and that *His* promises in His Word are *sure* (Numbers 23:19; II Corinthians 1:20; II Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 10:23b; I John 2:25), a poor sinner who clings in childlike confidence to God’s declared justification of all mankind in Christ as pronounced in the Gospel (Romans 3:23–26; 4:5; II Corinthians 5:19–21) has the sure and certain assurance of that justification as his own personal possession (Romans 4:16; 8:38–39; Philippians 1:6; II Timothy 1:12).

May we, not only this Reformation season but also throughout our lives, hold fast in the humble hand of faith and ever firmly maintain the chief Scriptural teaching of justification by God’s grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, totally apart from any works of the Law, receiving its precious comfort for ourselves by God-given confidence in the Lord’s promises and assurances of our justification!

— Jason A. Mabe*

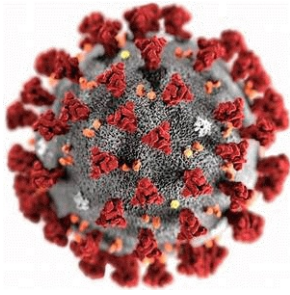
(Submitted through his Pastor)

* A student in our seminary when the article was originally submitted



**O God, our Lord, Thy Holy Word
was long a hidden treasure
til to its place it was by grace
restored in fullest measure.
For this today our thanks we pay
and gladly glorify Thee.
Thy mercy show and grace bestow
on all who still deny Thee.**

TLH 206, 1



The Covid-19 Pandemic— A Catalyst for Fleshly Behavior

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: ...hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies... and such like.” —Galatians 5:19-21

For a year and a half, our country —indeed the whole world for practical purposes— has been in the grips of a viral pandemic that has virtually changed the lives of all our citizens, not for the better but for the worse in most cases. For true believers, of course, chastisements are meant for their good and blessing, even though they seem for the present to be grievous (Hebrews 12:11). Indeed the *anxiety* caused by this pandemic panders to the flesh in sinful mankind and results in many of the works cited in our title-text. Since little was known about Covid-19, exactly how it was spread, how it might be mediated and contained, and how it might be arrested and hopefully cured, the disease propagated itself so rapidly and with such deadly consequences that a virtual *panic* ensued with the result that our entire society was effectively shut down with people confined to their homes and contact between persons limited at first to those of their own households, as if one’s home was the only safe refuge from infection. People couldn’t go to work; businesses shut down, children couldn’t attend school, and hospitals began literally to choke with the number of serious and critical cases filling their intensive care units. Public worship in church services and classes was prohibited, and people generally were consumed with *fear* of one another. “Social distancing” became a common expression in our vocabulary, with six feet apart becoming the standard of “safe separation” from others; and yet even that regulation didn’t seem to be adequate in gatherings of more than six people. The word that generally characterized the mood of the average citizen was “*fear*.”

When medical professionals decided that the virus was spread chiefly by means of respiratory or saliva droplets coughed or sneezed onto others and then ingested or inspired by them, *masks* were mandated for people indoors and even outdoors to contain the spread; but then some masks were deemed to be effective while others were not, and this itself became (and still is) a matter of controversy. PPE (“personal protective equipment” like N95 masks, gloves, gowns, coveralls, safety glasses and shields, etc.) were in short supply for doctors and nurses in many hospitals; and an urgent rush on production and shipment of these items was initiated. And for critically ill patients, whose lungs were compromised by the disease and deprived of oxygen, special ventilators had to be manufactured by the thousands to keep them alive in intensive care units. Temporary hospitals were built, and the one word which characterized all of these efforts was “*panic*.”

Due to a public/private partnership initiated by the federal government in May, 2020, known as “Operation Warp Speed,” to develop and test vaccines against the virus, *several* vaccines were produced by December of that same year, with the government purchasing one hundred million doses in advance of their release; and they were authorized by the FDA for “emergency use” on December 11th, clearly a record for the time usually needed to develop and produce vaccines of this kind. Sadly, a word that *now* characterizes the vaccine effort among many of our citizens is “*suspicion*,” since the vaccines are not really a cure and in some cases have resulted in negative side-effects, so that about 30% of our population still have not been vaccinated. Recently now, in order to close that gap, many governmental agencies and even private companies are *requiring* (*mandating*) vaccination as a condition for continued employment, even though some have a natural, acquired immunity from having suffered a Covid infection, and despite the protests that mandatory vaccinations violate an individual’s “constitutional rights” — which remains to be seen in court tests.

There can be no doubt that the Covid pandemic is a highly serious matter, given that between January, 2020, and September, 2021, there have been 44,139,822 total cases in the United States alone, some admittedly not serious or critical, but with a total of 713,295 deaths to date. There have been 233,896,879 cases worldwide and 4,785,663 deaths. 210,692,802 cases have recovered. (www.worldometers.info as of September 29th).

Besides the *physical* dangers of the disease itself, which are most severe in those who are immunocompromised, there are “mitigations” that are frustrating and often difficult to bear. The impact of such mitigations on businesses (and especially *small* businesses), on employment especially for heads of households, on the in-person education of our children, and certainly the intrusion of governmental regulations and “recommendations” even upon our assembly for public worship, is having decidedly negative results *socially*. Of the mitigations, masking and social distancing are two of the most prominent and two of the most controversial, particularly the masking of little children, the masking of students in school, and the masking even of vaccinated people. Whether masking is effective at all is in controversy among medical professionals, which causes more doubts, more misgivings, and more distrust among ordinary citizens. We observe and perhaps even personally experience frustration, isolation, anxiety, depression, anger, resentment, wrath, short temper, malaise, lack of initiative and motivation to be productive, and disrespect for our governments (federal, state and local), their officers, and their representatives. Some of these are listed in our title-text as “*works of the flesh*,” and some are outgrowths of those works and *fleshly* acts and attitudes contrary to God’s Law, acts which should “*not be once named among [us] as becometh saints*” (Ephesians 5:3b).

It is certainly not an overstatement to say that many of us have observed these and other “*works of the flesh*” in our society, in our neighbors, and even in ourselves, undue “*care*” [i.e. *anxiety*] (Philippians 4:6) or “*taking thought*” [i.e. *worrying*] (Matthew 6:24ff.) about matters over which we have no control, matters which have over the course of a year and a half created a pervasive atmosphere of frustration and anxiety. We’re afraid of everybody; we suspect everybody of being a “carrier;” we worry that a stranger closer to us than six feet might in effect KILL us by transmitting to us a fatal disease! That atmosphere has acted as a kind of **catalyst**, an influence-to-action, resulting in attitudes, moods, suspicions, fears and behaviors characteristic of the children of this world who have no heavenly Father such as cares for you and me (Matthew 6:24ff.).

Quite obviously it’s not so much the disease itself that has negatively influenced our “human” behavior — for some of our own brethren have contracted Covid-19 and have borne it patiently as a chastisement of our dear heavenly Father (Hebrews 12:1-13) — but it’s the lock-downs, the masking, the social-distancing, the restrictions on our worship-assemblies, and now of late the mandatory vaccination policies that seem to intrude upon our personal liberty to decide for ourselves whether we want to have them. Our governments and the administrators in our workplace seem to be acting in an **arbitrary** or “*froward*” (I Peter 2:18) manner (which they often do — Herod, Pilate, Caesar, etc.) in enforcing their mandates that **our flesh** wants to *resist* them; but our Lord in His Word tells us the very opposite. Take just a few passages as examples:

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. ...Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath but also for conscience sake.” (Romans 13:1-2; 5)

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. ...Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward” (I Peter 2:13-16; 18)

“*Seditions*” are works of the flesh in which discontent, resistance or rebellion against the government in power are manifested and are justified in the fleshly mind as being “legitimate” and “warranted.” What *seems* to some to be “arbitrary” or “illegal” or “unconstitutional” dare not be used as *grounds* for discontent, resistance or rebellion when God Himself **forbids** “*seditions*.” “*Variance*” is a similar work of the flesh, an active disagreement, quarrel or dispute, where agreement should be expressed in a legal proceeding. “*Emulations*” are ambitious or envious rivalries for control where humility is lacking and pride prevails; and these are fueled by “*wrath*” and “*strife*” and “*such like*.”

This is the world in which we live today, the *unbelieving* world which is overwhelmingly *godless*, devoid of spiritual understanding, ruled by “*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*” (I John 2:16), and characterized by “*the works of the flesh [which] are manifest*” according to our title-text. As vexing as the world is to us Christians, realizing in our **new man** how the Old Adam of sin within all of us is a willing participant in the world’s evil works and ways (Romans 7:18-24), it is incumbent upon all of us to examine ourselves as to whether we are actively “*crucify[ing] the flesh with the affections and lusts*” (Galatians 5:24), consciously and deliberately fighting against those things which militate against our faith and seek to make us *part* of the world. The Lord Jesus, in His high-priestly prayer to His heavenly Father in John 17, prays for us in this regard: “*I pray not that Thou shouldest take them **out** of the world, but that Thou shouldest **keep them from the evil**. They are not **of** the world, even as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them** through Thy **truth**; **Thy Word is truth**”* (vv. 15-17). “*If we **live** in the Spirit,*” writes the Apostle Paul, if we are spiritually **alive** (Galatians 2:20), resurrected with Christ (Ephesians 2:1-7), sanctified by the Word of His Truth into a New Man (II Corinthians 5:17), then “*let us also **walk** in the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:25); then let’s **act like it!** Let us “*fight the good fight of faith*” (I Timothy 6:12), “*tak[ing] unto [us] the whole armor of God, that [we] may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand*” (Ephesians 6:13).

Therefore, as we are battered about by the Corona virus and its invisible threat to our health and safety, and as we are perplexed by the fleshly works which are stimulated and created in our Old Adam by anxiety, undue care, and uncertainty in the world, fleshly works to which we will succumb if we do not recognize them and fight against them in confidence of our heavenly Father’s gracious mercy and protection, “*let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us; and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, ...lest [we] be wearied and faint in [our] minds*” (Hebrews 12:1-3). Let us “*be **careful** [that is, anxious] for **nothing**, but in **everything**, by **prayer** and **supplication with thanksgiving**, let [our] requests be made known unto **God**. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep [our] hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:6-7).

—D. T. M.



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Abonnema, Nigeria

The Rev. Nimi B. Fyeface, Pastor

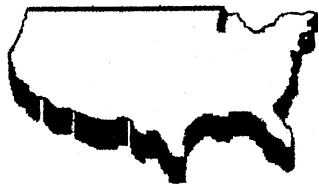
The Rev. Faith N. J. Asembo, Co-Pastor

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

Parsonage: (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's Cell: (206) 579-8861

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

5350 South Fountain Street, Seattle, WA 98178

Sunday School & Bible Class 4:00 p.m.

Worship Service 5:30 p.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

483 Tangent Street, Lebanon, OR 97355

E-mail: revbloedel@gmail.com

On the Web at
StLukes-CLC.com

Telephone: (206) 723-1078

Pastor's Cell: (206) 579-8861

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's Cell: (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

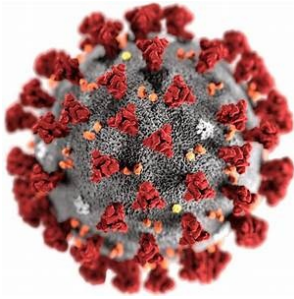
On the Web at
TrinityEvLutheran.com

Telephone: (708) 948-7075

Parsonage: (708) 386-4145
Pastor's Cell: (708) 556-1892

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

Help us, Good Lord!



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

—Philippians 4:6

Lord God, dear heavenly Father, we thank Thee that, according to Thy merciful providence, Thou hast regarded our beloved country in this time of peril and hast permitted our society to open up to a great extent as we experience far fewer infections with the Coronavirus due to natural and acquired immunity and successful inoculations with effective vaccines. Even as we still 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. May it please Thee in Thine own best time and way to comfort us in this period of chastening and to protect us from harm and danger, granting us meanwhile patience under adversity 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.

