

- WITNESS, MERCY, LIFE TOGETHER -

# MISSION FIELD: USA

## A RESOURCE FOR CHURCH PLANTING

BY REV. STEVEN D. SCHAVE





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## FROM THE AUTHOR

**I** WOULD FIRST LIKE TO THANK MY WIFE, DEACONESS KIM SCHAVE, for her support which has been unwavering in the midst of any challenge. She also, has given me an example of the fierce determination of the diaconate in mercy and advocacy for the least of our brothers. I thank my children for being the greatest kids a father could ask for. I thank my mother who made a career of childcare and even owned a daycare amidst special needs children, fueling my compassion for the weakest and most marginalized among us. I thank my father for instructing me on how to be a man of intellect, respect and humble service. I am forever grateful to all those who helped to plant Christ Lutheran Church, Perry, Ga., and those who helped to revitalize St. Paul Lutheran Church, Cincinnati, Ohio. I could not have asked for a greater group of people to serve with in the ministry. I thank my professors at Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Ind., for my understanding of mission from the cross.

I dedicate this work to the legacy of the reformer Dr. Martin Luther and the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Upon his visit to the holy city of Rome, Dr. Luther was certainly disillusioned by what he discovered there. It was a time in the church when forgiveness was for sale to support a towering bureaucracy, works righteousness had become enmeshed in the fabric of the church and gross and scandalous sin was openly occurring even amongst the leaders of the church. Luther could not remain silent anymore, not only because of the corrupt nature, but also the impact it was having on the souls that were entrusted to his care.

We speak often in terms of mission, doctrine, church planting and revitalization, but to be sure, these are all the means for reformation of the Christian Church. Wherever the Word is planted or sustained in a distinctly Lutheran confession of faith, these are seeds for reformation. And indeed there is no greater way to honor the legacy of the reformation than to continue it right here in our own Missouri Synod. To honor Luther's legacy by purifying the church's confession and being steadfast in our mission. This can only happen through true reformational leadership which stands on the Word to bring concord among us. Make no mistake; the reformation was a difficult time in the Church which required sacrifice and suffering to bring forth the truth of the Gospel. But united in confession, the mission would once again have the foundation needed to stand the test of time. *Sola scriptura* (by Scripture alone), *Sola fide* (by faith alone), *Sola gratia* (by grace alone), *Solus Christus* (Christ alone), *Soli Deo gloria* (glory to God alone): God grant that through the framework of witness, mercy, life together for Word & Sacrament mission we might see a reformation of the church that binds us together in these dark and latter days. God grant that the bride would be adorned and the lamps would be burning when the bridegroom arrives.





# INTRO- DUCTION



## FOREWORD

The purpose of this church planting resource is twofold. First, it aims to provide the theological underpinnings for doing Lutheran missions in order to help a core group in developing their shared identity in what it is to be the Lutheran Church. Secondly, in the following chapters, it offers a practical step-by-step approach to go from forming a core group to chartering a new LCMS congregation. Likewise as a planning aid this resource uses witness, mercy and life together as the framework for mission to help organize around these patterns in the life of the new church.

Why should the LCMS consider “Witness, Mercy and Life Together” as the framework for doing missions? Certainly from a purely administrative perspective, having these new emphases can aid in budgeting, planning and implementing the work of the Church. Indeed, it makes for a manageable spreadsheet and a clean looking pie chart in presenting metrics, or for strategic planning. And not only would it be a great tool for simplicity sake, but also would help in fine tuning the focus in the midst of a plethora of models and programs and governance structures — and even missiological constructs.

But surely the mission of God is not simply a task oriented endeavor; it is both incarnational and cruciform. At the Trinitarian center of mission is the Father sending the Son. And upon the Son ascending, once completing His salvific work, the Spirit descends upon the Church along with the formation of the Body of Christ. The Spirit gathers the Church, through the preaching of Christ, who draws us back to the Father. This is the natural embodiment of mission in the Church. And there is no more natural embodiment than witness, mercy and life together in regards to the life of the Church and her identity. At the core of any mission work then, is clearly answering the question of, “what is Church in relation to God?” A right understanding of church (ecclesia) will flow naturally into witness, mercy and life together. While at the same time, this can have intentionality in how it is accomplished in practice.

Two key aspects of this mission are church planting and revitalization. While the mission work of planting and revitalization may seem quite distinct, it can be shown that the patterns of witness, mercy and life together are present, regardless of

the setting. But again, the presupposition is that mission cannot be separated from the Church, as God’s Word and Sacraments are central to all mission work.

Here you will find practical resources for those who will endeavor to do mission work in a distinctly Lutheran way. The start of a new church can be a daunting task when one considers that they are laying the foundation for a Lutheran church for years to come. However, as this is not simply a program, but an identity, we can naturally answer the questions: how do we know that a church been planted, and is it clearly recognizable as the body of Christ in this place? The basis of this mission then will be the marks of the church and not simply business metrics.

So, too, with revitalization, this is no transformation of the church into something that is foreign to its DNA, but rather bringing back to life what once was. But again, just as with starting a new life, the thought of revitalizing should seem a daunting task for mere mortals. And yet it is the living and active Word of God that can change chaos, death and decay of church and community, into peace, resurrection and life. And this rebirth will again be patterned by witness, mercy and life together. But rather than over complication, this can be accomplished when we simplify, unify and testify.

Of course when we deal with categorizations like witness, mercy and life together, there will be challenges. For example these categories have intersections that make it more difficult to fit the mission work of the church neatly into individual file folders. As a matter of fact, in his “Mission from the Cross,” Detlev Schulz had previously described the identity of the church in mission by using *Martryria/Diakonia/Koinonia*, and a fourth category, *Leitourgia*. Indeed one could argue that worship is in and of itself incorporated into all three of the other elements. But to be sure, worship could also be its own category, and could easily be included in the mission framework as such. However, as the three intersecting categories are now widely accepted, they will be used for the framework for mission.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission From the Cross* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2009), 236–239.



# A THEOLOGY OF WITNESS...

## ... MERCY AND LIFE TOGETHER IN MISSIONS

**T**he basic theological question to be asked is, “do we ever see a time in Scripture when the church is NOT patterned by Witness, Mercy and Life Together?” Indeed, throughout the Old Testament, the people of God have a life together: called by, and set apart by God to dwell in unity. Everything that an individual did affected the whole community, and in return God purifies His people of all those things that would divide or cause harm. And their life together was centered on worshipping God and receiving His gift of forgiveness. Mercy, too, is non-optional, as God commands His people to love others and to care for them — including those outside the community of believers. Likewise, His people are to be a blessing to the nations, a light to the world. We often think of mission in the Old Testament as being centripetal or drawing inward, with a few references to sent ones such as Jonah. But there can be no doubt that God’s people were to be a witness to His name, and the resulting witness was both good and bad, lifting up or defiling the Name of God.

But from the moment that the likes of Abraham, Noah or Israel arrived at their destinations, they established an altar and they called on the Name of the Lord, for the whole world to see. Even the location of the Promised Land bears witness to the fact that the nations were to be greatly influenced by the Church. God’s people were meant to be at the center of commerce, travel and religion ... a witness to the world.

So, too, the early Christian Church abounds in witness, mercy and life together. A simple survey of the words *martyria*, *diaconia* and *koinonia* will show the evidence of this. The early church is formed in its fellowship as the one body of Christ. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Again, worship and reception of the divine gifts of the sacraments was the focal point of their life together. And likewise to the location of the nation of Israel, witness and mercy of the early Christian Church were the innate result of this life together. The Church was to be a steward of the mysteries and stewards of first article gifts to be used in mercy both within the house of God and for those outside the kingdom. And of course witness was given, even in the midst of persecution. Not in spite of, but often spurned on by their life under the cross. Life together was strengthened, people were cared for according to their needs and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Indeed, when Christ ascended, He handed down the mantle of proclaiming repentance and forgiveness, executing the office of the keys and being merciful as God was merciful. The Church was to love one another as Christ had loved them and to take this love into the world, to the very ends of the earth, starting from heart of the city.

## BUT WHAT IS CHURCH?

Then and now, the life of the Church is patterned by witness, mercy and life together. And yet, if we are to start anew or bring to life what once was, what is at the heart of the matter is, “what is church?” in relation to these patterns. What are the distinct marks of the Christian Church that one would expect to find in accord with a Lutheran confession of faith? Martin Luther speaks of seven marks of the Church that incorporate witness and life together in relation to God, while he includes yet another natural out-flowing of the church, characterized by loving our neighbor (mercy).

In his writing, *Church and Ministry III*, Luther begins the discussion of what constitutes the church in the following way:

*Well then, setting aside various writings and analyses of the word “church,” we shall this time confine ourselves simply to the Children’s Creed, which says, “I believe in one holy Christian church, the communion of saints.” Here the creed clearly indicates what the church is, namely, a communion of saints, that is, a crowd assembly of people who are Christians and holy, which is called a Christian holy assembly, or church. Yet this word “church” is not German and does not convey the sense or meaning that should be taken from this article.*

*In Acts 19 [:39] the town clerk uses the word ecclesia for the congregation or the people who had gathered at the market place, saying, “It shall be settled in the regular assembly.” Further, “When he said this, he dismissed the assembly” [vs. 41]. In these and other passages the ecclesia or church is nothing but an assembly of people, though they probably were heathens and not Christians. It is the same term used by town councilmen for their assembly which they summon to the city hall. Now there are many peoples in the world; the Christians, however, are a people with a special call and are therefore called not just ecclesia, “church,” or “people,” but sancta catholica cristiana, that is, “a Christian holy people” who believe in Christ. That is why they are called a Christian people and have the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies them daily, not only through the forgiveness of sin acquired for them by Christ (as the Antinomians foolishly believe), but also through the abolition, the purging, and the mortification*

*of sins, on the basis of which they are called a holy people. Thus the “holy Christian church” is synonymous with a Christian and holy people or, as one is also wont to express it, with “holy Christendom,” or “whole Christendom.” The Old Testament uses the term “God’s people.”<sup>2</sup>*

This of course is reminiscent of Peter’s description of God’s holy people when he speaks of them as living stones:

*“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put  
to shame.”*

*So the honor is for you who believe, but for  
those who do not believe,*

*“The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone,”*

*and*

*“A stone of stumbling,  
and a rock of offense.”*

*They stumble because they disobey the word,  
as they were destined to do.*

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood,  
a holy nation, a people for his own  
possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies  
of him who called you out of darkness  
into his marvelous light. Once you were not  
a people, but now you are God’s people; once  
you had not received mercy, but now you  
have received mercy” (1 PETER 2:6-10).*

Christ, therefore is the cornerstone of any church that is to be planted, and those in the royal priesthood are the stones which make up this spiritual house. The mortar that seals these stones together is faith, cemented together in the blood of Christ. This holy priesthood, the people of God, is the Christian holy people that Luther speaks of.

While Luther was able to quickly identify the church to be planted as a “Christian holy people,” the question still remains as to how to recognize these people. Luther himself wrestled with this in his writing, *Church and Ministry III*, where he poses the question “But how will or how can a poor confused person tell where such Christian holy people are to be found in this world?”<sup>3</sup> Therefore,

<sup>2</sup> This description, along with the discussion of the marks of the Church which follow, may be found in Luther’s treatise, “On the Councils and the Church,” in *Luther’s Works, Vol. 41: Church and Ministry III*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1966), 143–166. Hereafter, AE.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Vol. 41: Church and Ministry III*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 143.





as an outline, we will use Luther's discussion of what the Church is, and how we can identify it, to assist those who are involved in planting a new church by stepping through the marks of the Holy Christian Church. To put a finer point on these marks as they relate to mission, we will also draw from "A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century" (TSM21).

## 1) WITNESS: POSSESSION OF THE HOLY WORD OF GOD

Luther begins with the following to identify the church:

*First, the holy Christian people are recognized by their possession of the holy word of God. To be sure, not all have it in equal measure, as St. Paul says [1 Cor. 3:12-14]. Some possess the word in its complete purity, others do not. Those who have the pure word are called those who "build on the foundation with gold, silver, and precious stones"; those who do not have it in its purity are the ones who "build on the foundation with wood, hay, and straw," and yet will be saved through fire. More than enough was said about this above. This is the principal item, and the holiest of holy possessions, by reason of which the Christian people are called holy; for God's word is holy and sanctifies everything it touches; it is indeed the very holiness of God, Romans 1 [:16], "It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith,"*

*and 1 Timothy 4 [:5], "Everything is consecrated by the word of God and prayer."<sup>4</sup>*

One of the most exciting moments in planting a church is breaking ground for a new building. Once the concrete foundation is poured, there is a sense of excitement for how the church building will unfold. However, Luther aptly points out that the holy Christian people have a foundation that, unlike a physical structure, is unshakable. Regardless of where this new church begins to meet, whether it is a storefront or a funeral home or the like, it is the Word of God which consecrates all that they do. And so too, it is the Word of God which will create faith and bring salvation to the lost. As Luther mentions, it is not enough, then, to build the church upon an impure foundation. Putting this into the missionary context, the TSM21 offers this:

**Word of God.** *The Triune God is a speaking God. By his spoken word, the Father brought creation into existence (GEN. 1:1-2; PS 33:6; JOHN 1:1-3). Christ, who is the eternal Logos, speaks his words, which are "spirit and life" (JOHN 6:63). The word of Christ's death and resurrection — the message of God's reconciliation of sinners to himself — is preached. It is this preaching that creates faith since "faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ" (ROM. 10:17). The Holy Spirit was breathed out by Jesus to his apostles on Easter evening (SEE JOHN 20:22) and inspired them to put his word into writing "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing*

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 149



*you may have life in His name” (JOHN 20:31). It is through the prophetic and apostolic witness to Christ delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures — the Spirit-inspired and inerrant word of God — that we have access to Jesus and life with him (SEE 2 TIM. 3:15 AND 2 PETER 1:16–21). The Holy Scriptures are to be interpreted in light of their being given by the Triune God. “The exegesis of the Holy Scriptures cannot contradict their inspiration.”<sup>5</sup> Both interpreter and context stand under the Holy Scriptures and are, in fact, interpreted by the divine word. The internal clarity of Scripture is mediated through the external clarity of its own words. Far from being an imposition on the Bible, the right distinction of the law from the gospel is nothing other than the distinction between “letter” and “Spirit” (SEE 2 COR. 3:1–18). Without this distinction, the Holy Scriptures remain a dark book (see AP IV, 5–6 [Kolb-Wengert, 121]; FC SD V, 1–27 [Kolb-Wengert, 581–586]).<sup>6</sup>*

But to reach the lost, will it require a change to the message of God’s Word in an effort to be more evangelistic? Is this approach Biblically based? We can look to the content and substance of the preaching of Paul to the Gentiles as described in the New Testament (particularly in Acts and Paul’s Epistles) for its mission implications. The question at hand is, “Did Paul change his proclamation

of the Gospel to heathens for the sake of saving souls and outreach?” To reach the lost would Paul avoid preaching about the topics of sin, judgment, the wrath of God and the scandal of the cross? It is worth an examination of whether Paul would condone such missionary approaches to preaching and to examine his own preaching methods. In an effort to be more evangelistic, did Paul avoid topics that might cause an offense?

### EXCURSUS: THE APOSTLE PAUL AS MISSIONARY PREACHER

No one will dispute the apostle Paul’s credentials as a missionary and evangelist; and it’s worth noting that Gentiles to whom he preached had a similar religious and moral worldview to that of our culture today. How did Paul reach out to the Gentiles? Let’s take a quick look.

We have transcripts of Paul’s preaching in the book of Acts as he speaks in Antioch in Pisidia, Lystra and Athens.

- ✚ At the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia (ACTS 13:16–41), Paul tells his Jewish audience that Jesus was the promised Savior, that their leaders wrongfully had Him crucified, that He rose again and that salvation is found specifically in Him. He finishes the sermon warning them not to be unbelieving scoffers.
- ✚ In Lystra (ACTS 14:15–17), the sermon barely gets started. After Paul heals a crippled man, he tells the Gentiles (who declare Paul and Barnabas to be gods!) to turn from their vain

<sup>5</sup> Oswald Bayer, “Theology as Askesis,” in Gudstankens aktualitet, trans. E. M. Wiberg Pedersen, et. al. (Copenhagen: Forlaget ANIS, 2010), 49.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew C. Harrison, “A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century” in *Journal of Lutheran Mission* (Sept. 2016), 67–68.

things to the living God who has already been providing for their daily needs.

- ✚ In his famous sermon in Athens (ACTS 17:22-31), Paul declares that their unknown god — the God they *don't* know — is the one true God who has made all things, and has raised a man (Jesus) from the dead, and that Jesus will judge the world in righteousness.

Clearly, Paul is not afraid to speak of matters that might be met with confusion, skepticism or anger.

In fact, responses to his preaching show a wide variety of reactions, often producing faith and exposing unbelief in the same group of hearers. In Antioch in Pisidia, many want to hear more, but others stir up persecution and drive Paul and Barnabas away. At Lystra, they barely stop the Gentiles from making sacrifices to them, and then the persecutors from Antioch arrive and stone Paul until they think he's dead. In Athens some want to hear more, while others mock Paul because he proclaims the resurrection of Jesus.

Paul always preaches relevantly. The content of his preaching and his epistles shows that he knows his audience well, carefully applying the Word in their context. But he doesn't design his preaching to guarantee a favorable reaction; instead, he proclaims God's Law and Gospel that they need to hear, regardless of how they might respond. It is his task to preach the Word, but it is the Holy Spirit's to convict the hearers and give them faith.

## SIN, WRATH AND JUDGMENT

This is never more true than with those controversial doctrines we mentioned before. Paul certainly doesn't shy away from warning of sin and judgment: within his epistles, he refers to sin more than 120 times and the Law at least 130 times.

Nearly as soon as he begins his epistle to the Romans, he says of unbelievers, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them" (ROM. 1:18-19). He quickly reinforces that this wrath is equally for the Gentiles as well as the Jews:

*"But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed ... There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who*

*does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality"* (ROM. 2:5, 9-11).

For outreach to the Gentiles, there is no compromise to be found, no excusing sins because they are immersed in a pagan culture. This is not an isolated instance: for example, he writes in Col. 3:5-6, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming."

Happily, he also makes clear that God shows no partiality when it comes to salvation: "For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing" (1 THESS. 5:9-11).

And again, God offers salvation to all: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (ROM. 6:23).

When it comes to the Law, Paul the missionary doesn't soften the Law into advice that seems obey-able, or suggest that God might not judge Gentiles as harshly. He always makes clear what is at stake for unrepentant sinners.

## THE SCANDAL OF THE CROSS

As Paul is forthright about the Law without compromise, he's also bold in proclaiming the Gospel that Jesus is the only way of salvation. Because he clearly articulates the threat (eternal death), he is also insistent on proclaiming the cure:

*I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith" (ROM. 1:14-17).*

If there is any doubt that Paul believes that Jesus is uniquely the Savior, there's Gal. 1:8-9: "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I



say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

### THE REASON FOR PAUL'S APPROACH

The reason for Paul's preaching is in the very next verse: “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ” (GAL. 1:10). Paul is there to preach the Word, to plant the seed; and because it is the Lord's Word, he leaves the harvest up to Him.

In fact, Paul *anticipates* a poor response: “For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 COR. 1:22-24). Yet, just a few verses later, he makes clear again that the cross is central to Christian preaching: “And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 COR. 2:1-2).

At the same time, he takes pains to make sure that if offense is taken, it is because of the Word and not the preacher's demeanor. When he commands the young pastor Timothy to teach the Word, he also instructs him to be an example in speech as well as love and conduct (1 TIM. 4:12). His sermon in Athens (ACTS 17:23-32) is a masterpiece of addressing his hearers' beliefs so that he may speak of Christ most relevantly. To the Ephesians, he notes the importance of “speaking the truth in love” (EPH. 4:15). In fact, in Ephesus he's met with nearly-violent disagreement; yet the town clerk defuses the crowd by noting that Paul and his companions “are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess” (ACTS 19:37). Paul's disagreement with their religion is both clear *and* respectful, and his preaching is consistently about man's sin and God's grace in Jesus Christ.

### PREACHING THE WORD (A SIMPLE PREACHING OF THE WORD)

It may sound too simple, but much can be learned for missionary preaching from Paul's exhortation to “**preach the word**” (2 TIM. 4:2), as well as his counsel to be “rightly handling the word of truth” (2 TIM. 2:15). To preach in like manner is far more than to examine Paul for logistical principles (e.g., “He went to the synagogue first” or “He was aware of his cultural context”), but to apply Law and Gospel properly. Rather than manipulating the Word to meet a

personal outreach agenda or one designed to meet numerical growth targets, his hearers will benefit immensely if a pastor allows the Word to speak for itself — sin, scandalous cross and all.

And if the preacher avoids topical sermons of sanctification and uses the church year as his guide, then he can't avoid Paul's — more importantly, God's — supreme subject of the cross, repentance and faith.

### TEACHING THE FAITH

The first mark of the Church — possession of the Word — is not just about preaching. It is also about teaching the faith.

The more one knows about something, the easier it is to talk about it. Long-time cooks can trade recipes and secrets for hours, while a gearhead can talk cars in detail. It's the same with the Christian faith: the more people know biblical doctrine, the more likely they are to share it with others. This makes instruction, or catechesis, an indispensable part of evangelism.

Another under-appreciated tool in the evangelist's toolbox then is *Luther's Small Catechism*. It's a fantastically concise explanation of Scripture summarized in simple language; yet for many it provides the deepest explanation of Christianity that they have ever heard. Though so profound that pastors still plumb its depths, it's written simply with the intent to instruct children — not just for their own faith, but also so that they can witness to it publicly. In fact, Luther explains that even a child can be prepared to give a missionary witness by means of catechetical instruction, even in the direst of circumstances:

*And finally, I strongly urge that children be taught the catechism. Should they be taken captive in the invasion, they will at least take something of the Christian faith with them. Who knows what God might be able to accomplish through them. Joseph as a 17-year-old youth was sold into slavery into Egypt, but he had God's word and knew what he believed. And he converted all Egypt. The same is true of Daniel and his companions.<sup>7</sup>*

As a welcome for church visitors, the Small Catechism is often an appreciated gift. As a tool for teaching members to evangelize — or for evange-

<sup>7</sup> “Admonition to Prayer against the Turks” in *AE* 43:239. The invasion Luther has in mind is that of Muslim armies who invaded Hungary in 1540. As another example to Luther's point, one might also remember that the Syrian commander Naaman first heard of God's mercy from a kidnapped little girl (2 Kings 5:2).





lizing by teaching, the Small Catechism is tough to beat: it's a treasure of Christian doctrine in an easy-to-learn format.

### RUNNING WELL

Possession of the Word is the first mark of the Church, and to proclaim the Word of God rightly is to do so in its fullness, properly distinguishing Law and Gospel and even presenting those teachings that are offensive to sinful ears. As we've seen above, Paul didn't change his message or theology to reach lost Gentiles. He does say in 1 Cor. 9:22, "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some." But this doesn't mean he changed the message: learning the sins and fears of his hearers, he spoke the Word of God appropriately but fully to their situation. (For instance, examine the entire discussion of 1 Cor. 8-10 where Paul is willing to forego meat because of the weakness of others, yet applies pointed Law and Gospel to their concern.)

A missionary preacher who is pressured to follow a preaching technique that obscures Law and Gospel can take to heart Paul's words to the Galatians: "You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is" (GAL. 5:7-10). Those who wish to plant or revitalize a church must ensure that the Word of God is kept in its purity and put their faith in its power to build and sustain faith. And why not?

The Gospel — and only the Gospel — is the power of salvation to all who will believe.

### LIFE TOGETHER: A "HANDS-ON" GOD IN THE SACRAMENTS

It should come as no surprise that after the Word, Luther discusses the Sacraments as the marks of the church. However, in today's society, one of the greatest barriers to the Gospel is the idea of a God who is hands-on with His creation. To be sure, it is evident in Scripture that God's hand was there as He formed Adam from the wet ground like a potter working with clay. So too, God knitted us together in our mother's womb as well. But to many, there is a feeling that God is no longer present with His creation, and so we must mystically transport ourselves to Him. At the same time, most of post-modern society is skeptical of the earthly and the absolute, including the church. To the post-modern world, spirituality requires an escape from the "real" world. Therefore, the idea of something earthly made sacred, within a church environment no less, is looked upon with great skepticism.

However, the next identifications of the church from Luther are just that — the Sacraments or sacred things. Physical things that are set aside, and when combined with the Word of God, have the power to give forgiveness. So too, Luther then speaks of identifiers as men being called into a divinely instituted office who in turn administer these Sacraments and who exercise the office of the keys on behalf of the church. And so what was once taken for granted, as in Luther's writings, now

requires much catechesis on the part of a church planter reaching out to the lost.

The foundation of the church is the Word of God, so when reaching the lost it must begin with that Word which is preached and taught as recorded in the Scriptures. This is indeed the Word of God and not men (2 PETER 1:20), and so too, the Bible is more than an ancient book. It has real operative power to change the lives of those who hear it proclaimed through the new church plant or revitalized one. God's Word created the heavens and the earth, and whenever His promises or curses were attached to something physical, it was connected to the operative power of the Word.

Therefore it must be taught that God, who wishes all men to be saved, uses lowly things as the means of His grace. If this is denied, then the incarnation will be a stumbling block. God humbled himself to become a man and to take on our flesh to save us. To deny the means of grace is to deny the two natures of Christ — the cosmic collision of heaven and earth. God promised to send the seed of Eve to win our salvation, God added his promise to that rainbow first seen by Noah, God made a covenant through circumcision, and God brought salvation from death at the Passover when His promise was attached to the blood of a lamb on a door. God has always been and will always be a hands-on God bringing salvation to His creation through His creation. So too, God works through the humble stuff of His creation, as it is not only for the wealthy and the powerful that He brings salvation, but even more so as Mary the mother of Christ proclaims, even the lowly will be exalted to the highest heavens.

## 2) LIFE TOGETHER: THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Luther's second identification of the church is as follows:

*Second, God's people or the Christian holy people are recognized by the holy sacrament of baptism, wherever it is taught, believed, and administered correctly according to Christ's ordinance. That too is a public sign and a precious, holy possession by which God's people are sanctified. It is the holy bath of regeneration through the Holy Spirit [TITUS 3:5], in which we bathe and with which we are washed of sin and death by the Holy Spirit, as in the innocent holy blood of the Lamb of God. Wherever you see this sign you*

*may know that the church, or the holy Christian people, must surely be present.*<sup>8</sup>

The Word of God teaches us that everything needed for our salvation was won for us upon the cross. There is nothing more that we are to do to save ourselves. However, God in His mercy has given us a way to be connected to that miracle that occurred on the cross. We then have a way to receive the benefits of what Christ did for us by giving us faith in the forgiveness of sins. Again, it is God's Word that has the power to create faith, but so too, when added to something earthly like water it has the power to do what is promised. In baptism, this is namely the promise of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit (TITUS 3:5).

We live and die in the waters of baptism. We see God's promises attached to the waters in the Flood, the Exodus and the Jordan River in which Naaman was cleansed and Jesus was baptized. In the case of the Flood and the Exodus, God drowns and God saves by using water. So too, in baptism God drowns our old Adam to bring the new man to life. It is this death and life that a newly planted church brings to the lost.

Baptism is critical to planting a church because Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (MATT. 28:19-20). Therefore, if a church plant has any question as to how they are to make disciples, they need look no further than baptism and teaching.

The TSM21 brings to light the fact that baptism then is more than an initiation to a particular church:

**Baptism.** *Baptism is far more than a rite of initiation. While it is a line of demarcation between unbelief and faith and hence not optional for mission, it is more than an entry point into the Christian life. Dr. C. F. W. Walther wrote, "Let us never forget that through Holy Baptism we have all joined the mission society which God Himself has established."<sup>9</sup> Baptism is best thought of as present tense, hence, "I am baptized" and not "I was baptized."*<sup>10</sup> Luther notes,

<sup>8</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 41: *Church and Ministry III*, 151.

<sup>9</sup> Walther, "The Mission Society," 24.

<sup>10</sup> Thus Christians live in our baptism through confession and absolu-

*"I am baptized, and through my baptism God, who cannot lie, has bound himself in a covenant with me."<sup>11</sup> Baptism is the Triune God's gift whereby he demonstrates his mercy by bestowing on us a new birth (SEE JOHN 3: 3-6; 1 PETER 1:3-5; TITUS 3:4-7). Baptized into his own name (MATT. 28:18-20), we have God's own pledge and witness that we belong to him through the forgiveness of sins (SEE ACTS 2:38-39) and are heirs according to the promise (ROM. 6:1-11; GAL. 3:26-29; COL. 2:12-14). Therefore, Baptism will not be withheld from infants or from new converts to the faith. Since it is by Baptism that we are joined to the body of Christ (SEE 1 COR. 12:12-13), this sacrament is foundational for our life together.<sup>12</sup>*

### 3) LIFE TOGETHER: THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

Luther's third identification of the church is as follows:

*Third, God's people, or Christian holy people, are recognized by the holy sacrament of the altar, wherever it is rightly administered, believed, and received, according to Christ's institution. This too is a public sign and a precious, holy possession left behind by Christ by which his people are sanctified so that they also exercise themselves in faith and openly confess that they are Christian, just as they do with the word and with baptism.<sup>13</sup>*

Jesus makes it very clear that in the Lord's Supper we receive not only bread and wine, but also His very Body and Blood (MATT. 26:26-28; LUKE 22:19-20). He did not come to give us new laws to follow, but invites us to "take and eat" and to "take and drink" that we might be able to touch and to taste our salvation and to have assurance of the forgiveness of sins won for us on the cross.

Administering the sacrament has great implications for those in a church planting scenario. It is the means by which the newly established congregation is brought together as the Body of Christ, and at the

same time an act out of love for the neighbor who might otherwise eat and drink to their spiritual harm. As stated in the TSM21:

***Lord's Supper.*** Hermann Sasse described the sacrament of the altar as "the church's heartbeat."<sup>14</sup> In this sacrament, Christ gives his body and blood under bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink. It is his testament in which he bestows the fruits of his saving sacrifice on the cross: His body given into death and his blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Luther underscores the forgiveness of sins in the Small Catechism as he engages in a threefold repetition of the words "given for you" and "shed for the forgiveness of sins." These words show us that the sacrament of the altar is the testament of God's sure mercy for sinners. When we come to eat and drink Christ's body and blood, we come as beggars to the feast of heaven. In this sacrament, we are not accessing Christ by liturgical mimesis;<sup>15</sup> rather we are proclaiming **the Lord's death until he comes** (SEE 1 COR. 11:26). **Eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper do not create life together (koinonia) but confess and express this unity we have in the proclamation of Christ's death. Life together (koinonia) in confessing him is always Christ's work and Christ's gift by his word. Hence the practice of closed Communion is a necessary corollary of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper.<sup>16</sup> Bringing contradiction in teaching or life in the Holy Communion**

<sup>14</sup> Hermann Sasse, *We Confess the Sacraments*, trans. Norman Nagel (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1985), 151.

<sup>15</sup> Mimesis means "imitation, mimicry."

<sup>16</sup> The Missouri Synod has used different nomenclature to express the idea of closed Communion at various times in her history. Different terms have been used to describe the same doctrine and practice. The terms "closed Communion," "close Communion" and "close(d) Communion" are equivalent terms. Article VI of the Missouri Synod's Constitution states as a condition of membership in the Synod, "Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description." Article VI:b provides additional clarification by defining unionism and syncretism as "Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession." The practice of closed Communion then precludes receiving Communion at churches that hold heterodox positions. The Missouri Synod has adopted Dr. C. F. W. Walther's *Church and the Office of the Ministry* as its official position in 2001 (Res. 7-17A). In Thesis VIII of Walther's *Church and the Office of the Ministry*, Walther writes, "Here the saying of Augustine holds: 'Believe and you have eaten.' As I said before: To receive the Sacrament is a mark of confession and doctrine. Therefore, whoever does not regard as true the doctrine of the church in which he intends to attend the Sacrament cannot partake of the Sacrament in that church with a clear conscience." (Download Walther's Thesis VIII at <http://goo.gl/gKqIOq>.) Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries*, trans. Norman Nagel (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1966), 76. "By 'closed Communion' reference is to the restricting of participation to full members of the congregation." Participation in Holy Communion is directly connected to church fellowship. See also CTCR, Admission to the Lord's Supper (1999), [lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=411](http://lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcms&id=411).

tion. By God's grace we daily return to our baptism as we crucify the old man in confession of sin and rise in accord with the new man in holy absolution (the forgiveness of sins). This gift therefore keeps the objective nature of God's grace ever before us so that we do not fall into relying on our experience or emotion. For these reasons we also strive to retain individual confession and absolution in the church.

<sup>11</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 35: *Word and Sacrament I*, eds. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton Oswald, Helmut Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999), 36.

<sup>12</sup> Harrison, "A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century," 68.

<sup>13</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 41: *Church and Ministry III*, 152.



*fails to give witness to Christ and what he gives us in and with his body and blood.*<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, those who are new to this church must be properly instructed in what it is that they are receiving. It must also be taught that they bring each others' burdens and joys to the altar in communion with those who they are in fellowship with. It is a chance to bring this newly planted church together in solidarity in the most intimate setting of sharing the table of the Lord.

#### 4) LIFE TOGETHER: THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS EXERCISED PUBLICLY

Luther's fourth identification of the church is as follows:

*Fourth, God's people or holy Christians are recognized by the office of the keys exercised publicly.<sup>18</sup> That is, as Christ decrees in Matthew 18 [:15–20], if a Christian sins, he should be reproved; and if he does not mend his ways, he should be bound in his sin and cast out. If he does mend his ways, he should be absolved. That is the office of the keys. Now the use of the keys is twofold, public and private. There are some people with consciences so tender and despairing that even if they have not been publicly condemned, they cannot find comfort until they have been individually absolved by the pastor. On the other hand, there are also some who are so obdurate that they neither recant in their heart and want their sins forgiven individually by the pastor, nor desist from their sins. Therefore the keys must be used differently, publicly and privately. Now where you see sins forgiven or reproved in some persons, be it publicly or privately, you may know that God's people are there. **If God's people are not there, the keys are not there either; and if the keys are not present for Christ, God's people are not present.** Christ bequeathed them as a public sign and a holy possession, whereby the Holy Spirit again sanctifies the fallen sinners redeemed by Christ's death, and whereby the Christians confess that they are a holy people in this world under Christ.*<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Harrison, "A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century," 68–69.

<sup>18</sup> Luther had previously discussed this subject at length in his treatise *The Keys* (1530). LW 40, 325–377.

<sup>19</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 41: Church and Ministry III, 153.

As Luther says, the office of the keys is both Scriptural and divinely instituted (MATT. 16:19 AND JOHN 20). Indeed Christ says: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (MATT. 16:18–19).

Thereby Christ Himself founded the church on the confession of Peter and the institution of the office of the keys. These words of Jesus give to Peter and to the Church the keys, which is the power to forgive sins or bind sins. Like Baptism and the Lords' Supper, we see a human action [whatever Peter binds/looses] with a Divine promise [also done in Heaven].

Even in its infant stages, a newly planted church should understand that it has received the gift that Jesus presented to the entire Holy Christian church of all times and of all places. In a postmodern era, this may be a stumbling block for non-Christians. The words of forgiveness will appear to be merely the words of a man. But again in John 20:19–33 we see that it is Christ's action that is taking place and not merely that of a pastor. Here we see a picture of the church. Christ is physically present and yet He goes through a door. He gives peace to His disciples and shows them the signs of His crucifixion. All these things we see in the church, including the office of the keys. The Father sends the Son, the Son sends the apostles, and as John says, we see the Son when we see the Father. Apostles are representatives of Christ in the Gospel mandates given to them. This is Christological in that within the church, Christ gives life to the church. Jesus ordains the disciples by breathing on them and saying "receive the Holy Spirit" for this work they are to do. He then gives them power to loose/bind sins.

It should be taught in a mission church that it can forgive sins based on the incarnation whereby the divine was joined with humanity. In Mark 2, a paralytic is healed, and his sins are forgiven. In verse 10 Jesus tells the Pharisees that to show He has authority to forgive, He also heals. The Pharisees said that only God can forgive sins, and people still feel this way today. They might think the pastor is puffed up because only the Son of man can forgive sins on earth. However, Christ is God joined to a man, and all authority in Heaven has come down to earth and is administered through the Office of the Public Ministry on behalf of the church.



Absolution then becomes a powerful witness to non-Christians that Christ is still working forgiveness of sins through His Church.

TSM21 connects this to the preaching office in this way:

*Preaching is not limited to the sermon but is also individualized in the absolution where God's servant is entrusted to speak words that forgive sins now (see **John 20: 21-23**; SC V, 15-29 [Tappert, 349-351])<sup>20</sup>. The absolution is eschatological, that is, it brings the verdict of the last day into time as Christ says, "I forgive you your sins." The absolution leaves no room for doubt for it is God's own word of promise to be trusted in life and death.<sup>21</sup>*

## 5) LIFE TOGETHER: CONSECRATION OR CALLING MINISTERS

Luther's fifth identification of the church is as follows:

*Fifth, the church is recognized externally by the fact that it consecrates or calls ministers, or has offices that it is to administer. There must be bishops, pastors, or preachers, who publicly and privately give, administer, and use the aforementioned four things or holy possessions in behalf of and in the name of the church, or rather by reason of their institution by Christ, as St. Paul states in Ephesians 4 [:8], "He received gifts among men ..." — his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers and governors, etc. The people as a whole cannot do these things, but must entrust or have them entrusted to one person. Otherwise, what would happen if everyone wanted to speak or administer, and no one wanted to give way to the other? It must be entrusted to one person, and he alone should be allowed to preach, to baptize, to absolve, and to administer the sacraments. The others should be content with this arrangement and agree to it. Wherever you see this done, be assured that God's people, the holy Christian people, are present.<sup>22</sup>*

If the view of the Church is an assembly of believers gathered around the Word proclaimed and the Sacraments administered, then it is logical to assume that someone must proclaim that Word and administer the Sacraments. Pieper speaks directly to the extreme situation of church planting in an area where there are no Christians when he says:

*Where there are no Christian congregations, as in a pagan country, there can be no public ministry, no service in the name of a congregation. But as soon as the missionary activity has borne fruit and a congregation has come into existence, the public ministry can be established. After showing that a special call is necessary to make one a teacher among Christians, Luther continues: "This is the call to a public office among Christians. But if one landed among people who are no Christians, one might do as did the Apostles and not wait for a call; for there [where there are no Christians] the public office of preaching does not exist, and one might say: Here there are no Christians, I will preach and instruct them in Christianity. And if a group formed, chose and called me to be their bishop, I would have a call." (St. L. III:723)<sup>23</sup>*

So even in the most extreme case, the public office of preaching is appropriate. Notice there is no mention of a specific number of Christians before this preaching and instruction is to begin. Pieper also shows the difference between individuals within the priesthood of all believers and the office of the public ministry:

*It is not a human, but a divine command that Christians perform the works of their spiritual priesthood; accordingly, preach the Gospel not merely in their homes, but also in their intercourse with their brethren and with the world. Likewise it is not merely a human, but a divine regulation that Christians who live at one place fellowship with one another, form a congregation, and appoint men equipped with the necessary teaching ability to preach God's Word in the name of the congregation both publicly (in the public assembly) and privately (to individual Christians).<sup>24</sup>*

<sup>20</sup> This is included under Baptism originally; see Kolb-Wengert, 360-362.

<sup>21</sup> Harrison, "A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century," 68.

<sup>22</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 41: *Church and Ministry III*, 154.

<sup>23</sup> Pieper, F. 1999, c1950, c1951, c1953. *Christian Dogmatics* (electronic ed.). Concordia: St. Louis.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



Therefore, even if Christians proclaim the Gospel in their homes with a small group, they are still by divine institution, commanded to appoint someone with the needed abilities to teach and preach and to administer the Sacraments. So too, Augsburg Confession Article V speaks of the institution for the public ministry, if we wish others to obtain faith:

*“So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given (JOHN 20:22). He works faith, when and where it pleases God (JOHN 3:8), in those who hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ’s sake, this happens not through our own merits, but for Christ’s sake” (AC V: 1-3).*

Walther also speaks of the church being bound to this office when he says, “The ministry is not an arbitrary office but one whose establishment has been commanded to the church and to which the church is ordinarily bound till the end of time.”<sup>25</sup> He speaks of the office of the public ministry having the power of spiritual judgment, as well.

The TSM21 offers this connection between the Priesthood of Believers and the Office of Holy Ministry:

***Priesthood of the baptized.*** *The apostle Peter writes to those who have been “born again to*

*a living hope” (1 PETER 1:3), that is, to those who are baptized into Jesus’ death. He describes us as “living stones” that are built up as a “spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 PETER 2:5). This priesthood is holy, that is, it is cut off from the uncleanness of sin and set apart to live by faith in Jesus Christ. Notice that the New Testament does not speak of us as individual priests, each going his or her own way and doing the work of a priest for ourselves. Rather the New Testament speaks of our lives lived within a company of priests, a priesthood.*

The priesthood offers spiritual sacrifices. These are not sacrifices that atone for sin.<sup>26</sup> Jesus did that once and for all on the cross (SEE HEB. 7:27). The sacrifices that we offer are spiritual sacrifices, the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit (SEE PS. 51:17). This is the life of repentance: Daily dying to sin and living in the newness of Christ’s forgiveness. In other words, the whole life of the believer is one of sacrifice. This is the point that Paul makes in Rom. 12:1 where he writes,

*“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,*

<sup>25</sup> Walther, C. 1999, c1987. *Church and ministry: Witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry*. Translation of: *Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt*. (electronic ed.). Concordia: St. Louis, p. 191.

<sup>26</sup> Prayer is an important sacrifice and must not be confused with the means of grace. Prayer is a confession of faith which recognizes that God’s “good and gracious will is done even without our prayer,” as Luther makes clear in the Small Catechism. Prayer does not seek to control or manipulate God. Prayer does not engage in superstition that goes beyond what the Lord has promised in his word. Prayer is the expression of the justified sinner who humbles himself before God’s almighty hand — and by the Spirit’s work through word and sacrament — is led to rely upon Christ alone while praying as the Lord prayed in Gethsemane, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” See CTCR, *Theology and Practice of Prayer* (2011), 18–20.

*which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

Everybody in the ancient world knew that sacrifices were dead, not living. Jerusalem's temple resembled a slaughterhouse more than a church. The priest, smattered with blood, looked more like a butcher than a clergyman. Paul's words must have jarred his original readers for he writes of a living sacrifice. We present our bodies as living sacrifices for we have died to sin in Baptism and now live in Christ's resurrection (SEE ROM. 6:1–11).

This priestly life is our vocation, our calling. We live it out in our daily callings in the congregation, in civic community (citizenship), the family and the place of work. Here we who have received mercy from the Father show forth that mercy in our dealings with others, and it is here that we bear witness to Christ by “proclaiming the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 PETER 2:9).

Going about our daily vocation as baptized members of Christ's royal priesthood, we testify to Christ, speaking his saving word, the same word we regularly hear in preaching and the same word we read for ourselves in Holy Scripture (e.g., through personal and family devotions).<sup>27</sup> The content of our witness is always Christ, crucified and raised from the dead for all. In so doing, we are inviting others into the same life we have received from Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the only real life there is: that given in word and sacrament. Baptized believers will often be found urging others, believers and unbelievers alike, to “come and see” (JOHN 1:39) what Christ has done for them and for all.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 242–243, reminds us that “Luther emphasizes that every Christian has the right and obligation to pass on and witness God's Word in his personal sphere of life. In fact, Luther may at times even use the term ‘preach’ (predigen) for this act, implying that the incumbents of the priesthood of all believers are actually given a certain task to proclaim the Gospel wherever they may be. The context of this private preaching does not stand in conflict with the pastoral ministry of preaching and administration of the Sacraments publicly affirmed through the proper rite of vocation (rite vocatus).”

<sup>28</sup> Harrison, “A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century,” 69–70. Oftentimes, it is precisely this testimony from the priesthood of the baptized that plants the seeds for the church in contexts where the church has not yet been established, where ordained pastors or missionaries are not present, or where the church is persecuted. The word does not return empty (Is. 55:11) and faith can and does take root and grow through the word when and where it pleases the Holy Spirit, whether the gospel is spoken by laity or clergy. Thus the faith did not disappear when missionaries were forced from China and pastors were jailed. Even as Lutherans rejoice in that truth, we also recognize that the witness of the laity does not mean the office of the pastor (or ordained missionary) is thereby

**Office and offices.** *There is one office that Christ has instituted for the proclamation of his word and the giving out of his sacraments. This is the Office of the Holy Ministry (SEE JOHN 20:21–23; AC V, XIV, XXVII). Through the call of the church, the Lord places qualified men into this office (SEE 1 COR. 14:33–38; 1 TIM. 2:8–14). The men who serve in this office are to be properly trained and capable (SEE 1 TIM. 3:1–7; 2 TIM. 2:1–7; 4:1–5; TITUS 1:5–9) of the task of being stewards of the mysteries of God (SEE 1 COR. 4:1–2). The church may not be without this office for it is to this office that Christ has entrusted the preaching of his word and the administration of his sacraments.<sup>29</sup> No one puts himself into this office, nor does the church have the right to refashion the office into something other than what the Lord has instituted, or to put men into the office without being called and ordained (see AC XIV). The church does live in freedom to create offices that assist those who are placed in the one divinely-mandated office of the ministry of word and sacrament. These helping offices (auxiliary offices) would include deacons, deaconesses, evangelists, schoolteachers, catechists, cantors, parish nurses, workers of mercy, and the like.<sup>30</sup> These are valuable offices of service to the body of Christ and the world, but they are not to be confused with the Office of the Holy Ministry itself. The Office of the Holy Ministry might be said to be the office of faith as Christ instituted it so that faith might be created in the hearts of those who hear the preaching of Christ crucified. Helping or auxiliary offices are the offices of love for through these callings the*

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rendered unnecessary or expendable. See Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 239–247, and § 17 herein.

<sup>29</sup> Thus the AC calls this “the office of preaching” (*das Predigamt* AC V 1).

<sup>30</sup> The Office of the Holy Ministry, or the office of preaching and teaching, is founded on the apostles and prophets of Scripture and is seen within such scriptural offices identified by the names bishop/overseer (*episkopos*), elder (*presbyteros*), and shepherd (*poimenos*). This preaching office includes within it not only the work of “pastor” as Lutherans now identify it most commonly, but also evangelist and teacher (Eph. 4:11). In LCMS tradition an office of teacher, in distinction from the pastoral office, has been auxiliary in nature, working under and assisting the one who has overall responsibility for preaching and teaching. In other parts of the world, a particular office of evangelist aids the church's ministry in a similar fashion in the particular work of outreach, church planting, and mission development, especially where few ordained pastors are available. So also, the office of catechist has developed in churches for the particular work of instructing new believers. Thus, there is one overarching preaching office (see AC V), but it is inclusive of certain responsibilities that may be shared with others in offices that appear in various times and places in the church. And, in addition, there may be other helping offices established which fall only marginally within the scope of the work of the preaching office or are even completely distinct from it (e.g., a church musician or a parish nurse or an administrator of a food program). See also CTCR, *The Ministry: Offices, Procedures, Nomenclature* (1981).



*love of Christ is extolled in word and deed as his mercy is extended to those in need.*

*Those whom Christ through his church has placed in the Office of the Holy Ministry do not lord it over the priesthood of the baptized, but they stand among the baptized, as one of them, holding an office of service, seeking only to give out the Lord's gifts as he intended (1 COR. 4:1-2).<sup>31</sup>*

## 6) WITNESS AND LIFE TOGETHER: PRAYER, PUBLIC PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING TO GOD

Luther's sixth identification of the church is as follows:

*Sixth, the holy Christian people are externally recognized by prayer, public praise, and thanksgiving to God. Where you see and hear the Lord's Prayer prayed and taught; or psalms or other spiritual songs sung, in accordance with the word of God and the true faith; also the creed, the Ten Commandments, and the catechism used in public, you may rest assured that a holy Christian people of God are present. For prayer, too, is one of the precious holy possessions whereby everything is sanctified, as St. Paul says [1 TIM. 4:5]. The psalms too are nothing but prayers in which we praise, thank, and glorify God. The creed and the Ten Commandments are also God's word and belong to the holy possession, whereby the Holy Spirit sanctifies the holy people of Christ. However, we are now speaking of prayers and songs which are intelligible and from which we can learn and by means of which we can mend our ways. The clamor of monks and nuns and priests is not prayer, nor is it praise to God; for they do not understand it, nor do they learn anything from it; they do it like a donkey, only for the sake of the belly and not at all in quest of any reform or sanctification or of the will of God.<sup>32</sup>*

Here Luther is speaking of the various elements of public worship in which we pray, praise and give thanks to God. He also speaks against prayer and worship becoming nothing more than clamoring for the sake of our own bellies rather than to receive the gifts of God. Indeed we believe that worship is God's action upon us, and in turn, comes our response.

<sup>31</sup> Harrison, "A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century," 70.

<sup>32</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 41: *Church and Ministry III*, 164.

God is acting upon us through his Word and Sacraments. In return, we repeat back to God what he has said to us; we plead for his mercy and then apply His words and means of His grace.

Our theology of faith and salvation being a gift from God, by His grace alone, are clearly evident in our practice of worship. The theology and the practice cannot be separated; in other words, having a worship service that is Christ-centered and grace-centered is a direct reflection of our beliefs. Our prayers and songs, Luther says, should be intelligible, they should teach that which we believe.

The theology of worship can also be found in the words of Jesus himself. He warns of the extremes in worship that do not reflect correct theology. On the one hand, he warns us not to simply "go through the motions" of ceremonial rites when he quotes Isaiah in Matt. 15:8-9, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."

On the other hand, he warns us not to cause people to sin, which will happen if those in the ministry simply manipulate the emotions of their congregations to pull them inwardly rather than toward Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus says in John 4:23-24: "But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

Therefore, any mission church preparing to worship together or church in renewal should carefully consider the theology of worship and Christ's command to worship in spirit and in truth. The TSM21 also addresses this matter:

***Worship: koinonia, freedom, catholicity and the limits of love.*** Questions of liturgical diversity and uniformity need to be set within the context of the distinction between faith and love. Faith is freed by the gospel from all works of self-justification, but faith is not freed from the gospel or the means that Christ has instituted to bestow the gospel (the pure preaching of this good news and the right administration of the sacraments according to the divine word; see AC VII). Preaching and sacraments require form, and this form is catholic rather than sectarian or self-invented. Lutherans gratefully inherited the Western liturgical tradition



filtered through the sieve of justification by faith alone and honor it as our heritage (AC XXIV [Kolb–Wengert, 68–72]). Lutherans make a distinction between what Christ has mandated and what his word prohibits. In between the two are “adiaphora,” or “middle things,” which are neither commanded nor forbidden by God. The middle category of adiaphora does not mean that these matters are how they confess the truth of the gospel and sacraments. In times when a clear confession is called for, the Formula of Concord reminds us, matters of adiaphora may cease to be adiaphora (see FC SD X, 10 [Kolb–Wengert, 637]). Ludwig Adolph Petri notes that mission “must abstain from establishing confessions, accepting new customs in the divine service, uniting separated confessions and the like. As soon as mission begins to do something like that, it is manifestly in the wrong, for none of those tasks is charged or relegated to mission.”<sup>33</sup> This is to say that matters of liturgical practice are not best left to the individual but should reflect our confessional consensus so that both the freedom of faith and the love for brothers and sisters is maintained.<sup>34</sup> Love is always given to patience and deference to the weakness of the fellow believer (see ROM 14), but it may never be used as an excuse to compromise the truth of our confession. Liturgical diversity within the larger catholic context will be guided by the need to maintain unity in both faith and love (see FC SD X, 9 [Kolb–Wengert, 637]).<sup>35</sup>

## 7) WITNESS AND LIFE TOGETHER: THE HOLY POSSESSION OF THE SACRED CROSS

Luther’s seventh identification of the church is as follows:

*Seventh, the holy Christian people are externally recognized by the holy possession of the sacred cross. They must endure every misfortune and persecution, all kinds of trials and evil from the devil, the world, and the flesh (as the Lord’s Prayer indicates) by inward sadness, timidity, fear, outward poverty, contempt, illness, and weakness, in order to become like their head, Christ. And the only reason they must suffer is that they steadfastly adhere to Christ and God’s word, enduring this for the sake of Christ, Matthew 5 [:11], “Blessed are you when men persecute you on my account.” They must be pious, quiet, obedient, and prepared to serve the government and everybody with life and goods, doing no one any harm. No people on earth have to endure such bitter hate; they must be accounted worse than Jews, heathen, and Turks. In summary, they must be called heretics, knaves, and devils, the most pernicious people on earth, to the point where those who hang, drown, murder, torture, banish, and plague them to death are rendering God a service. No one has compassion on them; they are given myrrh and gall to drink when they thirst. And all of this is done not because they are adulterers, murderers, thieves, or rogues, but because they want to have none but Christ, and no other God. Wherever you see or hear this, you may know that the holy Christian church is there, as Christ says in Matt. 5 [:11–12], “Blessed are you when men revile you and utter all kinds of evil against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.” This too is a holy possession whereby the Holy Spirit not only sanctifies his people, but also blesses them.*<sup>36</sup>

Those who endeavor to reach the lost with the pure Gospel can expect a spiritual battle. From the inside, it may mean conflict, setback or discouragement. From the outside, it may mean the contempt of an increasingly hostile culture, legislation which threatens the conscience or perhaps even violent persecution. Beyond flesh and blood, it certainly means spiritual warfare and satanic attack (EPH. 6:12). The evil one will do everything he can to disrupt or divert what a church plant is attempting, or attack whatever revitalization is taking place. However, these and other trials and misfortunes can be blessings. James thus begins his epistle not telling Christians just to endure trials, but to rejoice in

<sup>33</sup> Ludwig Adolph Petri, *Mission and the Church: A letter to a friend (Die Mission und die Kirche: Schreiben an einen Freund)*, trans. David Buchs (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> This is not to deny the necessity of liturgical change as the church enters new settings. An obvious example of necessary change is the use of vernacular language for worship. That may also entail some change of terminology itself where words or concepts are completely alien. However, the concern of this section is that liturgical change not take place in a way that is contrary to the Lutheran confession of faith — a confession that rightly stands in the western creedal tradition. Thus, liturgical change, where it occurs, is always to take place in a collaborative manner or a way that is *catholic* in nature. In such a way not only are the concerns and needs of a local church considered, but so also the needs of the wider contemporary church, and, even the church of the past has a hearing.

<sup>35</sup> Harrison, “A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century,” 70–71.

<sup>36</sup> Luther, *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 41: *Church and Ministry III*, 164–165.

them! “Count it all joy, my brothers,” he writes, “when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness” (JAMES 1:2-3). It is in the cross that God has chosen to reveal Himself to us as the One who suffers for our sins; and it is now bearing that cross in suffering that teaches us reliance on God and trust in His mercy. Furthermore, it is in the Means of Grace that the Lord accompanies us and refines our faith in time of trouble. Despite bearing the cross, in what better position can a newly-planted or recently revitalized congregation be, than to be utterly dependent on the grace that God has brought to us through Jesus Christ? Rather than rely on their own abilities and strength to succeed, they can be made strong in their weakness as God visits them with His gifts and uses them to fulfill His will. Their faith will be made ever stronger as they become more reliant on God’s strength and not their own. Because they bear the cross, they are not far from it; and so they can lay all of their burdens at its foot because Jesus has borne them on their behalf.

The TSM21 gives a helpful understanding of the theology of the cross in mission in this way:

**Theology of the cross.** *The “theology of the cross” (SEE 1 COR. 1:18–2:5) stands in sharp contrast to the prevailing theology — the “theology of glory.” The theology of the cross shows God at work under opposites, giving life through death, showing mercy in wrath, making him- self known in his hiddenness, and manifesting strength in weakness. The theologian of glory attempts to access God by way of various ladders: moralism, rationalism or mysticism. The theologian of the cross confesses God condescending to humanity in the weakness of the baby of Bethlehem and the man of Calvary. The theologian of glory would judge a church successful on the basis of how well it accomplishes certain goals defined by the tenants of this world. The theologian of the cross recognizes that the church is hidden under suffering and defeat.*

*Christ’s church faces many enemies from within and without. She bears the mark of the holy cross, not as an identifier for its own sake, but as a consequence of bearing witness to and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church in every place bears the Holy Cross to some degree. The church in some places bears what appears to be a smaller cross than the church in other places,*

*yet no matter how small or big the cross, it serves the same purpose: A witness (martyria) to the world and, as Formula of Concordia XI confesses, “to conform us into the image of the image of the crucified Son of God.” It should not surprise us, the Lord’s people, that his holy church takes on the appearance of the crucified Son of God. In fact, it is a great honor and joy that the Lord conforms us into his image. This is why St. Paul says in Romans 8, “I know all things work for good.” The life of the church is cruciform in shape. The apt words of Hermann Sasse ring true: “All that we think and do in the church has to be cleansed by the theology of the cross if we are to escape the perils of a theology of glory.”<sup>37</sup> The theology of the cross will forever be a litmus test of the genuineness of Witness, Mercy, Life Together in our midst.<sup>38</sup>*

## 8) MERCY: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE OF LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR

Luther’s final identification of the church is as follows:

*In addition to these seven principal parts, there are other outward signs that identify the Christian church, namely, those signs whereby the Holy Spirit sanctifies us according to the second table of Moses; when he assists us in sincerely honoring our father and mother, and conversely, when he helps them to raise their children in a Christian way and to lead honorable lives; when we faithfully serve our princes and lords and are obedient and subject to them, and conversely, when they love their subjects and protect and guard them; also when we bear no one a grudge, entertain no anger, hatred, envy, or vengefulness toward our neighbors, but gladly forgive them, lend to them, help them, and counsel them; when we are not lewd, not drunkards, not proud, arrogant, overbearing, but chaste, self-controlled, sober, friendly, kind, gentle, and humble; when we do not steal, rob, are not usurious, greedy, do not overcharge, but are mild, kind, content, charitable; when we are not false, mendacious, perjurers, but truthful, trustworthy, and do whatever else is taught in these commandments — all of*

<sup>37</sup> Hermann Sasse, *We Confess Jesus Christ*, trans. Norman Nagel (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1984), 52.

<sup>38</sup> Harrison, “A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century,” 72-73.

*which St. Paul teaches abundantly in more than one place.*<sup>39</sup>

In other words, the eighth mark is mercy or loving one's neighbor. To speak of mercy in action, he points to the last seven of the Ten Commandments as they are lived out in Christians' lives. These signs identify that these holy Christian people are indeed sanctified by the Holy Spirit, for they are living in their God-given callings as outlined in the second table of Moses. Their faith is evident in their works.

Luther adds this eighth sign in addition or separately because, unlike the previous seven, mercy is not a *unique* mark of the Christian Church alone. One can find Hindus and Muslims who honor their parents and avoid drunkenness, for instance. However, only in the Christian Church does mercy spring from the grace of Jesus Christ.

Planting a church can consume time and energy, but neither may be done at the expense of other offices. As Luther points out, working in the Church is not the only holy thing in our lives. The callings of spouse, parent, citizen and neighbor are also holy offices, and in each of them we bear a witness that will impact the world around us. In fact, it is in the everyday lives of those engaged in church planting that they will find some of the greatest opportunities for evangelism.

A perfect complement to reaching out with the Gospel is reaching out through acts of mercy; and as James says most pointedly in his epistle, faith without works is dead (JAMES 2:17-18). Many relationships are built through sharing the love of Christ with those who are in need. Therefore, a newly-formed church or a church that is re-engaging can build a fellowship among their community by serving them through human care projects as Christ serves His Church: as Christians respond to God with praise to Him, they also respond to Him with love for their neighbor. We'll address this in detail as we discuss mercy as an emphasis in church planting.

The TSM21 speaks to the mercy and vocation as such:

***Mercy as sacred vocation.*** *The church is Christ's body, and as such, she continues his life of mercy as a witness to the love of God for body and soul. The church has a corporate life of mercy toward those within the orthodox fellowship of believers, toward*

*the broader community of Christians and to those outside the church (GAL. 6:10). The church can no more ignore the physical needs of people than Christ could have refused to perform healings or persons can be separated into body and soul in this life. Thus, the early church heartily and vigorously continued Jesus' ministry of healing and care for the needy (ACTS 6; 2 COR. 8-9). This witness, through mercy accompanying the gospel, has been a missiological force of the church in its great periods of advancement, especially in times of desperate need and persecution. The care for the widows (ACTS 6) and Paul's collection for Jerusalem (2 COR. 8-9) are the great prototypical models for mercy for the church for all time. We care for people in need, not with any ulterior motive, nor even in order to proclaim the gospel. We proclaim the gospel and care for the needy because that's who Christ is, and that is who we are as the church in this world (JOHN 14; ACTS 4:12).*<sup>40</sup>

## CONCLUSION

How do you know when a church has been planted? Using Luther's seven marks of identifying the Church, we are able to see a very clear picture of what a Lutheran church is when it is planted.

However, the simplest way to answer the question of how to identify God's holy Christian people is that Christ is there working through His Church; and Christ is where His Word and

Sacraments are, and these marks are what makes it the Holy Christian Church. Luther's marks can be used as guideposts of what makes a Lutheran church. Christ is working through pastors and the priesthood of all believers in their respective callings.

Indeed, Christ is here, hands-on on this earth, bringing hope and salvation to a lost and condemned world. Even though they may be small, it is as much in a newly planted church as any other that all the power of heaven rests at their disposal to bring eternal life to the world around them.

Given the marks and patterns of the Holy Christian church, we can move on to how to go about planting Lutheran churches that are framed by Witness, Mercy and Life Together.

<sup>39</sup> Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 41: *Church and Ministry III*, 166.

<sup>40</sup> Harrison, "A Theological Statement for Mission in the 21st Century," 65.





# CHURCH PLANTING

## GETTING STARTED

**O**n a global scale, the US is one of the largest mission fields in the world in terms of un-churched populations. And a truly effective way to reach those outside the Church is through church planting. In the first 100 years of the LCMS, we planted a new church every week, including outreach to new people groups. It is true that as a church body we are not always where the people are — especially as we see a massive shift toward urbanization. Likewise, we do not always reflect the diversity of our new American neighborhoods around our Lutheran churches. We are also aging faster in comparison to the population. But this initiative to plant new churches is not about institutional preservation. We need to plant churches, because it is who we are as a church body, and it is what we have been called to do, as faithful stewards of God's Word and Sacraments, to reach the lost.

It may seem an odd way to look at it, but when we consider revitalization within our Synod, church planting plays a prominent role, as it has the capability to bring renewed vigor to other churches and circuits and districts who wish to participate. In and of itself, church planting is a means of revitalization at the macro level. The Word of God alone can revitalize the church, and as we saw above, where the Word is planted there is the church! [Is. 55:10-11] God bless the sowing of His seed and He alone will reap the harvest. God bless The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as we endeavor in this mission.

But before a core group of people is gathered to take on this endeavor, it will be helpful to have some pre-planning already in order. Of course there are many ways in which the process of church planting may begin, or a combination of ways. For example a group of people in a community may be interested in seeing an LCMS church established, while at the same time a church or circuit have identified this as a possible location. A church might also recognize an unreached people group within their community and are interested in a new mission. A district may develop a new mission where there is no LCMS

presence as well, and can work alongside the Synod who can help to support this work. One of the strongest means for planting a church, however, is when a congregation plants a daughter congregation and is willing to help with the planning and initial startup process. In any case, it is important that the district is involved early on to ensure that the church plant fits in with the overall district level plans. So, too, the district will be an important resource in establishing a new church. Gaining support from the local circuit will also be very important and an encouragement to the mission.

### PRE-PLANNING FOR CHURCHES PLANTING CHURCHES

Serious discussions must take place if a congregation considers becoming the mother of a daughter congregation. The costs must be counted and sacrifices will need to be made for the sake of the Gospel. A good first step is to gather information about the vicinity that is being considered. Are there already members of the mother church or potential members who live in the area? Can the district supply demographic information to better understand the community? Where will you look for a mission developer? Will you seek out a specially trained seminary candidate working through the district and Synod? Will you be willing to support the new mission plant until they are chartered? Will you place them under the umbrella of your administrative support until they become self-sufficient? Will you continue to provide them with the needed support even after they have been formed as a new congregation? These are commitments that need to be made by the congregation and leadership of a mother congregation before venturing out in planting a new church. But if the commitment is there, then the first step in the process is to develop the Life Together of a new church.



# LIFE TOGETHER



## MISSION DEVELOPER

Life Together in its simplest form is that of shepherd and flock. There can be no shepherd without a flock, nor a flock without a shepherd as Jesus described the lost sheep of Israel — as those without a shepherd. The shepherd of course is called to watch over and protect the flock and lay down his life. And as Jesus calls upon Peter, Peter is to feed Christ's sheep. The pastoral office then is one of servitude. A servant who is specially trained in the care and equipping of the priesthood of all believers, and has been called to be the steward of the mysteries entrusted to him by God. Ministry then is to wash feet, to serve and not be served, meaning there should be no struggles for power, but rather there should be an understanding of the authority in which God has given His servants in their vocations. The pastoral office then has the great burden of exercising the office of the keys on behalf of the congregation while having its own ecclesial accountability as well. The pastor is duty bound to be an intercessor and to bear the spiritual burdens of those in his care. The congregation as the body of Christ will in return bear witness and show mercy to their neighbors in their various vocations as forgiven baptized believers. And so too, they will support the pastor also in the administration of the earthly affairs of organizing and forming this newly planted church. The mission developer then is called to be a missionary in the true sense of the word, to be about the Gospel. He is to seek out the lost, and bind up the injured, he is to be about planting the seed and working the soil.

So then, the mission developer needs to have an aptitude for the unique role of shepherding a newly planted church perhaps in an area that is a clean slate in regards to the Lutheran confession of faith. It should be noted that church planting may not be for everyone and it does take a unique skill set and characteristics.

“The mission developer then is called to be a missionary in the true sense of the word, to be about the Gospel. He is to seek out the lost, and bind up the injured, he is to be about planting the seed and working the soil.”

What are some things to consider in assessing a mission developer:

- + Is he called and ordained for this work, to be a Word and Sacrament missionary?
- + Does he have the theological integrity that will be needed to plant a distinctly Lutheran church?
- + Does he have the theological capacity to defend and confess the Lutheran confession of faith in potentially hostile environments to the Christian faith, is he willing to bear the marks of the cross?
- + Is this a man of prayer and devotion who will sustain his own family in the midst of the cross they will bear together?
- + Is this person marked by his love and empathy for others and has a desire to serve in mercy in a variety of settings?
- + Is he personable and willing to make contacts with potential members or community leaders?
- + Can he adapt quickly and not be afraid to learn from failures?
- + Is he a self-starter and go-getter who does not need a great deal of hand holding?
- + Is he good at budgeting his time wisely and balancing his schedule for both family and church vocation?
- + Can he be both task oriented for the job at hand while also being people oriented, which must come first?
- + Does he have a clear understanding and joy for the work that he will embark on?
- + Does he have enough basic knowledge of administration and planning for starting an organization and chartering a congregation — which may include basic grunt work?
- + Does he work well with others even in the midst of differences and can he resolve conflicts?
- + Is he not afraid to get his hands dirty in the muck and mire of sinful lives when reaching the lost or to roll up his sleeves to serve in his community?



## LIFE TOGETHER



## SCRIPTURE

“God is faithful, by whom you  
were called into the fellowship of  
his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

1 COR. 1:9



“This fellowship consists in this, that all the spiritual possessions of Christ and his saints are shared with and become the common property of him who receives this sacrament ... So also in our natural body, as St. Paul says in 1 Cor. 12[:25-26], where he gives this sacrament a spiritual explanation, “The members have [the same] care for one another; if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.” This is obvious: if anyone’s foot hurts him, yes, even the little toe, the eye at once looks at it, the fingers grasp it, the face puckers, the whole body bends over to it, and all are concerned with this small member; again, once it is cared for all the other members are benefited.”

Martin Luther. “The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ and the Brotherhoods.” AE 35.51.



## ASPECTS

Worship  
 Unity in Doctrine and Practice  
 Church Fellowship  
 Koinonia Project  
 Day Schools  
 Universities  
 Seminarians  
 Youth



*The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there" (from Genesis 12).*

Blessings to all the members of Mount Calvary! As you know, Christ Lutheran Church has begun to worship regularly together. We are still in the process of reaching into our community, but it is also important for our core group to become a community that worships together ... because that is church. Everyone was very excited about our first service, and I think for many of us, it felt like "mission accomplished." But in reality, the mission has just begun and God is calling us to step out of our "comfort zones". Abram had many reasons to not leave home when God called him. He was settled, his friends and family were there, his livelihood was there and surely he thought he was too old to be qualified for such a mission. There were great risks involved and even more sacrifice.

Maybe you have considered being a part of the new mission to Church County but didn't want to leave Mount Calvary. Maybe you have thought it would be a risk to come to a smaller church without all of the activities/groups of a larger one. Or maybe you think you are unqualified to run for an office or be involved with a board. Or maybe there would have to be a sacrifice because something is just different at the mission church. But brothers and sisters, what if there was no Abram and Sarai from whom our Savior would descend? If there is no risk taken, no stepping out in faith, no sacrifice, someone to be the first to lead the way ... then there is no Israel, and all the peoples will not be blessed.

This is the simple truth, but I know we are not motivated by the law — by what we do. So let me share the good news. The good news is that God's will will be done. Despite our fears and feelings of inadequacies, God's plan of salvation cannot be stopped. God Himself stepped out of the comforts of Heaven, to serve, to sacrifice, to suffer, to die, to rise again. Nothing could stop our Savior from carrying out His mission - even His journey to the cross. And Christ would step out of the comfort zone of heaven into our greatest places of fear — rejection, suffering, death and even hell — and He would conquer them all! Now I don't know where your comfort zone ends — maybe stepping out to do a community survey, maybe being in a different place to worship, maybe taking the lead to get things done, to spearhead a group or activity. But what I do know is that there is no need to fear. Even if Christ Lutheran doesn't have it all — it has Christ. And there God has promised to give us the forgiveness of sins, the power of His Word and the fellowship of the Body of Christ. And I do know that this may be a once in a lifetime opportunity in Church County to take a leap of faith that will be a blessing to people for generations to come for you and to be blessed in your own faith-building journey as you walk the path of Abram and Sarai.

**So I simply ask you to prayerfully consider how God may be leading you out of your comfort zone to blaze a new trail. And together we will begin a journey of faith to lead God's people to His promised land!**

— BULLETIN INSERT ENCOURAGING "SHORT TERM MISSIONARIES" —

## CORE GROUP RECRUITMENT

It will be important to form a core group of people who are committed to helping plant the church. Some people may wish to join the new congregation while others would like to give their talents and abilities to get things started. But regardless, the most obvious place to look for people would be from a mother congregation. Some folks may

be interested, but are nervous about leaving their comfort zone to embark on a new mission. You may wish to consider a bulletin insert encouraging them to step out like Abraham and Sarah when they were called by God to a new place (and be sure to offer specific ways in which they can serve).

## DECLARATION OF INTENT TO JOIN NEW MISSION

I herewith indicate to the pastor and members of \_\_\_\_\_ Lutheran Church  
of \_\_\_\_\_ my intention of joining the new Missouri Synod Lutheran  
Mission in \_\_\_\_\_.

Since this mission is as yet unorganized, I cannot ask for an official transfer. However, since  
I do plan to participate actively in the worship, fellowship, educational and stewardship  
programs of this mission, I therefore ask that my present congregation regard this as an  
application for transfer of my membership to this mission, and the transfer of my spiritual  
care and responsibilities to this mission.

I understand that the official transfer will become effective on the date of the organization  
of the new mission.

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

(Address) \_\_\_\_\_

Also included in this transfer request are the following members of our household:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

– INTENT FORM FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN COMMITTING TO THE NEW MISSION –

### TO ANYONE INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING WITH THE CHURCH MISSION IN ANY WAY!

Please come join us for an organizational meeting as we begin to  
form our core group. The meeting will be held from 1-3 p.m. on  
Sunday, Sept. 18. The first step is to meet and develop a plan for  
this new mission. If you are interested in this process, but are un-  
able to attend then you can pick up an informational packet from  
Vicar James. If you wish to become a part of this worshipping  
community (in any way - even if it is temporary) then please let  
Vicar James be aware of this so he can get an idea of the size of the  
core group. This information needs to be reported to the district  
by Oct. 1. *Thank you for prayerfully considering being a part of  
Christ's Commission!*

– BULLETIN BLURB FOR RECRUITING –

You may also be pleasantly surprised to find out that there are people in the area who have Lutheran backgrounds, are not connected to a Lutheran church and are interested in planting a new Lutheran congregation. As a matter of fact, they may have been waiting for quite a while for just such an opportunity. These may be inactive members from other churches, new residents or simply people raised in the Lutheran church but had fallen away. Seek out any Lutheran affiliated organizations to help identify these potential core group members.

To reach them, it is best to make a personal contact if possible, but you can also make announcements of your initial meetings through your local media outlets. It is a blessing to gather people from different backgrounds, but once you have recruited a diverse group it will be important to unify them and develop them into a family of believers who are at the heart of this mission.

FRIDAY

**The Journal** 50¢

TWO SECTIONS • 20 PAGES

**Journal Family & Faith** PAGE 7A

### New Lutheran church started

New congregation selects the name "Christ Lutheran" and sets date for "birthday" service

By CHARLOTTE PERKINS  
HNJ Lifestyle Editor

A small group of people gathered on Sunday afternoon at a restaurant and a new church began. There is still much work to be done, but they're on their way. It will be a Lutheran church.

and it is now in the mission stage.

Under the leadership of Vicar, a seminarian who has been named mission developer and a member of Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church of who is chairing the mission committee, the group plans to have its "birthday" worship service in late June, inviting the community for a worship service, celebration and possibly a picnic as well.

Following a devotional, the first step they took on Saturday was to vote on the name of the new church, which is to be Christ Lutheran.

The fledgling congregation then got down to organizing, setting up committees to search for temporary facilities, plan for the first service, for worship and education needs, outreach and public relations, as well as for reaching those without a church, setting up by-laws and a constitution and taking the necessary steps to be incorporated and to become an official part of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

Leaders of other churches in the synod have already offered to have a "baby shower" for the new church to contribute items needed for worship services.

Vicar has recently moved. He and his wife, who is studying to serve as a Deaconess, have four young children. told the group in his devotional comments that "As we meet today, there is a lot of excitement in what we are doing."

Calling the group of organizers a "small clan with no fancy place to call our home," he likened them to the shepherds who followed the call of angels to the birthplace of Christ, and said, "We may have little more to offer this world than the shepherds - no awe-inspiring cathedral, no pews, no magnificent pipe organ, but we have the Christ who is the source of light that shines so bright in the manger that the heavens need no stars."

said that he will be visiting other pastors in the area soon, and hearing about the community and its needs.

The group will meet again on Jan. 8, from 2 to 4 p.m. with the location to be announced. All are welcome. For information on becoming part of Christ Lutheran Church, call

For information on the beliefs of Lutherans, visit the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Web site at: [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org)

All are invited to join the team for a formational meeting to be held on Sunday

A name for the new church will be chosen and planning will begin. Those attending should plan to buy lunch and enjoy fellowship from 1 to 2 p.m., or just attend the organizational meeting from 2 to 4 p.m.

For more information or to make arrangements for child care, contact

Organizers of the newly-named Christ Lutheran Church

2004 Christine Perkins

- NEWSPAPER AD FOR INITIAL CORE GROUP MEETING -

- NEWSPAPER ARTICLE PUBLICIZING THE FIRST PUBLIC PLANNING MEETING -



## CORE GROUP DEVELOPMENT

One of the great fears for a church starting out is that they will fail to gain members, which ultimately means they will be bankrupted and this will end the mission before it begins. But in actuality, it is disunity that is the greatest danger to a new congregation. So, from the very beginning, it is crucial that the core group of people starting the mission church would be on the same page. This means theologically, the values that the group holds and the direction to be taken must have unity. If working with your district, you may be required to state clearly what is your mission statement, the vision for the future, the values that will guide you and what are your objectives to ensure the mission is accomplished according to God's will. But a mission developer must also realize that through this process of forming, norming, storming, performing as a group, there will be some who you counted on who will leave the group and others who you least expected that will be fully invested in your mission. But again, unity is key to the life of a new congregation.

Therefore at least three key meetings should take place to prepare for the chartering of a new congregation, in mission to your community. It is probably best to keep these meetings between one and two hours and should have a focus on both church fellowship and pastoral care. Agenda items to be included in the first meeting would be a devotion from the Word of God that speaks to God's mission in the world, prayer and hymnody, getting to know each other, a study on what is church and how do we know when it exists in this place, sharing information regarding your community and mission, develop a shared statement of mission/values/direction, include action items and assignments, close with prayer/benediction/a hymn, spend time in fellowship at the conclusion. This organizational meeting would most likely be held with the initial core group, to lay the ground work, before announcing to the community that there will be a formational meeting for those interested in the church that is being formed.





## EXAMPLE MEETING AGENDA FOR CORE GROUP MEETING #1

### MEETING 1 SAMPLE OUTLINE: THE BIRTH OF A CHURCH

#### 1. God's Mission

- a. Who are we? Why do we exist? Where do we want to go and how will we get there?
- b. Devotion — Impossible births
  - i. What things come to mind when you think of birth?
  - ii. Adam and Eve / Abraham and Sarah / the Virgin Mary
  - iii. Jesus on the Cross — the church borne from birth fluids of a pierced side
  - iv. The many births that can come from this mission
- c. The purpose of this meeting
  - i. To identify why this mission will exist
  - ii. To categorize the values that will drive our decision making
  - iii. To develop a plan and strategy for planting a new church
  - iv. To discover what will make us unique in reaching our mission field
- d. Planting a church
  - i. Martin Luther wrote a document called **ON THE COUNCILS AND THE CHURCH** giving a definition of the church
  - ii. In this document Luther identifies seven ways to recognize the church and also an outward sign of the church

#### 2. First things first -What is Church?

- a. The creed clearly indicates what the Church is, namely, a communion of saints, that is, a crowd

#### 3. Team building warmup [Show that more can be done together than as individuals]

- a. 1 Peter 2
- b. The Living Stone and a chosen people
- c. As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

#### 4. How can you tell where these Christian holy people are found?

- a. Luther's seven marks

#### 5. Some definitions to get us started

- a. Values
  - i. A value is an enduring belief that a specific behavior or outcome is personally or socially or congregationally preferable to an opposite or converse behavior or outcome.
  - ii. What are the values to which the congregation holds firmly and which make the congregation what it is?
  - iii. If you changed the values of a congregation, you would effectively change the congregation.
  - iv. What are the core values of the congregation?

- b. Biblical Christological values
  - i. Sacrificial / Faithful / Joy Filled / Tunnel Vision for the Mission / Unity / Love and Mercy / From conception to grave — they are souls that Christ died for
- c. Mission statement
  - i. A congregation must have a clear picture of the reason for its existence. A mission statement is a clear, concise statement (25 words or less) of the unique reason or purpose for the existence and efforts of a congregation.
- d. Uniqueness
  - i. What is truly unique about our ministry that God-willing will be blessed with success?
    - 1. Faith Alone, Grace Alone, Scripture Alone, Christ Alone
    - 2. An incarnational and not mystical relationship with God
    - 3. Down to earth people in need of God's mercy and who share that mercy with others and build relationships
    - 4. Assurance of salvation which is outside ourselves
    - 5. Pastoral — every person is a soul that Christ died for and not a number
    - 6. Powerful messages where God's Word is brought to life and salvation is proclaimed
- e. Key issues / goals
  - i. A key issue is a primary focus
  - ii. A goal is a description of a preferred, future condition addressing a key issue that contributes to an effective pursuit of the Mission.
- f. Vision
  - i. One paragraph describing the preferred future of the Mission congregation
  - ii. Vision is the ability to imagine different and better conditions and ways to achieve them
  - iii. A vision is a lofty, long-term goal
  - iv. Can explain it for 30 seconds, 3 minutes, 30 minutes, 3 hours
- 6. Other information needed
  - a. Plan to reach the lost
  - b. Demographics
  - c. Leadership plan
  - d. Stewardship plan
  - e. Proposed budget
  - f. First public worship date
- 7. Next Steps
  - a. Worship preparations
  - b. Site surveys
  - c. Children's ministry
  - d. Social ministry
  - e. Evangelism
  - f. Charter / Leadership
  - g. Land acquisition
  - h. Temporary meeting places
  - i. Set a meeting date

## MEETING 2 SAMPLE AGENDA: DEVELOPING THE ROADMAP

- CHURCH MISSION - DEC. 11 MEETING - <i>Developing the Roadmap</i>	
Opening Devotion – <i>“Humble Beginnings”</i>	2:00-2:15 p.m.
Voting on a Name – <i>Putting a Name to the Faces</i>	2:15-2:45 p.m.
Organizing Committees – <i>Planning for Success</i>	2:45-3:15 p.m.
Setting a First Public Worship Date – <i>It's a Birthday!</i>	3:15-3:30 p.m.
Next Steps – <i>Action Items and Forming the Bond</i>	3:30-4:00 p.m.



## MEETING 3 SAMPLE AGENDA: MAKING AN ACTION PLAN

**- A CHURCH MISSION OUTREACH -**  
**Christ Lutheran Church**

**JAN. 8 MEETING - MAKING AN ACTION PLAN**

<b>Opening Comments – “The Light Pointing to Christ”</b>	<b>2:00-2:15 p.m.</b>
<b>Profile Sheets – “Getting to Know You”</b>	<b>2:15-2:45 p.m.</b>
<b>Getting Up to Date – “Reviewing our Progress”</b>	<b>2:45-3:00 p.m.</b>
<b>Committee Breakouts – “Action Planning”</b>	<b>3:00-3:45 p.m.</b>
<b>Next Steps – Action Items and Forming the Bond</b>	<b>3:45-4:00 p.m.</b>

- EXAMPLE MEETING AGENDA FOR CORE GROUP MEETING #3 -

## A WORD ON STEWARDSHIP FOR THE CORE GROUP

### New Testament Stewardship

*Faithfully Giving a First-Fruits Proportion of  
Your Income for the Work of Christ’s Church*

BY REV. HEATH R. CURTIS

### INTRODUCTION

When we speak about stewardship we often say that it deals with how we use our time, talents and treasure in respect to God’s Church. And that is true as far as it goes. But catchy phrases usually don’t make good theology. When Lutherans think about stewardship we should think in Lutheran, biblical categories: Law & Gospel; Vocation; and Sanctification.

### LAW & GOSPEL

The foundation of understanding the Bible and its teachings is the distinction between God’s Law and God’s Gospel. The Law of God is the way He wants us to live, His commandments, principles, injunctions or whatever else you want to call them. As such, the Law of God always Shows Our Sin (SOS) because we can never perfectly keep God’s Law. The Gospel is the Good News that though we can never earn God’s favor with our works, merit or worthiness, God has provided salvation for us free of charge in the incarnation, life, death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ. As such, the Gospel of God always Shows Our Savior (SOS).

So, for example, all the Ten Commandments are Law, they show us how sinful we are. But they also serve two other functions. For unbelievers, the Law helps curb outward sin: if there is a law against stealing and a strong punishment for it, then there will be less stealing. For believers in Christ, the Law also serves as a guide to how to live a life of thanksgiving for the wonderful gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

The following information from God’s Word about the stewardship of our finances is Law in this third sense. In the New Testament, God has given us believers in Christ certain commands about how to use our finances for the work of the Church. This is our guide for how to respond to God in thanksgiving for his gifts to us. But even this Law will always accuse us and show us our sin. So as you read through this information, if you are convicted that you have not been faithful with your finances in thought, word, or deed, then know that this is God’s Law at work. He is calling you to repentance. So repent and trust in the Lord Jesus who died for all sins — including our sins of greed and miserliness. You are forgiven in Christ and as the forgiven child of God, you can lead a new and more faithful life in the power of Christ’s Gospel.

## STEWARDSHIP & VOCATION

Christian stewardship begins with the understanding that all we have is God's and that "we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world" (1 TIM. 6:7). Since all we have is God's, we should use it for his purposes. God's purpose for us in our lives is expressed in the various vocations, or callings, that we have.

A great treasure of the Lutheran Reformation is the rediscovery of the holy callings given to each Christian. In Luther's day, it was taught that the surest way to enter heaven was to leave the world and join a monastery. But Luther saw this as actually running away from the holy callings (in Latin: vocations) that God has given us to play in the home, the church and society at large. Each one of these vocations makes a claim upon us. Luther laid out the biblical commands for our various vocations in the Table of Duties in the Small Catechism — and specifically the command for all Christians when it comes to stewardship:

### ***What Hearers Owe Their Pastor***

*"In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 COR. 9:14).*

*"Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (GAL. 6:6-7).*

Our vocation as Christian, and as member of a particular Christian congregation where we receive the Word of God and His Sacraments makes a claim on us: on our presence on Sunday morning and on our support for the work of the Gospel. Likewise, our callings in the home make a claim on us: again for presence and support. So, for example, a father uses his income to feed, clothe and protect his children; a mother must be present with her children to actually be a mother to them. In society at large our vocations are varied, but they all boil down to being a good neighbor no matter where we are: we work, we have friends, we visit the local bar, we help those in need. In each place, we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. That means being a faithful friend and worker, a kind and generous neighbor, etc. Once again: this role places a claim on our presence and our support.

As the post-communion collect has it, we hope to grow in "faith toward God and fervent love toward one another." This growth in the Christian life is called sanctification. Our sanctification is

never perfect in this life, but that is all the more reason why we must actually strive to live a faithful (toward God) and loving (toward our neighbor) Christian life. Thinking about sanctification through the lens of vocation makes this a much more concrete task. My sanctification is not trying to get more holy — it's trying to get to church more often and be more supportive of the ministry; it's making time to actually raise my children and plan for their future by making sacrifices now; it's allowing room in my life to give alms to my needy neighbor and being present for my neighbor in time of need.

## TITHING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The word tithing comes from the Old English word for tenth. To tithe means to give one-tenth of one's income, or 10 percent. In the Old Testament, God commanded that the Israelites tithe for the support of the Temple, its priests and Levites, and the sacrifices:

*"Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD" (LEV. 27:30).*

*"To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting" (NUM. 18:21).*

Everyone in Israel was to tithe, even the Levites whose income came from the tithes of the other Israelites:

*"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Moreover, you shall speak and say to the Levites, 'When you take from the people of Israel the tithe that I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present a contribution from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe' (NUM. 18:25-26).*

Thus tithing was a part of the Old Testament law for Israel (along with the entire law for the nation, including the dietary laws which stated that one should not eat pork, shellfish, etc.). As such, God promised to bless Israel's faithfulness to this and all other Old Testament laws:

*"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need" (MAL. 3:10).*

## FALSE TEACHINGS ON TITHING

Too often many Christians now make a jump from the Old Testament law to our current situation under the New Testament. These folks say that 1) tithing is still a command of God upon us who share in the New Testament and 2) if you do tithe, God will bless you financially and if you don't tithe, God will punish you financially.

Both of these statements are in error in subtle yet significant ways.

First, the tithing commanded by God in the Old Testament law applied to the state of affairs before the founding of the New Testament with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Christians are today not under any obligation to circumcise their sons, or to abstain from pork and shellfish, so the Old Testament laws regarding tithing do not apply directly to today's Christians. St. Paul writes, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the substance, however, is Christ" (COL. 2:16-17). Christ is the fulfillment and therefore the end of the Old Testament law.

Second, Christ tells us that our life in this world will be difficult. We are to take up our cross and follow Jesus. To say that God will necessarily bless

us financially if we tithe or do any other good work, is to make God beholden to us and to deny the cross of Christ. All things being equal, of course a life lived in accordance with God's commands is more blessed than a life lived in disobedience. If we are faithful, God will of course bless us — but we must realize that God will bless us in the shade of the cross. Johann Gerhard put it this way:

*In the same way along with the eternal promises in the New Testament there are also given corporal and temporal promises which must be understood with the exception of the cross. "There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for My sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life" (MARK 10:29-30). "Godliness holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come" (1 TIM. 4:8). "He that would love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile" (1 PET. 3:10). "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right?" (Verse 13). (Theological Commonplaces, Law & Gospel, forthcoming from Concordia Publishing House).*





## NEW TESTAMENT STEWARDSHIP

So where does that leave us today with how we are to support God's work in the Church? To find these principles we need to look to the New Testament and how we are told to fulfill the law of love in regard to financing the Church.

St. Paul says the following to the Corinthian Christians:

*"On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper" (1 COR. 16:2).*

*"The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 COR. 9:6-8).*

So in the New Testament we are to give:

- 1) **Voluntarily and Cheerfully.** Giving must be done voluntarily, not under compulsion and cheerfully, not grudgingly.
- 2) **First Fruits.** Giving should be from the first fruits of our labor. Our giving is what we do on the *first* day of the week before our other expenses come due.
- 3) **Proportionally.** Giving is to be proportional, as each one of you may prosper. Giving is not to be an arbitrarily set dollar amount each week, but rather is to be in accordance with how one has prospered each week. Thus, each of us should determine to set aside a certain proportion (percentage) of our income for the Church each week. We'll get back to what that percentage should be below.
- 4) **Faithfully.** We do have the promise that God will give us what we need for this body and life. Therefore, we should give in faith, trusting that God will provide for all our needs — though not necessarily our wants!

So, in the New Testament proportional giving is also commanded. We are to give each week in accordance with how we have prospered. What size should this proportion be? The New Testament does not lay down any set number. We saw in that in the Old Testament the percentage was set down at

10 percent, a tithe. If God set this number down for his people of old, this seems like the obvious place to start with our giving. This is how tithing applies *indirectly* to Christians under the New Testament. Indeed, God in the New Testament does command that we give generously to support the work of the Church. And in the Old Testament God commanded that his people give 10 percent of their income for the support of the Temple. Thus, it seems fair to say that generosity begins at 10 percent.

## A PARALLEL: THE SABBATH IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

We might approach our answer to this question by asking whether or not we have to keep the Third Commandment — which reads in full from Ex. 20:8-11:

*"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."*

So, do we have to keep this commandment? Should we cease from all labor on Saturday as the people of the Old Testament did? Of course not! That was one of the Old Testament prophecies of Christ — and since Christ has fulfilled the Sabbath rest by resting in the tomb on Holy Saturday, we are free from the Old Testament Sabbath regulations. Thus Paul writes, "Let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (COL. 2:16-17).

And yet, there the Third Commandment stands in our Small Catechism: Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy! What's going on here? Well, look at Luther's explanation of the Third Commandment: "What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but gladly hear and learn it." So the form of the commandment, the letter of the law, has passed away as a shadow: but the spirit still remains. We are to honor God by our worship, by gladly receiving His Word and Sacraments in His Church.



So it is with tithing. The New Testament nowhere lists the precise regulations about giving this tithe and that tithe to the Levites and the Temple and so on. Those precise regulations were to point us to Christ: who represents the fullness of humanity though He is one Man, just as the tithe represented the fullness of the income of the people of Israel though it was only 10 percent thereof. We are in no way bound to these precise legal regulations of Old Testament Israel.

And yet, just as the fulfilling of the Sabbath Day doesn't mean that going to the Lord's House for worship once a week is obsolete — so also the New Testament does not make faithful financial stewardship obsolete. Rather, the New Testament is full of admonitions on this point: "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, *as he may prosper*" (1 COR. 16:2); "But as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness and in our love for you — *see that you excel in this act of grace also*" (2 COR. 8:7); "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 COR. 9:6-8).

So, just as the Old Testament's once a week worship became the benchmark for New Testament worship, so also the Old Testament's tithe becomes the benchmark for New Testament stewardship. Not in the way of inflexible, minute regulations — but in the way of pattern and fulfillment. If in the New Testament we are called to give proportionally (as each one may prosper), weekly (on the first day) and generously — then surely the Old Testament tithe is the floor level of Christian giving, not the ceiling. As our worship in the New Testament is a greater fulfillment of the Old Testament Sabbath, so also our New Testament stewardship is called to be an even greater sacrificial fulfillment of the Old Testament tithing regulations.

## PLANNING YOUR GIVING

Here is some practical advice on how to determine what you should be contributing to the work of the Church.

- 1. Receive God's gifts.** If you have not been faithfully attending worship to hear God's Word, receive his forgiveness, and partake of His body and blood for the eternal benefit of your soul, then by all means repent and come receive the gifts of our Lord Jesus! God does not want your money — He wants you, all of you.
- 2. Pray.** Go to the throne of grace and ask for strength to follow the Lord faithfully.
- 3. Consider what the Church does.** The Church is called to spread the Good News about Jesus Christ by preaching the Gospel to all who will hear it and administering the Sacraments to the faithful. You are a part of God's Church on earth. This is your mission and the mission is for the life of the world — that for which Jesus laid down his life and took it up again. The Church cannot complete its mission unless all members of the Church, those who have benefited from the Church's mission, faithfully support the Church.
- 4. Examine yourself.** Consider the commands of God from the New Testament about supporting the work of the Church and examine your own giving. Are you: a) giving of your first fruits — that is, does your offering come out of your pay check first, not just what's left over; b) giving voluntarily and cheerfully; c) giving proportionally; d) relying on God's promise to provide for you? If not, then repent and trust in God's provision.

**5. Decide on your proportion.** Now you are ready to consider what proportion of your income you can give faithfully, proportionally and cheerfully. As I mentioned above a good place to start is 10 percent. That is what my family gives and it makes for easy math: just move the decimal point and that's your offering for the week. But if you can't give 10 percent voluntarily and cheerfully, then pick another proportion: 7 percent, 5 percent, even 1 percent. But just follow the guidelines from Scripture and *faithfully give a voluntary first fruits proportion* of your income.

#### MORE LAW & GOSPEL

So that is God's Law on supporting the Church: support it faithfully from your first fruits, do it voluntarily and cheerfully and do it proportionally. Does that convict you? Does this Law show your sin? I know it convicts me. I have certainly not been as cheerful or faithful a giver as I should be. That is the bad news of our sinfulness against God's Law. But the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that we are forgiven by Christ's work on the cross. God loves us and has made us His children in Baptism. He feeds us with his very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins. We are His and no one can snatch us out of His hands.





## ADMINISTRATION

For the sake of good order, it is important to plan wisely from conception to reality of how the new church will be formed and become enmeshed in the community. This will take organization and the unavoidable administration needs of the church. Of course this is according to the will of God and according to His timeframe, but it will be helpful to develop a timeline with what needs to be done, and by whom, to incorporate and charter a new LCMS congregation.

An example of how this can be broken into phases is as follows:

## A PLANNING GUIDE TO CHARTERING A NEW CONGREGATION BASED ON WITNESS/MERCY/LIFE TOGETHER



### STAGE ONE:

**Developing your Life Together**  
(Months 1-3)



### STAGE TWO:

**Outreach through Witness and Mercy / Incorporation and chartering**  
(Months 4-6)



### STAGE THREE:

**Preparing for the charter service**  
(Months 7-9)



### STAGE FOUR:

**Planting roots**  
(1st year after chartering)



*To charter a church is to establish and administer a new congregation as a member of the LCMS.*

**- CHURCH COUNTY MISSION -**

[illegible]

- EXAMPLE COMMITTEE SIGN UP SHEET -



## EXAMPLE PLAN FOR THE BIRTH OF A NEW CHURCH



### STAGE ONE: DEVELOPING YOUR LIFE TOGETHER (MONTHS 1-3)



#### WITNESS

- \_\_\_ Study the demographics of the community. Use demographic tools, but also see for yourself, including the existing churches.
- \_\_\_ Choose your church colors.
- \_\_\_ Work with a professional graphic artist to design a logo, website and social media presence.
- \_\_\_ Choose a Bible text that represents who you are, to be used with your logo.
- \_\_\_ Design and print letterhead, envelopes and business cards.
- \_\_\_ Design and print a church brochure.
- \_\_\_ Choose a name for the new church.
- \_\_\_ Make contact with and build relationships with those interested in the new church.
- \_\_\_ Send out a newsletter (weekly/monthly) to all interested people within the community.
- \_\_\_ Hold a public informational meeting, for people outside of the mother congregation, who might be interested in the new church plant.



#### MERCY

- \_\_\_ Conduct individual and institution interviews to identify needs and assets in the community.
- \_\_\_ Form groups centered around outreach and human care needs identified within the community.



#### LIFE TOGETHER

- \_\_\_ Start a bible study and worship service with the core group, focus on Lutheran identity, witness and outreach. Be in prayer for God's will to be done and encourage others to pray.
- \_\_\_ Identify materials for Lutheran education and training. This would include adult information, children's resources, VBS and evangelism materials most appropriate for outreach.
- \_\_\_ Develop an overall strategy and direction for planting the church with the first core group meeting and then the second public meeting.
- \_\_\_ Set the date for the charter service.
- \_\_\_ Develop a timeline that extends from the present to three months past the charter service.
- \_\_\_ Secure a church phone number.
- \_\_\_ Obtain a post office box for the new church.
- \_\_\_ Develop preliminary constitution and bylaws.
- \_\_\_ Recruit a financial secretary to handle church finances honestly and professionally.
- \_\_\_ Recruit a bookkeeper.
- \_\_\_ Open a church checking account (once incorporated and chartered).
- \_\_\_ Secure a temporary worship location.
- \_\_\_ Identify more permanent worship location possibilities.
- \_\_\_ Provide activities for children during core group meetings.
- \_\_\_ Ensure that the mission developer, along with family, are well cared for.
- \_\_\_ Have regular social events to build fellowship among your core group and invite newcomers.



## STAGE TWO: OUTREACH THROUGH WITNESS AND MERCY / INCORPORATION AND CHARTERING (MONTHS 4-6)



### WITNESS

- Design an outreach plan and train others to witness in their everyday vocations and special outreach events.
- Host monthly gatherings for everyone interested in the new church and encourage the core group to bring their friends.
- Continue to nurture relationships with those who have expressed an interest in the new church or with those who have lapsed from the faith.
- Sponsor special outreach events every two to three months prior to the birth of the new church.
- Buy sandwich or yard signs and have them professionally painted.
- Create a large outdoor banner that is professionally done.
- Design the worship space to best communicate Christ in a liturgical fashion.
- Design and print a “Welcome/Communion Card” for the worship service that helps identify visitors and why they have come, while also explaining Communion practices.
- Regularly promote the new church through radio/TV/Internet and be sure to register with search engines.
- Do direct mail outreach into the community.
- Place a display ad in the most effective newspaper, consider the Yellow Pages if they are used in your area.
- Saturate the community with fliers/posters/door hangers.



### MERCY

- Conduct surveys and interviews among community members. Also touch base with the mayor, religion editors of newspapers, school administrators, police, chamber of commerce, radio/tv stations, healthcare providers, other clergy.
- Develop a mercy plan that is asset based and goes beyond giving aid and lifts others out of poverty.
- Mobilize groups centered around outreach and human care needs identified within the community.



### LIFE TOGETHER

- Communicate closely with those who are supporting the new church, ask for specific prayer needs.
- Recruit core group leaders.
- Recruit and train a leader for children's ministry.
- Meet regularly with core group leaders for planning purposes and assessing results/challenges.
- Provide ongoing support to existing outreach and administrative groups.
- Begin worship with the core group (midweek/Sunday?) as well as having an adult information refresher course.
- Estimate the cost for projected start-up needs.
- Make a budget for the new church for the first year.
- Raise the funds needed to meet the budget, especially the outreach and start-up expenses.
- Plan for the needs of the charter service.
- Provide activities for children during core group meetings.
- Ensure that the mission developer, along with family, are well cared for.
- Have regular social events to build fellowship among your core group and invite newcomers.



## BEFORE CHARTER SUNDAY

(see *LCMS Treasurer's Manual with Incorporation and Charter Steps*: [lcms.org/resources/ctmanual](http://lcms.org/resources/ctmanual))

- \_\_\_ Request district's affirmation for congregation to organize.
- \_\_\_ Appoint temporary officers.
- \_\_\_ Obtain Employer Identification Number (EIN). Complete IRS form SS-4 and either (a) mail or fax it to the IRS and wait for them to send you your EIN, or (b) call the IRS and obtain your EIN immediately and mail them the form with the EIN.
- \_\_\_ Open bank account.
- \_\_\_ Determine preliminary insurance needs.
- \_\_\_ Obtain church seal, if one is desired.
- \_\_\_ Make preliminary contact with Concordia Plans.
- \_\_\_ Hold special business meeting six to eight weeks before Charter Sunday to vote on the following:
  - + Adopt articles of incorporation, a constitution and bylaws.
  - + Elect a church council and officers.
  - + Authorize the council to make application for reception into the Synod and district.
  - + Authorize the officers to incorporate.
  - + Adopt a motion stating that the resolutions acted on at the business meeting becomes effective on the date of organization.
- \_\_\_ Request copy of the *Congregational Treasurer's Manual* and the *Personnel Manual* from district.
- \_\_\_ Obtain district approval of constitution and bylaws.
- \_\_\_ Select a Charter Sunday where those wishing to become members sign the constitution.





### STAGE THREE: PREPARING FOR THE CHARTER SERVICE (MONTHS 7-9)



#### WITNESS

- \_\_\_ Select worship music that contains the proper distinction between Law and Gospel.
- \_\_\_ Select an organist or keyboard player or designate a person to control the CD player.
- \_\_\_ Acquire an adequate sound system.
- \_\_\_ Acquire an adequate CD player / organ.
- \_\_\_ Create an Order of Service bulletin/ worship folder for the charter service and those thereafter.
- \_\_\_ Have ushers collect Welcome/Communion Cards at each service.
- \_\_\_ Design and distribute a Visitors Brochure as visitors enter the church or in the pew racks.
- \_\_\_ Staff an Information/Welcome Table with greeters.
- \_\_\_ Arrange for a photographer at the charter service.
- \_\_\_ Hold a practice charter service two weeks before the scheduled first publicized worship service.
- \_\_\_ Arrange for name tags to be worn by core group members and visitors, if desirable.



#### MERCY

- \_\_\_ Mobilize groups centered around outreach and human care needs identified within the community.
- \_\_\_ Ensure that follow-ups are being done with those who are served/involved in mercy work.



#### LIFE TOGETHER

- \_\_\_ Communicate prayer needs for this phase to your core group and those praying for the new church.
- \_\_\_ Communicate your direction and your ministry plan.
- \_\_\_ Recruit and train a worship committee.
- \_\_\_ Recruit and train ushers.

- \_\_\_ Recruit and train greeters.
- \_\_\_ Recruit and train trustees.
- \_\_\_ The children's ministry leader recruits and trains the nursery leader.
- \_\_\_ Recruit and train evangelism committee members if one is desired. Remembering that witness opportunities exist for everyone and not a single committee.
- \_\_\_ Pray for your core group before the first public worship service.
- \_\_\_ Assign tasks to all who are interested in helping.
- \_\_\_ Carefully screen and select at least two reliable individuals to serve as counters for the weekly offerings.
- \_\_\_ Help establish and maintain communication between those using the facility and the Trustees.
- \_\_\_ The lead trustee thoroughly inspects the rented facility and grounds after each worship service.
- \_\_\_ The trustees ensure the building is set up properly before the worship service.
- \_\_\_ Ensure the portability of those items needed on Sunday morning.
- \_\_\_ Obtain a safe and secure storage site for portable items.
- \_\_\_ Ensure all needed equipment and supplies are on hand before the trial-run public worship service.
- \_\_\_ Select a name for your children's ministry if you wish to communicate this separately.
- \_\_\_ Recruit Sunday school teachers and Nursery workers.
- \_\_\_ Establish written policies for nursery workers and parents.
- \_\_\_ Ensure caring and safe policies are designed for the nursery and that they are being followed.
- \_\_\_ Nursery director recruits and trains nursery workers.
- \_\_\_ Select the appropriate room for the nursery.
- \_\_\_ Outfit the nursery (portable items).
- \_\_\_ Train Sunday school teachers.
- \_\_\_ Ensure nursery workers and Sunday School teachers are in their rooms at least 15 minutes before the service/Sunday school hour begins.



- \_\_\_ Make signs for the nursery and Sunday school rooms.
- \_\_\_ Encourage the pastor before the first public worship service.

### EXAMPLE OF COMMITTEES, PROGRAMS AND STRUCTURE FOR THE CORE GROUP:

#### TEMPORARY COMMITTEES

- + Community needs
- + Temporary facilities search
- + First service and worship needs
- + Christian education needs
- + Outreach and public relations
- + Administration
  - Organizational structure
  - Constitution/bylaws development
  - Finance
- + Assimilation

#### PERMANENT COMMITTEES

- + Church Council
  - President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary Worship
  - Music
- + Elders
- + Trustees
- + Finance
  - Counters
  - Financial secretary
  - Treasurer
- + Greeters
- + Ushers
- + Christian Education
  - Adults
  - Children's ministry
  - Sunday school
  - Nursery
- + Stewardship
- + Outreach
- + Human care
- + Assimilation — pre-assimilation — set up and take down, ownership without compromise
- + Fellowship
  - Sunday morning coffee/donuts
  - Fundraisers (sauerkraut supper, spaghetti dinner, etc.)
  - Family fun nights



## STAGE FOUR: PLANTING ROOTS (1ST YEAR AFTER CHARTERING)

- \_\_\_ Create ministry growth / Progress reports as needed for oversight and grants
- \_\_\_ Current year budget process
- \_\_\_ Develop strategic plan and budgets for coming years (3-5 years)
- \_\_\_ Develop and mission and ministry plan for the future (3-5 years)
- \_\_\_ Land / Facility acquisition
- \_\_\_ Celebrate what God has done each year and plan for the coming year ...



## AFTER CHARTER SUNDAY

(see LCMS Treasurer's Manual with Incorporation and Charter Steps: [lcms.org/resources/ctmanual](http://lcms.org/resources/ctmanual))

- \_\_\_ Replace temporary officers with permanent officers.
- \_\_\_ Send report of organization to the Synod's department of statistics.
- \_\_\_ Install the church council.
- \_\_\_ Obtain state identification number.
- \_\_\_ File for incorporation.
- \_\_\_ Prepare a budget.
- \_\_\_ Begin the process of calling a pastor.
- \_\_\_ Become familiar with district quarterly report.
- \_\_\_ Check again on all appropriate insurance and bonding including liability for pastor.



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

### Christ Lutheran Church is on the move!

On May 20, Christ Lutheran will be moving to its first dedicated facility 1234 Main St. in the downtown. We will be moving into our office, classrooms and youth room by mid-June. We are very excited about the opportunity to have our own facilities throughout the week and the ability to be more active in our community. We will now have space for meetings, Bible studies, youth activities, family fun nights and community activities.

You can help! We will be purchasing chairs for \$20 each. With each purchase of two chairs, Thrivent will purchase a third one.

*We would also welcome donations of the following items in new or good used condition:*

• Fax machine / Projector	• (12) Preschool chairs
• (2) Matching sofas/loveseats	• Conference room table
• Wood end tables	• (6) bean bag chairs (Youth)
• (2) Preschool tables	• Bulletin and white boards

*Would you prayerfully consider buying a seat for a sinner/saint?*


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**I would like to help in God's mission at Christ Lutheran with the purchase of chairs.**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

NUMBER OF CHAIRS: \_\_\_\_\_

IN MEMORY/HONOR OF: \_\_\_\_\_



## EXAMPLE SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA:

### PREPARING TO CHARTER AND A DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE

Who is Christ Lutheran?

#### THE MISSION

Christ Lutheran Church is a worshipping community gathered around God's gifts to His people in Word and Sacrament; reaching out to a growing community through education and a sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ; loving, welcoming, caring and providing a safe haven open to all souls while remaining true and constant to God's Word.

#### THE VISION

The vision of the Mission Church is to become a thriving congregation within our community reaching out to the Church County area. We will have an established worship facility, will continue to grow and when necessary, plant a daughter congregation. We will be a congregation marked by its unity, faithfulness to God, education and fellowship, loyalty to our confession of faith and love and outreach within our community.

#### THE VALUES

- + Christ-Centered
- + Faithfulness to God's Word
- + Loyalty to the church and our confession of faith
- + Sacrificial love and mercy
- + Caring, sharing and bearing each other's burdens
- + Being a witness to Christ and salvation by grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone.
- + Unity in all things

#### VOTE ON THE FOLLOWING:

- a) Adopt articles of incorporation, a constitution and bylaws.
- b) Authorize the council to make application for reception into the Synod and district.
- c) Authorize the officers to incorporate.
- d) Adopt a motion stating that the resolutions acted on at the business meeting becomes effective on the date of organization.

### CHARTER SUNDAY

- + June 18th at the fairground
- + Worship from 2-3 p.m.
- + Celebration from 3-5 p.m.
- + Free food, fun and fellowship
- + Kid's playground
- + Catered food
- + Music

### EVENTS LEADING UP TO CHARTER SUNDAY

- + May 13th / June 3rd – Community surveys and invitations
- + Surveys address felt needs in community and prayer requests
- + Drawing for gift certificate and online survey
- + 500 streets to cover!
- + This is our first impression and a chance to invite as many folks as we can to celebrate with us

### FUNDRAISER

May 24th Spaghetti dinner: Mount Calvary Lutheran Church will be sponsoring a Spaghetti dinner fundraising event to help support the start of their daughter congregation, Christ Lutheran Church in Church County. The dinner will be held in the fellowship hall of Mount Calvary from 5-7 p.m. or there will be take-out. The prices will be \$5 for takeout, \$5 for adults eating in and \$2.50 for children eating in with a maximum family charge of \$20. There will be entertainment for kids and adults as well as door prizes. Please join us for this exciting event to prepare for the birth of a new Christian congregation in Church County.

### FACILITIES

- + New Office
- + Land acquisition – Bear Branch property?
- + Transition – office and worship space
- + If we outgrow the chapel
- + Probably won't be as attractive/comfortable
- + Need to know by June 18th to make an announcement
- + New worship times?
- + Temporary office

# Charter

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## Christ Lutheran Church – of – Church County, MO

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We the members of Christ Lutheran Church of Church County, MO having been commissioned by God through Baptism to be His Church, and having been gathered together by Him in this place, do gladly and willingly affix our signatures to this document, thereby officially organizing ourselves as a Christian congregation in this community. At this time we also wish to reiterate our part in God's mission such that we will be a worshipping community gathered around God's gifts to His people in Word and Sacrament; reaching out to a growing community through education and a sharing of the Good News of Jesus Christ; loving, welcoming, caring and providing a safe haven open to all souls while remaining true and constant to God's Word. By God's Grace we will be marked by our Christ-centeredness; our faithfulness to God's Word; our loyalty to the Church and our confession of faith; our sacrificial love and mercy, our caring, sharing and bearing each other's burdens; our being a witness to Christ and salvation by grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone; and our unity in all things. Therefore, being mindful of who we are and our purpose in this world, we hereby affix our signatures with the prayer that God would guide, direct, and bless our life and work together.

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**This Lord's Day, June 18**



## WORSHIP

What are the things that should be considered in the Life Together of a newly planted church when it comes to worship? Some basic questions to ask are: is it simple enough for a new church, can we do it with excellence and will it join us together with the Lutheran Church at large? Your public worship, in many ways will, for possibly generations to come, identify to the community what is Lutheran? And while it is important to know your community, having a Lutheran identity may cause culture shock for new participants. But taken to its very roots, this is wor•ship (wər-shəp): “In the Old Testament translates the Hebrew word meaning ‘to bow down, prostrate oneself,’ a posture indicating reverence and homage given to a lord, whether human or divine.”<sup>41</sup>

The Lutheran style of worship may be unfamiliar to those in your community ... if it is then they might even wonder if they have stepped back in time, or if this is a cult or at the very least think it is a Catholic service. To be sure we are not a cult, as a matter of fact the Lutheran church, through the Reformation, laid the foundation in the 16th century for all other protestant churches that would be formed worldwide. And for this Martin Luther was ranked as the 3rd most influential person/event of the 2nd millennium by Time/Life. As for its catholicity, indeed the roots of our worship service goes all the way back to the early church, as this is how the Christian church has worshipped since before the United States even existed ... kings and queens, servants and peasants, modern day businessmen and everyday people alike have worshipped in such a way for centuries.

### WHY HAVE A SHOCK?

So why keep on doing it, you might wonder? Why the culture shock? Why not change things up to fit modern America's culture? Very simply because the time that you will spend here is different: it is not only cross cultural but it is counter cultural. It's different than going to the store, it's different than going to work or school, it's different than going to see a show ... it is time that is separate from every other part of your week, in a place that is set apart and made holy by an eternal God. From the moment that we call on God's name we find ourselves on sacred ground in the very presence of our majestic Triune God. Every sight, sound and movement is a reflection of what is happening in worship.

<sup>41</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 1143.

## THE WORD OF GOD MADE FLESH ... FILLING OUR SENSES.

And so the sounds that are heard are different, the words that are spoken and sung are not the flowery words of modern day man, these words are indeed ancient, as they were spoken by an eternal God through the prophets and now His Son which are given to us in the scriptures ... this service is framed within the holy words of God which surround us in His holiness. And so we cry out for mercy with David, we rejoice at the announcement of Jesus' birth with Mary and we sing for joy with Simeon when we first cast our eyes on Jesus.

Why so much singing? For the very practical reason that music allows the words to ring through in our minds, whether it is a young child or a very elderly person who is losing their memory ... they are able to recount God's Word much easier and it becomes the fabric of their Christian life. Singing praises day in night through the Word and in hymns that are faithful expressions of that Word.

Not only this, but because we believe that being in the presence of God is the reality of Heaven on earth — we are truly singing with angels and arch-angels. And so our very movements and sights that we see reflect the fact that we have come to the throne where we will find the holy of holies here before us in Christ. We gather together with all of the heavenly hosts, the one true church throughout the world and all those who have died in the faith before us. Our fellowship then is not based on demographics or culture or style but on a timeless faith: what we believe, teach and confess then is what unites us together in one faith in Christ.

### WHY CROSS CULTURAL, WHY TIMELESS, WHY THE UNITY IN WORSHIP?

Very simply because this is not our service to God, but instead this is God's service to us. From beginning to end, we are detached from the world and united with God as we walk through the life of Christ who reaches down to us. Christ, who is God in the flesh, is still through a very earthly, real and tangible way filling our senses with His healing, cleansing and forgiveness. We come then to be connected to the death and resurrection of Christ not only spiritually but in a real and physical way, powered by the Holy Spirit through the creating Word of God, we receive the forgiveness of sins won for us on the cross as it fills our ears, washes over our bodies and as we taste and see that the Lord is good.

This is why it is a culture shock, because we step out of the world to be touched by Christ. The high and mighty of the church stood shocked when they saw a sinful woman shame herself by lowering herself at the feet of Jesus and with her unbound hair wiped her tears of repentance and joy on his feet. That is what we witness in worship, humbled sinners, who kneel down at the feet of Christ to be touched by Him and to be set free. That is what the shock of the cross was all about. It was the appearance of humiliation, scandal, utter defeat, but when the stone shook the earth as it was rolled away from the entrance of the tomb it was the shock of the resurrection. What we witnessed on the cross was victory, it was glory, it was the greatest picture of the depth of God's love, it was freedom, life and salvation.

Worshipping at a Lutheran church, we cannot guarantee that people will be charmed, or entertained, or motivated or experience an emotional rush, but worshipping in truth and spirit, sinners will be set free, will be set apart, will be made holy.

Saints will leave this place with God's peace. It is the shock to the system of the forgiveness of sin and life everlasting. This is the shock we come to receive every Sunday.

### WHEN TO BEGIN WORSHIPPING

As you will note from Luther's seven marks of the church, even as a core group, this is a worshipping community. As the Lutheran Confessions state, the church from its beginning is an assembly of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered (ACVII). So worship can begin immediately among the group forming the church. However, it would be wise before fully publicizing your worship services, that you have worked out all of the details for having the Divine Service and how you will rightly administer the Sacraments, as well. Therefore, the charter service may be the best opportunity to have your first truly public worship that you plan for.

#### Why cross cultural, why timeless, why the unity in worship?

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#### The Culture Shock of Worship



"If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:36)

• wor • ship (wôr-shəp) The OT translates the Hebrew word meaning 'to bow down, prostrate oneself,' a posture indicating reverence and homage

Greetings from your friends at Christ Lutheran Church, we are so very grateful that you have chosen to worship with us today. The Lutheran style of worship may be unfamiliar to you ... if it is, you might wonder if you have stepped back in time or at the very least think it is a Roman Catholic service.



The Lutheran church, through the Reformation, laid the foundation in the 16th century for

all other protestant churches that would be formed worldwide. And for this Martin Luther was ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> most influential person/event of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium by Time/Life. As for it's catholicity, indeed the roots of our worship service goes all the way back to the early church, as this is how the Christian church has worshipped since before the United States even existed ... kings and queens, servants and peasants, modern day businessmen and everyday people alike have worshipped in such a way for centuries.

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#### The Word of God made flesh... filling our senses.

And so the sounds that are heard are different, the words that are spoken and sung are not the flowery words of modern day man, these words are indeed ancient, as they were spoken by an eternal God through the prophets and now His Son which are given to us in the scriptures ... this service is framed within the holy words of God which surround us in His holiness. And so we cry out for mercy with David, we rejoice at the announcement of Jesus' birth with Mary and we sing for joy with Simeon when we first cast our eyes on Jesus.

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Not only this, but because we believe that being in the presence of God is the reality of Heaven on earth - we are truly singing with angels and archangels. And so our very movements and sights that we see reflect the fact that we have come to the throne where we will find the holy of holies here before us in Christ. We gather together with all of the heavenly hosts, the one true church throughout the world and all those who have died in the faith before us. Our fellowship then is not based on demographics or culture or style but on a timeless faith: what we believe, teach and confess then is what unites us together in one faith in Christ.

## FELLOWSHIP

An important part of church planting is simply to foster fellowship among the core group and then the new congregation. This is the Body of Christ, in this place, and it is helpful to simply get to know each other. It is important to find the space and the time that you might intentionally have opportunity to bond with one another. As the group forms into a congregation, indeed as they are shoulder to shoulder at the communion rail, they will share in each other's joys and burdens: your

joy is my joy, and your burden is my burden. Note also that while youth activities and other groups for special interests are wholesome, rather than only segmenting the group, it is worthwhile to host multi-generational events that represent the fullness of the Body of Christ. It is amazing how quickly your group will become like family that loves one another when you have integrated activities. Even volunteer work will not seem a chore when the bond is there, because all that will matter is that you are doing it together.



## ASSIMILATION

Assimilation of new people is also an important part of this fellowship. One of the great aspects of church planting is that people can jump in right away, get involved and feel like they are a part of building the new church. For example, if worshipping or social activities require set up and take down, you can encourage visitors right away to participate. Of course the most important aspect of this fellowship is to bring people into the life of the church. This will require teaching the confession of faith to those outside of our church fellowship. They may be new to our ways of doing things, but once taught why we do what we do, so often they will fall in love with how our doctrine is interwoven into our practices. Because of our beliefs about the Lord's Supper, our communion practices may also be new to visitors, but with gentle catechesis they will see the great importance we place upon the Sacraments.

It is a careful balance of fellowship without compromise. Once people have joined the church through transfer or profession of faith, it will be helpful to get to know them, give them opportunities to use their gifts and talents and to have current directories available to help them learn who other members are. You may also wish to share with the congregation information on new members to help them get to know your latest additions to the church. Be cautious, though, not to give the impression that you are happy that they have joined just so they can volunteer and give, or give the impression that their daily vocations are any less sacred than church volunteerism.

**– PROFILE SHEET –**

**Christ Lutheran Church**  
**A Church Mission Outreach**

---

LAST NAME \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Educational Background:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Employment Background:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Church Volunteer/Work Experience:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I am passionate about:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





MERCY

**A**s stated in the introduction, mercy or human care will be an integral part of the life of a new church. Just as God cares for us as a whole person of mind, body, and soul: so, too, the Church cares for others with this same compassion. Indeed it is difficult to step over one who is lying on the ground physically starving, as you are trying to tell them that Jesus loves them. Indeed their spiritual starvation is the primary concern, but we cannot ignore the physical care of a person either, as we are more than just spiritual beings. And as James says, “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?” (JAMES 2:15-16).

Martin Luther goes so far as to say that we have broken the Fifth Commandment when we do not come to the aid of others, even our enemies:

*189] Secondly, under this commandment not only he is guilty who does evil to his neighbor, but he also who can do him good, prevent, resist evil, defend and save him, so that no bodily harm or hurt happen to him, and yet does not do it. 190] If, therefore, you send away one that is naked when you could clothe him, you have caused him to freeze to death; if you see one suffer hunger and do not give him food, you have caused him to starve. So also, if you see any one innocently sentenced to death or in like distress, and do not save him, although you know ways and means to do so, you have killed him. And it will not avail you to make the pretext that you did not afford any help, counsel, or aid thereto, for you have withheld your love from him and deprived him of the benefit whereby his life would have been saved.*

*191] Therefore God also rightly calls all those murderers who do not afford counsel and help in distress and danger of body and life, and will pass a most terrible sentence upon them in the last day, as Christ Himself has announced when He shall say, Matt. 25:42f: I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not. That is: You would have suffered Me and Mine to die of hunger, thirst, and cold, would have suffered the wild beasts to tear us to pieces, or left us to rot in prison or perish in distress. What else is that but to reproach them 192] as murderers and bloodhounds? For although you have not actually done all this, you have nevertheless, so far as you were concerned, suffered him to pine and perish in misfortune.*

*It is just as if I saw someone navigating and laboring in deep water [and struggling against adverse winds] or one fallen into fire, and could extend to him the hand to pull him out and save him, and yet refused to do it. What else would I appear, even in the eyes of the world, than as a murderer and a criminal?*

*193] Therefore it is God's ultimate purpose that we suffer harm to befall no man, but show him all good and love; 194] and, as we have said, it is specially directed toward those who are our enemies. For to do good to our friends is but an ordinary heathen virtue, as Christ says Matt. 5:46. (“The Fifth Commandment, Large Catechism.” In *Book of Concord*, ed. Paul T. McCain. St. Louis: Concordia, 2007.)*



## MERCY

Of course, this is seen in the proper distinction of God's Law and Gospel. We are convicted by God's good and holy Law when we break His command to love our neighbor, but guilt or fear is not what motivates us to do so. Indeed we have received God's mercy in His Son, and not only are we filled with this mercy through God's means of grace, but it is overflowing. In our baptismal identity, it is so engrained in us to show mercy that we must ask, "when did we clothe you?" Showing mercy, for us, is as natural as a heart that beats and lungs that breathe. As St. Paul tells the Galatians, especially to those in the household of faith, we are to show mercy (GAL. 6:10), which then ripples out into our communities. But this is typically where we have

the most concern for showing mercy — to the poor and marginalized outside the church. Sometimes with good intentions not to cause harm to those in need, but more often concerned that we might show mercy to those undeserving. Indeed even Luther referred to those drifters who came to the cities to take advantage of others' generosity, as the Squire Filth (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 21. St. Louis: Concordia, 2007, 117), because they were not truly in need, but were deceiving the pious who genuinely cared about the poor among them. So how do we balance between charity and generosity that helps and does not hurt? The following is a whitepaper on a new look at mercy that does just that.



## SCRIPTURE

“For even the son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

MARK 10:45



## SCRIPTURE

“For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.”

LUKE 22:27





## SCRIPTURE

“And he gave the apostles, the prophets,  
the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,  
to equip the saints for the work of ministry  
for building up the body of Christ.”

EPH. 4:11



## ASPECTS

Care for those in the body of Christ. Jesus in the gospels.  
Galatians 6. 1 Corinthians 12

Care for those outside the body.  
Jesus in the gospels, Galatians 6 “good to all.”

Cooperation in externals.

Confession in left hand kingdom issues.



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CARING FOR THE MARGINALIZED

In Matthew 25 when Christ describes the final judgment in which the Son of Man will come with His angels to separate people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, Jesus points out that those who are of His Kingdom are in fact those who cared for others in need. We understand this is a matter of faith, a baptismal identity — Christ is King and those of His Kingdom show mercy. This mercy is centered on the cross, in which the Bread from Heaven is broken and given for the forgiveness of sins as true Food that gives salvation. Notice too in Matthew 25, that those in Christ's Kingdom are completely unaware that they clothed, visited and fed the King in this earthly life. That is until the King tells them that as they did it to the least of these brothers, they did it to Him. This is important if we are to consider ourselves to be the hands and feet of Jesus. When showing mercy, it is easy to see ourselves as the king who helps those who are inferior to us or to look down on those people with a sense of superiority because we have our lives more in order. And yet, when we understand our place in the Kingdom, we quickly understand that we are citizens only because the King was willing to suffer and die in order to give over His Kingdom as an inheritance. Indeed, we are poor miserable beggars. We are those people unworthy of such riches. And now as recipients of this undeserved mercy and love, we too distribute it freely as well.

### 1. UNDERSTANDING MERCY

When we sit at the table and look into the bloodshot eyes of a broken, addicted homeless person and he gives that toothless smile — although he is written off by society — we don't see some poor waif that we will lean down to help as if we are king. No, Jesus says as you have done to the least, you have done to Him. So instead of seeing a beggar, we see in that homeless person, Christ our King! This is the honored guest at my table. These misfits and outcasts are those who would sit at the table of Jesus. The very Kingdom belongs not to the mighty, who merely think they are the chosen ones, but sinners forgiven by grace through faith, chosen in Holy Baptism. And so, too, when you feed or clothe those who have been marginalized by society, you care for them as Christ did, in mind, body and soul. You give more than temporary aid to the body. You are showing that someone cares and you are giving eternal hope in Christ.

### 2. UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE, DIGNITY AND FREEDOM OF MERCY

Of course one can question if someone is truly in need or is simply using the church's charity. Indeed, the church must be wise in not enabling an unhealthy dependence. But it also should understand that God does not wait until someone is worthy of His mercy — something for which we should all be very thankful. To be sure, if someone asks for your shirt, you are called to give your coat as well. Why? Mercy is always connected to the church's ministry of Word and Sacraments. It is a part of our life together as the Body of Christ. And no program, secular or otherwise, can be

transformative in the lives of sinners as are the means of God's grace. As Lutherans, we understand the inherent value of every human life — a person who is so valued by God that He sent His Son into the World to save him or her. No matter how the world might view a person, we understand that the least will be first and that we are created in the image of the Creator. This is the basis for the dignity that should be afforded to all people. And that dignity includes the fact that each person has the capacity to serve his or her God given purpose as citizens of communities in vocation. Just as conversion leads to freedom, mercy should not result in any form of compulsion or detrimental relationship of dependency. If need be, the church should fight for and be advocates for the marginalized so they too can make contributions. For those who suffer from addiction, mental illness or a cycle of abuse or crippling disability, this may seem like an uphill battle. But it is one that we are called to fight.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE LCMS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

What then is the role of the church in the community development of our cities? Should we insulate ourselves from the world around us and simply pray that our decaying neighborhoods will improve? Or are we called to the vocation of actively involved corporate citizens? Indeed, many of our churches in the city are playing active roles at the center of neighborhood renewal. The church can be afforded the opportunity to help in both the planning and the implementation of revitalization. Local governments, agencies, corporations and churches can work collaboratively to develop both a quality of life plan and a theory of change to see the plan implemented. The church can assist with implementation in a wide variety of ways to build up the necessary infrastructure of a community. This can include housing, blight improvements, crime safety, job training, education, food ministry, cold shelters and the like. Of course, the church deals best individually through an ongoing relationship with someone.

With this approach we can effect changes to develop stable home lives, reentry into society, first-time home ownership or vocational training. But to have a full renaissance in our struggling communities, it will take more than just job

seekers. It requires jobs. This seems to be an elusive task despite the best efforts of governments, economists and developers alike. But could the church play a role as an economic catalyst in the creation of jobs? Is this not the intent of giving people dignity? They might not only receive help but they can become productive citizens in their communities. Some areas of our cities will be overlooked by business development due to crime and infrastructure. But could the church assist with small business capitalization? Could the church assist with not only helping someone to be a first-time home buyer, but perhaps becoming a first time business owner, employing those who live in the community? Indeed, this would require the assistance of specialists in the world of business and finance, but the LCMS could create a task force to develop entrepreneurial training from a Christian perspective that is anchored by our local altars.

Some congregations have already been responsible for job creation, unintentionally. For example, congregations might house a local child care center that employs staff or run a church related mercy operation that requires employees. Likewise, a church, through a separate nonprofit organization, can own businesses that allow for on-the-job training of starter jobs that will eventually help someone to become gainfully employed in an ongoing career. We have seen how Lutheran Housing Support has offered turnkey solutions to housing in our inner cities and our Gospel Seeds ministry has identified the needs in which a church can assist. There is no better time than now to find creative solutions for the LCMS to play a role in the development of business districts in overlooked communities. Key to this will be small business loans and developing business plans for viable enterprises that will attract consumers from beyond the confines of a community's neighborhood. Again, the church needs to be involved if lives are to be truly changed physically and spiritually. The LCMS can assist in the incubation of small businesses that breathe life into dying cities. This is a clarion call for fresh new thinking and creative alliances with positive forces in the community to serve our neighbors in love, for the sake of the Gospel and the salvation of the lost.

#### 4. THE NEW FACE OF MERCY

When we think of mercy, we typically think of those who have been called to care for the helpless in the midst of crisis, which demands emergency intervention. And no doubt Christ has called us to care for the least of these brothers in need, until the end of days, to save lives.

However, we now know that our help also can have unintended consequences that are ultimately harmful when dealing with chronic poverty. This is what Robert Lupton, author of *Toxic Charity*, describes as a progression of one-way giving. The progression goes as such: one time = appreciation, two times = anticipation, three times = expectation, four times = entitlement, five times = dependency. This is not the result that anyone desires and it does not result in the dignity and freedom that everyone wishes to have. Much like the Hippocratic Oath for health care professionals, Lupton has crafted an oath for those who desire to help:

- “1. I will never do for others what they can do for themselves.*
- 2. I will limit one-way giving to crises and seek always to find ways for legitimate exchange.*
- 3. I will empower by hiring, lending and investing, and offer gifts sparingly as incentives to reinforce achievements.*
- 4. I will put the interests of the poor above my own (or organization) self-interest even when it means setting aside my own agenda.*
- 5. I will listen carefully for spoken and unspoken needs (knowing that many clues will be hidden).*
- 6. Above all, to the best of my ability, I will do no harm.”<sup>42</sup>*

This radically alters the face of mercy when we think of mercy not only in terms of aid and betterment, but also of helping to find ways to develop communities and individuals of all ages and backgrounds, regardless of abilities. Mercy then incorporates not only the social and health care spectrum of the laity, but also young professionals and retired corporate executives. And this

goes beyond the urban mission trip to offer aid, which again is vital, but it is not the complete view of mercy. Picture the retired executive who wishes to end his days in a life of significance by serving at the soup kitchen only to see the poverty needle remain steady. Picture the unemployed homeless person at the receiving end of the soup kitchen who is just looking for a chance to get back on his or her feet. Picture the father who has to step away as his children are handed the Christmas toys that he couldn't provide for them. Is this the picture of freedom and dignity of mercy that God desires?

Now picture when young professionals and retired corporate executives use their God-given vocations to work together with those in need to move them from aid to enterprise, through wealth generation and job creation. When poor and rich live side by side to improve and develop communities. When the person in need is seen as the solution to the community's development problems or human care needs. Every person has capacity, designed in the image of God, irrespective of abilities. This is the new face of mercy. It is not only one helping another, but everyone working in partnership and collaboration. The new face of mercy is a sea of diverse faces in community, loving their neighbors and caring for them in body and soul. This is seen in something as simple as two aging residents living together in a retirement community — perhaps one is the eyes for the other and in return one might be the legs — two Christians knitted together to be one body. Of course this is the understanding of communion in that we are made to be the one Body of Christ in community. True mercy will always have its genesis at the altar of the church, where Christ is brought to all who are in need. And from this mercy received — that gives forgiveness, life and salvation — will be an outpouring of love and charity that offers dignity and freedom to those in need. The new face of mercy addresses the hunger and thirst of body and soul by working together in *koinonia* (our life together as the Church). Pastors, deaconesses, doctors, nurses, social workers, young and old, blue and white collar, rich and poor alike — the table of duties in Godly vocation — this is the face of mercy.

<sup>42</sup> Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), 127.



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMMUNITY

So now that we have a healthy understanding of what mercy looks like, the first step in showing mercy to your neighbor is getting to know them. What are the existing assets in your community, what are the gaps that the church can help to fill, how do you work together to help others to help themselves? The “Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs” Community Outreach Process is an excellent resource to help church plants to understand their communities and how to serve them in love. The reference to planting the Gospel refers to what ultimately will happen after cultivating the soil and building relationships with neighbors and leaders in the community. The following is information about this program for outreach.

The immediate and sustaining goal of the “Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs” initiative is to assist Pastors and their congregational leaders in gaining hands-on experience conversing with their neighbors, beginning with those who reside near the congregation’s geographical location. These experiences develop trained leaders who can use these skills in other geographical areas as the congregation expands its mission outreach.

The conversations or interviews focus on the community’s critical, unmet or underserved human care needs. These needs might be:

- ✦ Insufficient day care openings;
- ✦ After school tutoring for academically at-risk students at the nearby neighborhood public school;
- ✦ Latch key after school care;
- ✦ A food and clothing pantry for the unemployed or underemployed living near the church, etc.;
- ✦ Critically needed support groups, i.e., parenting, recently widowed, unemployed, recently divorced, single parenting, etc.; and
- ✦ A congregation-based health center and Parish Nurse ministry.

There is no end to what a congregation can do when it seeks to model Christ’s compassionate mercy motivated by the Holy Spirit who “Calls us by the Gospel” (Luther’s Explanation of the Third Article of the Apostle’s Creed).



## HANDS-ON AGENCY INTERVIEW TRAINING

These community conversations (interviews) take place, first of all, with key social service, educational, health, governmental or other helping agencies serving the congregation's community:

- ✦ the nearest elementary school;
- ✦ a day care center;
- ✦ a clinic serving low-income clients;
- ✦ a city community re-development liaison staff; and
- ✦ any and all agencies serving the community who know about gaps in the delivery of social, educational or health services and who may even want to partner with the congregation in closing these gaps.

Staff persons from the "Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs" initiative accompany the Pastor and congregational members on these visits and initiate the conversation as contacts are converted into real connections and working relationships with these agencies.

The local congregational committee planning the "Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs" event, schedule the appointment prior to the four-day, on-site training.

## HANDS-ON TRAINING GOING DOOR-TO-DOOR! RESIDENTIAL INTERVIEWS

Another key community conversation is with the congregation's neighbors — those living down the block and around the corner from the church or where a new congregational start is being considered.

Within a four-hour, Saturday morning workshop in the normal four-day, on-site training, pastor and congregational members (workshop participants) role play making door-to-door calls on residents right around from their church.

Then, teams of two (LUKE 10:1: "After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go.") — teaming an extrovert, willing to knock on the door and start the conversation with another member who takes notes and joins in the conversation after it's been initiated — are sent out to put into practice the workshop role playing!

## EASE OF THE INTERVIEW – CALLER DOES NOT INITIATE A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

We call these conversations very low-key, non-threatening interviews for both the interviewer and interviewee. The key factor in the ease of the interview is that the caller does not initiate a spiritual conversation unless requested or when it becomes evident that the potential interviewee is in a stressful situation and the caller may ask: "Would you like us to pray with you?"

Otherwise the conversation focuses on the interviewee's assessment of community needs. This contact, at their door, respectfully and sensitively made, initiates a potential relationship upon which all opportunities to share the Gospel are based.

## LENDING CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP TO THE COMMUNITY – BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP

In order to build on this initial contact, and build a relationship that may lead to opportunities to share the Gospel, the callers might focus on possible follow-up opportunities as interest is noted about a particular neighborhood or community need.

The caller might ask: "If we find that a lot of the neighbors are concerned about this issue/need, can we call on you to help move this identified need to some possible solutions?" The congregation, in this case, is empowering the neighborhood/community to join forces in addressing critical needs. Some parish consultants cite this kind of transaction as lending congregational leadership to the community.

These initial relationship-building conversations are also known as CULTIVATION or PRE-EVANGELISM in the language of mission outreach, that is, reaching out beyond the membership core.

## MODELING JESUS' OWN PRACTICE OF FIRST INQUIRING ABOUT CRITICAL NEEDS

The interviewers simply identify themselves (hand out a church brochure, their calling card), state the reason for their call, "Our congregation (down the block) is seeking to try and serve the human care needs of the community — social, educational, health needs, etc. — and we are wondering if you would be willing to share with us what, in your opinion, are some of the critical, unmet or underserved needs in this neighborhood and community?" This approach models Jesus' own practice of first asking what He could do for the people He met, what needs were pressing in on them (MARK 10:51: "What do you want me to do for you?";

**MATT. 20:32:** “And stopping, Jesus called them and said, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’”)

Those searching — one in 10 — will share name and telephone!

We have found that overwhelmingly, folks are willing, even excited, to share with us, the callers, their opinions about the gaps in the delivery of human services in their neighborhood and community! They often express a desire to address these gaps, maybe even in a congregation/neighborhood partnership that breaks the isolation of neighbors, one from the other.

The callers are trained to identify when it might be appropriate to ask for their name and telephone number.

These residents, willing to share their name and telephone number with the callers, the interviewers at their door, are those who are searching and may be open to a follow-up spiritual visit from the pastor or other congregational spiritual leader(s). At the very least, one in 10 of those we interview is a prospect, that is, a resident seeking to be part of a caring, supportive Christian community.

Loneliness and a surprising disconnectedness is prevalent in many of the neighborhoods surrounding our congregations, and many seem to sense that something is missing in their lives. Significant contacts and close relationships — fertile ground for planting Gospel seeds.

This is an initiative that helps congregations grow numerically, not only through the prospects identified in the door-to-door residential interviews and then followed up on, but also as a congregation identifies critical community needs and develops a program, perhaps, with the help of an LCMS World Relief and Human Care Domestic Grant, to meet the identified needs, further strengthening the relationship.

In the process of serving — even discussing — critical, unmet or underserved human care needs in a specific congregation’s community, significant contacts are made. Significant, sustained contacts made in the process of serving human care needs can foster close relationships.

Significant contacts and close relationships are fertile ground for planting Gospel seeds; therefore, let’s get to work “Planting Gospel Seeds While Serving Human Needs.”







## SERVING YOUR COMMUNITY

Please note again that mercy begins at the altar, pulpit and fonts of our congregations. It is only through our Word and Sacrament ministry that people are truly transformed, in that which is more than skin deep. But outreach through mercy does give access to people that you may not otherwise meet. Just going through the interview process with community leaders allows a new pastor and congregation to not only meet people, but to show they care. Make no mistake, a community will gauge much of who you are, based on how they see you care for the least. When a pastor serves in a community's hospitals, hospice centers, nursing homes, prisons and shelters it speaks much to the Lutheran theology of the cross. We are well equipped in how to address the issues of suffering, death and dying. Not just in human care needs that stem from natural disaster or community decay, but in the muck and mire of human lives that have been wracked by sin. Helping to rebuild and restore in communities, giving opportunity to help rebuild lives. To bring from out of chaos, death and decay ... peace, life, resurrection. In partnership

with the community, in service together, working through our various vocations. As this work is an essential part of ministry, it is highly recommended that it is an essential part of the life of the church. So too, having someone dedicated to coordinating these efforts is a great asset. The vocation of deaconess allows for a theologically trained church worker who can direct the work of mercy both in and outside the church. She also would provide diaconal care to women and children in conjunction with the pastor's spiritual care.

But again, this is not for the faint of heart, mercy can be gritty and challenging — and yet greatly rewarding. Again, when working with the marginalized, something to consider when you are welcoming people in: they just may take you up on it. This may be people who you can see and smell their sin on them ... that notorious sinner from the neighborhood may just grace your church doors. It is essential for the church to know there are no those people, no unlovables, no untouchables, only those whom Christ has suffered and died for. Only honored guests at His table.



Here is a sample devotion to help in teaching this:

***“Loving the Unlovable of the World”***

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (HEB. 10:23-25).

Love AND good deeds ... I’ve worked in some of the worst shanty towns in the Deep South. I’ve worked in one of the toughest neighborhoods in the inner city. I’ve helped in mercy around the world and at one of the worst natural disasters in history in a third world country. I have spent many a day recently in Ferguson to help care for all who have been affected by the recent unrest. And I’d like to think I spurred a good many people to more than a few good deeds. Soup kitchens, community centers, disaster relief, neighborhood renewal, reconciliation ... good deeds of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, building homes for the homeless ... we do our good deeds and spur one another on.

But what of love? What of love? Because I am here to tell you there are some pretty wretched folks out there. The unlovable of our society ... those we may serve who are scam artists, thugs, criminals, lowlifes, the refuse of the world. Love? We may serve them, but like Job’s friends, we first want to know why mercy should be shown to someone who is getting what they deserve. Like the Pharisee, who sees the sinful woman of the city entering the house and thinks her filthy sin may rub off and tarnish their holiness. Or worse, if an unclean leper came to temple, can you imagine? We may serve them with good deeds, but like the rich man who passed by the beggar Lazarus at his gate each day, we look down our nose at this homeless wretch who is beneath us — let the dogs tend to his wounds. Perhaps, we will have our Good Samaritan moment, but love the unlovable? Yes, when Jesus says as you have done it to the least we have done it to Him, we are the great, they are the least, and we humble ourselves to let them sit at our table, to be served by us. But is God actually telling us to love them as ourselves and to spur one another to do likewise? What sort of foolish love is this?

It is the love that is shown to you — by God. Yes, make no mistake, you are Job who comes into this world and will leave it with nothing to offer God, you are the leper covered in sins that rots your flesh, you are the sinful woman of the city who has no business in the house of a holy man — let alone who dares to touch the Holy One of God, you Lazarus are the beggar at the gate groveling for mercy. But this rich man, Jesus Christ, this Good Samaritan ... He looks down upon you and has compassion that overflows from the very depths of His being, His love for you courses in His veins, and He pours Himself out until there is nothing left, to fill you up.

Did you hear what I said? For a wretched sinner like me ... a lowlife, filthy, scum of the earth ... God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, to fulfill the law, to sacrifice, to suffer and to bleed. And when I least deserved it, prayed, “Father forgive.” In this greatest of good deeds, He dies on a cross, for me, to save me. What foolish love is this, on the cross? Dear God what have done — for me? You heal me of my wounds, you cleanse me of all that is unclean and corrupts, you feed me at your table with forgiveness/life/salvation, you clothe me in your righteousness, you give me my heavenly home. And this grace, this undeserved love, it transforms us, it spurs us towards love and good deeds. For when we see the refuse of the world, we see the apple of God’s eye. When the lowly wretch sits at our table, we see the honored guest that we are humbled to serve and wash their feet. For as Christ says, as it is done to the least it is done to Him, our King. And so in the least we see a royal! We see one who is crowned with God’s mercy, we see one with value beyond compare. So let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering ... let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works ... let us encourage one another ... and all the more, all the more, as we see the Day of Christ’s return drawing near. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH, CHURCH COUNTY  
– Community Needs Survey –

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

**What needs do you think our community has? How can our church help fill these needs?**  
*(Pre-K programs, elderly help, playground, soup kitchen, etc.)*

**Is there anything we can pray about for you?**

**Do you have a church home?**

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH, CHURCH COUNTY  
– Community Needs Survey –

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

**What needs do you think our community has? How can our church help fill these needs?**  
*(Pre-K programs, elderly help, playground, soup kitchen, etc.)*

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**What needs do you think our community has? How can our church help fill these needs?**  
*(Pre-K programs, elderly help, playground, soup kitchen, etc.)*

**Is there anything we can pray about for you?**

**Do you have a church home?**

## HERE IS A SAMPLE MERCY CARE/HUMAN CARE PROCEDURE GUIDELINES:<sup>1</sup>

### **St. Paul Lutheran Church**

*Deaconess Sara Smith, director of Human Care*

St. Paul Lutheran Church serves her neighbors in love. As we receive the mercy of Christ, we share that mercy with others. Our mercy care goes out to the community in the name of Christ, caring for our neighbors in body and soul.

We assist with basic needs in times of crisis, being careful that our assistance doesn't enable poor choices or unhealthy dependency. Basic needs include rent/mortgage, utilities, food and transportation. Sometimes we assist with other requests, such as car repair, medication, storage unit, etc., depending on the circumstances. All matters are confidential.

### **ASSESSMENT**

We limit our assistance to our geographical area, namely the church's zip code and three adjoining zip codes. It's a very rare case that a non-member outside this area will receive financial assistance from St. Paul, due to limited funds. Those who aren't in this area are advised to call a church closer to their home.

### **PHASE ONE**

I don't use a written application form. I prefer to ask questions in a caring conversation, during which I take notes. I keep a file (confidential) on everyone I assist that includes the following information: Name, address, phone number, names and ages of children and others living in household. In our initial discussion I ask the following:

*What led to this need/Why are you in financial crisis at this time?*

*Why did you choose to come to St. Paul for this assistance?*

*Should you receive assistance, how will you maintain after?*

This can be a phone conversation, but is better in person.

### **PHASE TWO**

If it seems that financial assistance would not enable self-destructive behavior, more information is collected to determine if and how we may assist. I either do this verification myself, or refer to Madisonville Education and Assistance Center (MEAC) for the verification process and to further assess the need. MEAC is a local agency that assists with basic needs. St. Paul has developed a working relationship with MEAC, and in many instances we partner with them to assist people.

The following information is gathered. I gather this information in conversation, keeping necessary notes. If MEAC is verifying, a form is completed and faxed to me.

- ✦ Total number of people in household along with their ages and education.
- ✦ List of all household income and sources of the income.
- ✦ List of all bills and expenses.
- ✦ Criminal record (if any).
- ✦ Copy of photo ID.
- ✦ Copy of the bill for which request is being made.
- ✦ Copy of the lease if the request is for rent.

We want to see a budget that works. Ideally, our financial assistance should be a bridge to get through a financial crisis and back on track. For instance, in a household with a tight budget, if the car breaks down and money has to be spent on repair, suddenly there's no money for the utility bill. The decision to assist in that situation is easy.

However, if there just isn't enough income to cover the basic expenses, counseling on lowering bills and/or improving employment is necessary. We may also provide financial assistance, depending on the need. Careful consideration of these situations is critical, because our assistance cannot continue month after month.

If it appears there is sufficient income to cover expenses and there doesn't seem to be a reason for the financial crisis, money is likely being spent irresponsibly. Then we hesitate to assist.

<sup>1</sup> Used with permission.

## VERIFICATION AND ASSISTANCE

### FOOD

St. Paul does not have a food pantry. We donate food to the local food pantry at MEAC. I handle requests for food by referring to MEAC's pantry and also informing people of the free meals available in our community (MEAC has a weekly dinner and two other churches offer lunches a few times a week).

I rarely give a supermarket gift card, since there's no way to be sure that it will be spent on food (and not on alcohol, cigarettes, etc.). In emergency situations, I would rather purchase food for a family.

I never give cash.

### RENT

I typically only assist with rent if payments are delinquent and late fees and notices are involved. I make a copy of the lease/rental agreement, being sure there is current contact information for the landlord. Payment will be made directly to the landlord, so at this point I need to verify the lease and landlord information. I keep a list of the landlords in the community known to me and to MEAC. If this landlord is not on that list, I access the county auditor's website to get the name of the owner of the property. If it doesn't match the landlord's name, I attempt to contact the owner to verify that the name I've been given is the rental agent of his property. If I can't make that contact, I proceed with caution, especially if the check is to be made out to the landlord's name rather than a rental agency's name.

Once verified, I contact the landlord to notify him that I am considering assisting one of his tenants, giving him the tenant's name. I ask if he will accept partial payment and let him know of my discussion with the tenant and when they expect to be paying the remainder. I rarely pay an entire month's rent, and in a lot of cases more than one month's rent is owed. I deliver or mail the check directly to the landlord.

### UTILITIES

I assist with utility bills that are past due. I consider paying enough to bring the balance down to a manageable amount. If there is a disconnect notice, I need to contact the utility company to determine how much needs to be paid and the

deadline to avoid the disconnection. If the amount that I am able to pay is less than the amount needed to avoid disconnection, I don't pay until this difference has been met, since the goal is to keep the service on. For instance, if \$550 needs to be paid to keep service connected and I'm going to pay \$200, it will be the last \$200. The difference of \$350 will need to be paid before I can pay (or at least I need to know which agency/church is also assisting, so I can contact them and verify). I pay the utility company directly.

### TRANSPORTATION

I keep tickets for bus fare in my office. These are given to neighbors needing to get to doctor appointments, job interviews or for transportation to a new job prior to receiving the first paycheck. As long as a neighbor isn't asking for too many, I don't require verification to get a couple bus tickets. However, in the case of new employment in which two to three weeks' worth of tickets would be given, I need to see something that verifies employment or contact the employer (with permission).

I occasionally put gas in a neighbor's car to help them get to work or an important appointment. I meet them at the gas station and pay for a few gallons of gas.

### BIRTH CERTIFICATES/IDENTIFICATION

I will pay for someone to obtain a copy of their birth certificate (or their children's). I will also pay for a state picture ID, either meeting them at the BMV or giving them a money order made out to the BMV in the amount needed (I contact the BMV first to find out exact amount and to whom it should be payable.)

### TRANSIENTS

St. Paul frequently receives requests from transients, people passing through the city and requesting money for gas, food or automobile repair. It's difficult to verify these requests and I suspect that in a lot of these cases the story is not entirely true. They are almost always wanting cash. I never give cash. These requests usually end with me putting gas in their car to get them on their way. I take a copy of their driver's license for my records and have them follow me to the gas station. It's important in these cases that the recipient of our assistance understands that this is from our church and from the



mercy we receive in Christ. When I suspect that they have knocked on the door of the church to get some quick cash, I want to be sure they know what they are receiving from us — the love and mercy of Christ.

### AGENCIES AND OTHER CHURCHES

I work with Madisonville Education and Assistance Center (MEAC), which is a local agency that assists with basic needs. They will interview, assess the need and verify the information of anyone I refer to them, participating in the assistance when necessary and if they have the funds. They also work with several other churches in our community. When the amount of money needed is too large for any one church or agency to get the neighbor through the crisis, we can work together. It also helps to have a central agency in contact with the

churches who assist, to be sure that someone isn't getting the same assistance month after month, but from different churches. I also directly contact the other churches when necessary (always with permission from the neighbor whose case we will be discussing).

On difficult cases requiring ongoing work to resolve issues relating to the financial crisis, I work with the social worker at MEAC, after first getting permission from the neighbor to discuss the details with the social worker.

MEAC will refer neighbors to St. Paul when they don't have the funds to meet the financial need. They will also refer neighbors to us who are in need of spiritual counseling.



## REFERRING TO AGENCIES

Oftentimes, someone will come to the church with a need that can be best met by an existing agency in the area. I keep an active list of the community agencies in the area and their contact information.

This is very useful when the physical need is too great for us to handle alone. Referring to an agency doesn't mean that we are no longer assisting our neighbor. My help is often still needed in the process of contacting and applying with the agency, as well as counseling during the process. It is often vital for someone to have an advocate who can help them through the often complicated process of getting on their feet.

Our list of agencies include the following categories:

- + Emergency shelters
- + Homeless resources
- + Mental health services
- + Substance abuse resources
- + Legal resources
- + Soup kitchens and food assistance
- + Clothing assistance
- + Rent, utility and financial assistance
- + Furniture assistance
- + Employment resources
- + Medical assistance
- + Birth certificates and IDs
- + Payee services
- + Senior and disabled subsidized housing
- + Low income permanent housing
- + Veteran services

## DENYING A REQUEST

When it's necessary to deny a neighbor's request for financial assistance, I make the reasons clear, explaining that our policy is to only assist financially if **1)** we have the funds, **2)** they have a crisis situation (having spent too much money on Christmas presents doesn't count), and **3)** it can be a bridge to stability. I assure them that St. Paul does indeed care and, of course, invite them to our Divine Service and upcoming events.

## MERCY CARE FUND

Mercy care at St. Paul is funded by donations from congregation members. As the director of Human Care, I dispenses these funds at my discretion. The pastor and the elders have access to the dispersal records.

## PROCLAIMING CHRIST

Assisting with these basic needs provides opportunities for me to share the Gospel of Christ with our neighbors who are suffering. When it is necessary or appropriate I introduce those I'm helping to the Pastor or consult with the Pastor or Elders over difficult situations.

Our mercy care always points to Christ. Our neighbors learn that St. Paul Lutheran Church is a loving, caring place proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ, inviting them in for care of body and soul.

## CHURCH PLANTING AND SPM

At first glance, Specialized Pastoral Ministry — a ministry of mercy with the Office of National Mission — would seem not to have much to offer a newly planted church. However, there are three areas that could provide support and an avenue into the community:

1. Specialized pastoral ministers include those ordained and commissioned men and women who have received additional training to serve as pastoral counselors, institutional chaplains and emergency services chaplains (police and fire) as well as clinical pastoral educators. Should the need arise due to stress or significant loss or any other traumatic experience(s) that it would be helpful to talk with an LCMS colleague who has special training in pastoral care and/or counseling, their contact information is readily available through the SPM Office at 888-THE LCMS or [infocenter@lcms.org](mailto:infocenter@lcms.org).
2. These same skilled ministers can be a contracted to provide formal or informal ongoing training in pastoral care for those church planting ministers who want to enhance their

skills in counseling and/or pastoral care. It should be noted that due to the nature of SPM with the bulk of the ministry in pluralistic contexts, many specialized pastoral ministers have become subject matter experts in reaching out to ethnically diverse cultures and religions as well as nones, should that be a direction the new church wants to explore.

3. For the most part, fire and police chaplains are parish pastors who — with the support of their congregation — volunteer their time to serve local police or fire departments. The LCMS SPM Office will offer guidance to the pastor who wants to investigate this avenue into community outreach. Specific courses have been identified that will provide the foundation to provide high quality pastoral care to police and fire fighters, their families, as well as to victims of disaster and violence.

### Contact Information:

Rev. Joel Hempel

Interim Director, Specialized Pastoral Ministry  
888-THE LCMS





## PASTORAL CARE IN TIMES OF TRAGEDY: AN INTRODUCTION

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Christianity has a long and active history of helping in times of tragedy. For example, Martin Luther and Johannes Bugenhagen are known for their merciful and compassionate work while they comforted the sick and dying during the plague of 1527. Another example, of great mercy work was C.F.W. Walther, who under his guidance led The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in opening numerous orphanages for children without hope. However, by-and-large, human care was not properly emphasized in the last half of the 20th century within confessional Lutheran congregations.

The Social Gospel Movement, which rose to prominence following World War I, de-emphasized salvation by faith alone in Christ and instead emphasized ethics. The Social Gospel's focus was not on preaching and receiving the Sacraments, but rather social activism that improved the quality of life of the community. Unfortunately in their effort to disassociate themselves from this bad theology, many Lutheran pastors “threw the baby out with the bathwater” and inadvertently removed themselves from works of mercy and compassion in times of tragedy.

Another significant factor was the increased influence of the United States government's social welfare system. When the government began to do social work, the Church at large slowly handed over their works of mercy and compassion to the government. The government began to provide aid to the needy, relief during catastrophic disasters and tragedy, and to take responsibility for abandoned or displaced children. Regrettably, this led to the decline of congregational mercy work; some clergy thought that mercy work involved only helping out its church's members or perhaps only entailed the pastor leading the congregation in Word and Sacrament.

By the 21st century, LCMS churches had declined in their role of mercy work throughout the world. Mercy work in times of tragedy within the LCMS meant sending checks to organizations like Lutheran World Relief (LWR) or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) relief organization known as Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR). This form of mercy work, although not inherently wrong, distanced churches from actual care. An awareness grew that a vital aspect of congregational life had been lost, and some began to wonder: how had







congregations in the LCMS gone from, on the one hand, reaching out to the sick and dying during Luther's time and helping the orphaned and widowed during Walther's to, on the other hand, writing checks and sending them to other organizations? When did LCMS congregations lose sight of the intrinsic nature of their role of mercy and compassion? How did the LCMS overlook words in Scripture such as, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 JOHN 3:16-18)?

Needless to say, the LCMS' understanding of mercy, compassion and good works needed an overhaul, and a renaissance has begun. Matthew C. Harrison, former executive director of Lutheran World Relief and Human Care (WRHC), raised awareness of congregational mercy work by writing on topics such as mercy work in the Early Church; by reprinting essays that our Lutheran forefathers and the Early Church Fathers wrote that help lay a historical and theological foundation; and by showing pastors that Lutherans have always cared for both spiritual and human need. His work was largely inspired by his experiences following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, revealing the need for greater mercy work at the congregational level. Likewise, John Fale traveled the world as LCMS associate director for

Mercy Operations and understood the need to reach out to the sick, downtrodden and afflicted with the Gospel and material needs. These men, and others, revolutionized the way mercy work within the LCMS is understood today.

However, there is still much to be done. In a world full of terrorist acts, distress, natural disasters, death, hunger and despair, pastors have the opportunity to bring Christ's Gospel coupled with mercy and compassion to a hurting world. This essay will address these issues by laying a foundation for mercy work, addressing specific issues that come from tragedy and by giving pastors the tools they need in order to provide pastoral care in times of tragedy.

## NEW TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATIONS OF CARE FOR BODY AND SOUL

Christian mercy work was neither an invention of the Early Church nor an invention of the Lutheran Reformation. Mercy work originated in the New Testament. Mercy was especially modeled in the life of Christ. Jesus' incarnation to suffer alongside all of humanity exemplified mercy and compassion. In His earthly ministry Jesus was constantly concerned about broken humanity's body and soul. Throughout Jesus' Galilean ministry, he walked alongside the people preaching the Gospel and healing the sick. Harrison emphasizes Jesus' compassion, stating, "Mercy makes something happen. For Jesus *splanchnizomai*, the verb form of *splanchnon*, is always 'compassion giving birth

to action.’”<sup>43</sup> Jesus’ compassion for His people was an example to all Christians of a gut-wrenching concern that drove Him to take action and help those whom He encountered in need. A perfect example of this is when Christ fed the 4,000 (MARK 8:1-9). Because the crowd had been so enamored and engrossed with Jesus’ teaching, they brought nothing to eat; but in His compassion, Christ met their physical needs as He had their spiritual needs. “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way” (MARK 8:2-3). So what did Christ do? Did He continue to preach to them? No. He met their physical needs by providing for them enough food that, “they ate and were satisfied” (8:8).

Saint Paul’s ministry also serves as an example of caring for people in every need and bearing the burdens of others (GAL. 6:2). Paul provides a model for congregational compassion for its members and the unchurched community around them. Paul encouraged the Galatians, “Let us not grow weary of doing good ... So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (GAL. 6:9-10). Paul not only exhorts others to give and serve; he spent years of his life gathering funds in Macedonia and Corinth for the poor in Jerusalem, and then delivering that aid to help them during their

crisis. Mark Seifrid explains that Paul regards the collection for Jerusalem “not merely as service to relieve need (although it does do precisely that) but, more fundamentally, to bring about common thanksgiving to God and interchange among the churches.”<sup>44</sup> Paul also commends the Macedonians “for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth and generosity on their part” (2 COR 8:2). He points to them as an example of Christian generosity, love and charity for those in the midst of severe persecution and tragedy.

The Epistle of St. James also instructs Christians how to treat one another. James 2:8 exhorts, “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing well.” James thus sums up the Old Testament law into a phrase of love toward one’s neighbor. If one is to be a Christian and bear Christ’s name, he must be Christ-like in his love for others.

In one of the most controversial passages of Scripture, James writes, “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (JAMES 2:14-17). David

<sup>43</sup> Matthew C. Harrison. *Christ Have Mercy: How to Put Your Faith in Action* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008), 41.

<sup>44</sup> Mark A. Seifrid. *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2014), 317.







Scaer explains that these verses address the very practical problem that the “deference to the rich and the criminal ignoring of the poor contradicted God’s generous attitude to all men in Christ.”<sup>45</sup> It is not possible to be Christ-like and intentionally ignore the destitute, especially if they are in the family of faith. Although helping the poor and destitute does not gain one salvation, charity and love are fruits of the Christian life and the natural outgrowth of being a follower of Christ (Eph. 2:10).

### THE CHURCH’S HISTORY OF MINISTRY TO THE NEEDY

Christian care for humanity in crisis occurred from the very first days after the ascension of Christ and during the apostolic era. The Church grew significantly when the unbelieving community witnessed Christian love in action as the Gospel was proclaimed and churches planted. Historian Adolf Von Harnack explains that, when the good works of the Christians were made public, “people glorified the Christians’ God, and, convinced by the very facts, confessed the Christians alone were truly pious and religious.”<sup>46</sup> In both the Early Church and during the Reformation, Christians took care of the poor, slaves, prisoners, and those affected by the plague.

<sup>45</sup> David P. Scaer. *James the Apostle of Faith: A Primary Christological Epistle for the Persecuted Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1983), 89.

<sup>46</sup> Ross Edward Johnson. *Mercy in Action: Essays on Mercy, Human Care and Disaster Response* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2015), 89.

Generous aid and care for the poor was a common theme in the Early Church Fathers such as Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Augustine. In fact some Church Fathers, exemplified by Cyprian, emphasized charity to the point that they viewed it as an essential part of the Christian faith, “Cyprian develops alms into a formal means of grace ... representing alms as a spectacle which the Christian offers to God.”<sup>47</sup> Individual Christians and the Church corporately distributed charity. In A.D. 250 the church in Rome alone paid for 100 clergy and 1,500 additional people who were in need.<sup>48</sup>

The Early Church used deacons, deaconesses and widows to oversee the work of aiding the sick, disabled and poor. Before modern medicine, severe illness was much more prevalent and people lived with both excruciating pain and debilitating health. The Church was aware of their community’s needs, as Tertullian said, “True charity, disburses more money in the streets than your religion in temples.”<sup>49</sup> Hence, Christian sacrificial giving extended to both the Church, to take care of the Christian poor, and to the unchurched living in tragic situations.

Another area of concern for the Early Church Fathers was the treatment of the working poor.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 76. Although Cyprian was correct in emphasizing charity and its benefits, charity is not viewed as a sacrament in the traditional sense. Article XIII:4 of the Apology to the Augsburg confession says, “Baptism, the Lord’s Supper and absolution (which is a sacrament of Repentance) are truly Sacraments.”

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 81.

Slavery was common, and many of the Roman slaves were indentured servants and prisoners of war. John Nordling, in his Philemon commentary, explains that the treatment and quality of life for slaves varied from being treated as family by some slave owners to repeated beatings by others.<sup>50</sup> Harnack documents five areas where Christians influenced the secular culture toward a more compassionate treatment of slaves.

1. Slaves who converted to Christianity were considered full brothers and sisters in the faith.
2. Slaves were allowed to have membership in the highest offices of the church as clergy and bishops.
3. In a moral sense, Christians taught that female slaves should be treated the same as free females and were not to be treated as sexual objects to be exploited. Sexual abuse of females was not allowed or permitted by the church.
4. Masters and mistresses were strictly charged to treat their slaves humanely and slaves were taught to respect them.
5. Christians would often buy the freedom of Christian slaves, especially those enslaved by abusive masters.<sup>51</sup>

Life in the Early Church era was harsh; there were no substantial government social welfare nets to help the sick, dying and destitute. However, the Church rose up to aid the ill, nurture the dying and to sustain the disabled. Deacons and deaconesses oversaw the mercy work to these people and the widows were charged with prayers for the poor. During the first few centuries of the Early Church there were very few large church buildings. Church structures were rather humble and the majority of the tithes and offerings were designated as poor-funds.<sup>52</sup> The Early Church focused on aiding both Christians and non-Christians. The primary use of the congregation's offering was distributed to the Christian poor, sick or disabled. However, Christians also generously gave to the non-Christian poor in the streets.<sup>53</sup>

Such mercy work was not confined to the Early Church. In the late 1590's, Germany and many

parts of Europe were struck by the plague. Some estimates indicate that as much as one-third of the total European population died. In 1597 the plague decimated a German town named Unna. In the month of July alone, Lutheran Pastor Philipp Nicolai buried 300 congregation members, and over 1,000 people died.<sup>54</sup> Critical to Lutheran spiritual care was to minister to the sick and dying, despite the possibility of clergy dying from infection.<sup>55</sup> In the midst of this devastating catastrophe, Pastor Nicolai found his comfort in the cross, Scripture, the Divine Service and hymnody. During the worst parts of the plague Pastor Nicolai wrote the book *Freudenspiegel* (*Mirror of Joy*). He also wrote what would later be known as the queen and king of the Lutheran chorales, "Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying" and, "O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright."<sup>56</sup> With the introduction of congregational singing during the Lutheran Reformation, hymnody became one of the primary ways for Christians to articulate the joys of the cross and the hope of heaven to come, even in the direst of circumstances.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has a long tradition of congregational mercy work and human care from its very inception. There is little question that C.F.W. Walther, the first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, was a staunch defender of the office of the holy ministry, one who held that the primary work of the pastor is to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments. However, the boundaries of pastoral work are not confined to preaching and consecrating. Walther wrote, "Although a preacher above all has concern for the spiritual needs of the members of his congregation, concern for the physical well-being, particularly the needs of the poor, the sick, widows, orphans, the infirm, the destitute, the aged, etc., are within the scope of the duties of his office."<sup>57</sup> Hence, pastors who encourage their congregations to show mercy to their members and their communities in times of tragedy are well within their role as pastor.

John Frederick Buenger, a young pastoral candidate, traveled with Walther from Saxony, Germany, and settled in Missouri. Pastor Buenger, who initially served as a parish pastor, experienced enormous personal tragedies including the death of his wife

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 135–36.

<sup>55</sup> For further reading on pastoral care in times of the plague, consider reading Martin Luther. "Whether One May Flee from the Deadly Plague" in Luther's Works, Vol. 43, Devotional Writings. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>50</sup> See John G. Nordling. Philemon. Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> Johnson, 85–87.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 81.



and five children.<sup>58</sup> Working closely with Walther, Buenger oversaw the formation of Lutheran hospitals in St. Louis and a large orphanage in the nearby city of Des Peres. F. Dean Lueking explains, “John Frederick Buenger’s 35 years of pastoral ministry ... left a profound influence upon the benevolence ministry of the young Synod. His work in founding the Lutheran Hospital and the Lutheran Orphanage set a pattern in theory and practice of social ministry that continued long after his death.”<sup>59</sup>

During the first 100 years of the LCMS’s history, mercy ministry exploded. “By 1928 there were 72 Lutheran hospitals, orphanages, child welfare societies, homes for the aged and institution missions.”<sup>60</sup> In 1950, the Board of Social Welfare was established to help organize the 2,500 people who were serving in Lutheran Social Ministries to approximately 100,000 people annually.<sup>61</sup> By the 1960’s each district of the LCMS had a board or commission for social welfare and 70 percent of the LCMS congregations had mercy committees.<sup>62</sup>

If the fledgling renaissance of mercy work in Lutheran churches is to continue, faithful pastors are well-positioned to foster works of charity while preventing a departure into a graceless social gospel. With instruments at their disposal every day, they are prepared to provide spiritual care even to those who suffer horrific disasters.

### HELPING CHRISTIANS TO UNDERSTAND GOD’S LOVE: ANSWERING THE WHY QUESTION

Contrary to what popular culture says, people are not spiritually good or deserving of God’s favor in and of themselves. The Bible consistently teaches that we are sinners even after conversion (ROMANS 7). The Bible says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (ROM. 3:23) and that “the wages of sin is death” (ROM. 6:23). We confess in the Divine Service that we justly deserve God’s “present and eternal punishment.”<sup>63</sup>

There will always be aspects of our all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving God that humans will never understand. Unfortunately, in times of

trouble, humans assume the worst of God and believe that He doesn’t care. People believe they have the right to demand that God explain His actions to us. Instead, we should trust in His love even if we don’t understand what is happening to us or around us. It is because of God’s love that He is at work redeeming and saving people from themselves. This love is clearly evident in God sending his Son to die on the cross to pay for our sin so that one day all those who die in the one true Christian faith will be rescued from this world of tragedy and live in the perfection of Heaven.

In times of tragedy, instead of trying to speculate about God’s nature or demanding God to do our will, the proper response is repentance. In Luke 13 Pilate slaughters the pious. It was an evil action against undeserving people. In response, Jesus told the people to repent: “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (LUKE 13:3). He did not justify the event, explain God’s nature or discuss why evil happens. He spoke instead of repentance. Repentance is humbling and moves one from being self-centered to trusting in God’s goodness and mercy. It turns a sinner from pride to reliance on the Almighty and all-loving God who does not always give explanations except “I AM WHO I AM” (EX. 3:14) and “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” (IS. 55:8) or as St. Paul explains, “Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made me like this?’” (ROM. 9:20).

Lutheran pastoral care can help explain to others why suffering and tragedy happens. Suffering and tragedy are a result of sin and the fall. God explicitly warned Adam and Eve not to disobey His law. However, they chose to disobey God. Sin and brokenness entered the world. As soon as humanity fell into sin, our loving God promised redemption (GEN. 3:15). From the time of the fall until the final day of this world there will be tragedy, suffering and sin. However, God is actively rescuing this world from sin, death and the devil in ways that are not always realized.

As we offer pastoral care to those hurting and confused, it is always best to focus on having faith in what is revealed to us about God; that He loves us, that He died for all of humanity and that He continually rescues us from brokenness and sin. It is not beneficial to meditate on the hiddenness of God, which will never be understood, which questions God and what He is doing behind the scenes of our lives and this world. He does not promise all the answers. Everything that is necessary to know

<sup>58</sup> F. Dean Lueking, *A Century of Caring: The Welfare Ministry Among Missouri Synod Lutherans 1868–1968* (St. Louis: Board of Social Ministry The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1968), 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>63</sup> *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2006), 184.



about God and salvation is clearly revealed in the Scriptures.

It is always important to remind those suffering that when bad is happening, it is not necessarily directly related to a particular sin that they have committed. However, it is always because we live in a sinful and broken world (GENESIS 2-3). In this world our bodies betray us and we get sick and die, or others betray us and cause problems and misfortune. Often we go through personal agony because of the sinful choices that we ourselves make (PSALM 51). At times there are spiritual attacks by the devil and his demons who like to harass people and cause misery and misfortune (JOB).

When offering spiritual care, it is important to remind people that God often allows amazing things to come out of tragic situations. Joseph's sufferings led to good for many (GEN. 50:15-21), and Job was eventually blessed after his time of tragedy (JOB 42:10). However, it is also important to maintain that there is no promise that believers will always directly see or understand the good that comes out of particular trials and tribulations. In times of tragedy it is important to trust in God's nature: that He is a loving and caring heavenly Father who is watching over His people. He is at work with mercy. God's mercy revealed to humanity is clearest in the person of Jesus Christ, the constant assurance that we are reconciled to our Heavenly Father and that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God which is found in Christ Jesus (ROM. 8:38-39).

## SHEPHERDING TO THE CROSS: THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

Shepherding with the theology of the cross ensures that the ministry provided is Christocentric. When a pastor's focus is on the cross, it allows Christ to increase and the person to decrease (JOHN 3:30). Times of tragedy break down the false walls of pride that people build up. Many times people falsely comfort themselves with their own achievements, intelligence and self-sufficiency. Being diagnosed with terminal cancer, having an uninsured house flood or the sudden loss of a loved one is shocking and humbling: it is a reminder of what Job learned, that "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (JOB 1:21). When this world strips away all that this life has to offer, the Christian is left with two choices: he can struggle alone or he can turn to his Lord and Savior as his refuge in the midst of this life's storms.

Martin Luther famously explained, "A theologian of the cross says what a thing is, whereas a theologian of glory calls the bad good and the good bad."<sup>64</sup> In times of tragedy a faithful pastor has a clear opportunity to explain sin and its consequences to people who have denied the sting of sin and death. Pastors proclaim the tragedy of the broken reality in which we live. The pastor can then guide his listener into the only true comfort, namely Christ and the resurrection. Theologians of glory will try to

<sup>64</sup> Gerhard O. Forde. *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation*, 1518 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), x.

candy-coat the sting of sin with shallow spirituality like, “if you just have enough faith, this will turn out ok.” A theologian of the cross says, “I can see how difficult this is. This is completely normal. But, take hope, Christ suffers with you. He knows the pain that you are going through,” and he continues to point the person to Christ.

Theologians of glory seek to affirm their members with their own optimism and positivity; but despite the last few decades of mega-churches’ practical theology of optimism and self-worth, the bigger issue is a deteriorating sense of self-worth. Christian self-worth is only found in what Jesus did on the cross. Popular Neo-Evangelical Christian books are written about achieving your best potential or about how to live victoriously. But a theologian of the cross points forward to the resurrection, heaven and the best life to come. Jesus said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (MATT. 6:19–20).

A theologian of the cross brings comfort by reminding the person how compassionate Jesus was in his suffering in this world — compassionate for sinful humanity. Jesus was lied about, lied to, betrayed, hungry, beaten and killed so that He could suffer in our stead — and so that we could be forgiven. Pastors can lead those suffering to take comfort in the fact that they live in the shadow of Jesus’ cross, and any goodness that they have comes from a righteousness that has been imputed to them from God. They can take comfort that they are God’s perfect children because Christ took all of their sin and shame and then God gave them all of Christ’s perfection, active obedience and righteousness.

The theology of the cross can be understood by someone who has lost everything due to tragedy, because tragedy breaks a sinner from self-reliance. A theologian of glory resists confession of sin but the theologian of the cross confesses, “I am a poor miserable sinner.” The Lutheran confession of sin is devoid of positive thinking, wisdom, optimism or personal strength. The boasting of the theologian of the cross is only found in his status as a new creation in Christ. Saint Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (GAL. 2:20).

When Christians feel as if they are going “through the valley of the shadow of death” (PS. 23:4),

they have a promise that the troubles of this world are only temporary.

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (JOHN 16:20–22).*

For the one that lives outside of the one true Christian faith, this life’s sorrows are his best life. His future will be utter destruction. But for the one who believes in Christ, this world will not compare to what God has prepared for him in the future (ROM. 8:18). Despite the catastrophes suffered in this world, the greatest tragedy that could happen is still to die outside of the one true Christian faith. It is thus ideal that congregational mercy be connected to the Gospel message whenever possible so that spiritual healing can happen while earthly needs are being met.

## PASTORAL VISITATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS: BEING PRESENT IN THE COMMUNITY

Christ’s presence after His resurrection demonstrates the power He has to console and comfort the needy. Christ’s powerful presence is the paradigm for our ministry of mercy, which can dispel the darkness of fear and uncertainty of the future (JOHN 20:19–20). It was the power of Christ’s presence that moved His disciples from the tragedy of death to the triumph of life. That same power is realized today in the ministry of the Church through those who stand in His stead to transcend the critical events that affect people’s lives. Our Lutheran response is a clear testimony of the Gospel, not just in deed, but also in word — the word of Christ’s forgiveness and eternal love.<sup>65</sup>

The call and vocation of the pastor is to bring peace through God’s Word to the brokenhearted. God’s peace is more than a passing allusion to Jesus or His love. Rather pastoral comfort is given when the pastor takes time to comfort the disheartened in the brokenness of this life (sin)

<sup>65</sup> Part of this section can be found in: Ross Edward Johnson and Michael W. Meyer, editors. *Mercy in Action: A Guide for Pastors in the Midst of Disaster* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2014), 18.



and share God's mercy through His Son (Gospel), the Christian's ultimate hope (heaven). Pastoral comfort can happen in the pastor's office or off the church property. However, the model of ministry that is shown to us through Christ is one of a shepherd that is out and about walking among his people (MATT. 4:18).

When the pastor is visiting his members and people in the community, he can help them as they are trying to survive the effects of a disaster. In the confusion of the world's tragedies, one's mind or even friends can give horrible advice that often leads to spiritual disillusionment.

Additionally, sometimes before a tragedy strikes, genuine Christians hold on to pop-psychology, false beliefs and false promises about God and His nature. Through patience, visitation, kindness and teaching, faithful pastors have the opportunity to comfort and correct God's people, who are being led astray by the tragedies of the world, with His Word.

## THE ROLE OF WORSHIP AS COMFORT

One of the simplest and most eloquent explanations of Christian worship was written by Norman Nagel in the preface of the hymnal, *Lutheran Worship*, "Our Lord speaks and we listen ... The rhythm of our worship is from him to us, and then from us back to him. He gives his gifts, and together we

receive and extol them. We build one another up as we speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs."<sup>66</sup> In the Divine Service, God comes to man and blesses him with His gifts through the pastor who is called to be in the stead of Christ. In the midst of tragic events, broken humanity needs God's blessing more than ever. Nowhere are people closer to the presence of God than when they are in the Divine Service where Christ is bodily present with a special promise to bless and forgive.

Tragic events — including the death of a loved one, a grave medical diagnosis or a catastrophic natural disaster — peel back the façade that covers this broken world. Tragedy allows people to see the destructiveness of a fallen world and sin's consequences. Yet, despite brokenness, Christ invites His people, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (MATT. 11:28). In the Divine Service, God comes to man and blesses him so that humanity can have spiritual rest in Him. As the service begins with a confession of sin, people understand their need for forgiveness and then receive grace of God. The pastor, who stands in the stead of Christ and in front of His sheep, is a powerful comfort and reminder of God's presence in the midst of the storms of this world. There is nothing sweeter than to hear the love, grace and mercy of God spoken into one's ears. The absolution is the declaration of God's forgiveness, a gift of God's

<sup>66</sup> *Lutheran Worship*. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1982), 6.





peace and a reminder that He is with His people despite the catastrophe they may be experiencing.

After the Muslim terrorist attacks in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, which killed and injured thousands, American church attendance swelled for a few months. People flocked to hear God's Word preached to them. In times of tragedy, pastors are called to clearly preach the Law, even if death and destruction may be all around them, even if they are surrounded by caskets. In a crisis, the laity need to understand the cause of the brokenness of this world from God's perspective; nothing should be taken for granted. If the hearers do not understand the spiritual significance and the causes of sin and destruction, they will have a weakened sense of the comfort that the Gospel gives and they will place little hope in the resurrection.

Nowhere on earth are we closer to God than when we stand or kneel before the altar and receive the body and blood of Christ given for the ongoing forgiveness of our sins. When Christians receive the body and blood of Christ, they are connected to Christ (1 Cor. 10:16–17). They are connected to Him despite the chaos of this world. Communion is a powerful comfort in a world that provides very little hope or consolation. The Lord's Supper is where God is actively giving grace, mercy and forgiveness; and the parishioner is passively receiving blessing, strength, forgiveness and encouragement from God Himself.

Through Lutheran hymnody members sing theologically rich songs that bring hope and consolation. Since these hymns are based on scriptural truths they bring spiritual comfort. Hymnody is a beautiful and powerful way to express deep scriptural truths in a memorable way to Christians of all ages. It allows Christians to rejoice after receiving the body and blood of Christ with a song of praise; and can help remind them of scriptural truth such as, "nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."<sup>67</sup>

At the close of the Divine Service, the entire congregation is reminded once more that they are blessed and at peace with God. The last words that the congregation hears are pure grace, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace."<sup>68</sup> Once again the believer is a passive recipient and the Lord is the One who blesses and proclaims His love. The Christian simply receives and responds, "Amen." The Lutheran worship service allows the believer to be comforted in the confidence that he is loved by his Lord despite his own sin and despite what is happening in his life around him.

<sup>67</sup> *The Lutheran Hymnal*. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1941), Hymn 376.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.





## CONCLUSION

In a world full of tragedy, disasters, suffering and pain, Lutheran pastors have an arsenal of spiritual weapons to combat the world, the devil and bad theology. Pastors have the Bible, the Confessions, the Catechism, the Creeds, hymnody and much more. These instruments are as much for use in times of disaster as on an ordinary Sunday. As people suffer the tragic loss of their home, health, job, family, children or anything else, they can be comforted by pastors who point them to Christ through good and biblical spiritual care. Although a theology of mercy may seem like common sense to many faithful pastors, pastoral care in times of tragedy is often neglected. A theology of mercy in action that takes place in the community is not as prevalent as it was in the life of Christ, in the lives of the apostles or in the era of the Early Church Fathers, yet this is slowly changing. Once again, pastors and congregations are looking into ways that they can serve their community. In times of tragedy, the fragile veil of American self-reliance and optimism is peeled back and a Lutheran pastor is well-equipped to minister with the theology of the cross to the hurting of this world. Only through the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions is he faithfully able to minister to the needs of his flock which takes them to the cross of Christ to be comforted by Him. By being present and active in one's community, the Lutheran congregation and

pastor are able to be positioned to help in every need of this body and life (5th and 7th commandments). All the more, they are able to provide spiritual comfort only the Gospel can give.

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### THE CHURCH AS A PLACE OF CARE

Indeed the church is a place of care from the moment a visitor walks in the door to worship or to seek help for a physical need. The church is welcoming to all, accessible to all and caring to all. This care, of course, as Scripture says, begins with the household of faith. Therefore the shepherd of the flock cannot neglect the needs of the church any more than he can turn away those in need who are outside the church. He has a primary responsibility to care for the flock in both their physical

and spiritual care. A church planter is a missionary who spends a great deal of time reaching the lost, but it is important to not get so caught up that he neglects his own flock, beginning with his family. So too, the congregation must ensure that their pastor and family are well cared for, in order that their shepherd might be joyful in his work. Care in the church is centered in God's Word and Sacrament in which Christ feeds us and cares for us in both body and soul.





WITNESS

To be sure, the word witness, or *martyria* in Greek, from which we derive the word martyr, speaks to the seriousness of this pattern in the life of the Church. Indeed all those who are confirmed in the Lutheran church are asked to vow their very lives for the sake of the Gospel rather than to turn away from their confession. Witness certainly is most emphasized in the church's proclamation of the Gospel and the testimony of believers, but also in more subtle ways. For example, the name of your church plant bears theological weight,

it will forever identify you in your community and the message it conveys. What does it say when you are the only church in the area named Christ, for example? Church architecture, liturgical art, the very sights and smells and sounds of the church all speak something to your common beliefs. In this section we will address the need for a corporate witness, but so too, as individual believers in every day vocations.





## WITNESS



## SCRIPTURE

“For there are three that testify:  
the Spirit and the water and the blood:  
and these three agree.”

1 JOHN 5:7-8



## SCRIPTURE

“And you shall put into the ark the testimony that I shall give you ... There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony. I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.”

EX. 25:16, 22

95



## SCRIPTURE

“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

LUKE 24:46-48





## ASPECTS

Proclamation/Preaching  
 Vocational Witness  
 Mission/Church Planting  
 Apologetics

## OUTREACH

On the grand scale, it may seem most mundane, but part of the church's initial witness is simply to introduce yourself to the community. As said earlier, conversations with community leaders and outreach through mercy are excellent ways to become embedded in your surroundings and to develop relationships. And likewise there is an opportunity to invite the community to come to you, to receive the gifts that God provides in the Divine Service. The first step in this is to get the word out that there is a new church forming. Again, it is adiabaphora, but having a set of standard colors used for multimedia, a graphical representation for the church or logo, building a website and social media pages: all are first article gifts that help to make your congregation recognizable to the public and helpful to getting your message out.

So too, involvement in activities such as parades with a biblical themed float, community yard sales with proceeds going to help those in need, having a booth at a community block party: these are

great opportunities to meet your neighbors and introduce yourselves. Whether you are canvassing a neighborhood to invite them to a church VBS or hosting a table at the fair or have visitors in worship, it is helpful to keep a contact list to follow up as soon as possible.

It may also be possible for the pastor to help with devotions whether it is at a nursing home, or as a volunteer hospital/hospice chaplain or in a prison ministry as ways to reach out with the Word of God to others. So too, the missionary pastor could write for the local paper in the religion section or may be asked to speak at events regarding the work the church is doing. The point being, the more opportunity the church has to engage the community in the Word the better. The missionary pastor should also try to identify friends and family and church members who are no longer attending a church to give them an invitation to study and worship at the new church plant.



Contact: John James,  
Mission Developer  
Email: church@email.com,  
Phone: 123-456-7890  
Address: 1234 Main St.,  
State, City, ZIP

## A new Lutheran Church is coming soon to the Church County Area!

- A place where even though everything around you is changing, the promises of God are the same today, yesterday and tomorrow
- An assurance of your salvation which is a precious gift that comes from God Himself
- A life shaped by Christ, who's death on the cross turned the ordinary into the extraordinary
- Worshipping God where His Word comes to life as we retrace the footsteps of Christ -- the Word made flesh for our salvation
- If you are looking for a place where you are cared for as a person that Christ died for and not just a number ... where you can be a real person, with flaws and imperfections, and yet can come to God to receive forgiveness and to be made Holy again ... then

Plans are being made to begin a new mission congregation in southern Vespers County! If you have ideas on how a new church can meet the needs of your community/ family then please let us know. Or if you would like to be a part of the excitement of planting a new church then we'd like to hear from you also. We want to serve our community by reaching out with love of Christ and the saving message of the Gospel and would like your help.



— EXAMPLE AD TO INTRODUCE YOUR CHURCH PLANT —

97




CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

**Please join us at our new location at**  
**St. Paul's Elementary School**

*Sunday school: 9:30 a.m.*  
*Worship: 11:00 a.m.*

**PHONE: 123-456-7890 | EMAIL ADDRESS**

— A SAMPLE YARD SIGN —



## Christ Lutheran Church

### A CHURCH COUNTY OUTREACH MISSION

*"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15).*

**Are you looking for a church that you can call your spiritual home?**

**Church Office:**  
1234 Main Street  
City, State ZIP


**Rev. Daniel Doe**  
**Phone:** 123-456-7890  
**Web address:**  
**Email address:**

**Sundays**  
**Bible Study:** 9:30 a.m.  
**Worship:** 11:00 a.m.

- A place where even though everything around you is changing, the promises of God are the same today, yesterday and tomorrow
- An assurance of your salvation which is a precious gift that comes from God Himself
- A life shaped by Christ, who's death on the cross turned the ordinary into the extraordinary
- Worshipping God where His Word comes to life as we retrace the footsteps of Christ - the Word made flesh for our salvation
- If you are looking for a place where you are cared for as a person that Christ died for and not just a number ... where you can be a real person, with flaws and imperfections, and yet can come to God to receive forgiveness and peace ... then please join us!!!


— A SAMPLE AD FOR INVITING PEOPLE TO WORSHIP —

**CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH**



**Are you looking for a church that you can call your spiritual home?**


- A place where even though everything around you is changing, the promises of God are the same today, yesterday and tomorrow
- An assurance of your salvation which is a precious gift that comes from God Himself
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**Christ Lutheran Church**


"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

**CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH**



**Are you looking for a church that you can call your spiritual home?**


- A place where even though everything around you is changing, the promises of God are the same today, yesterday and tomorrow
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**Christ Lutheran Church**

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

— VISITORS CARDS FOR PLACES LIKE THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE —

## SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR METHODS FOR OUTREACH

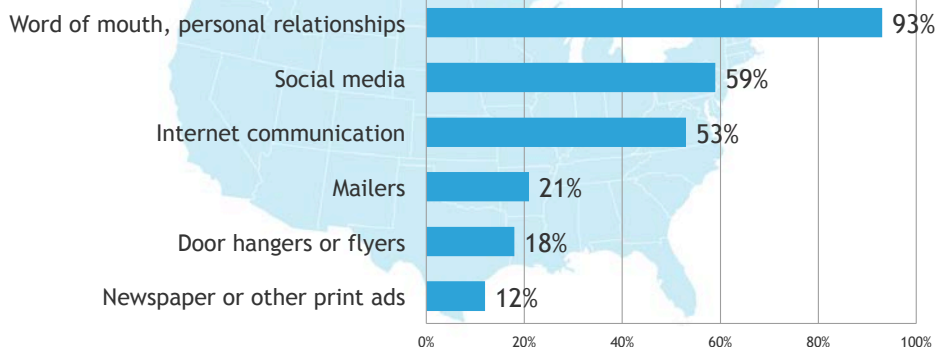
The following are some of the statistics from a church planting study done in 2015 by Lifeway Research, in which the LCMS was a participant among other denominations. In a digital age, it is not surprising that publicity and outreach involves much more of an online presence than in the past. In addition to this, as it becomes increasingly dif-

ficult to gain access, door to door evangelism was used for outreach by only 22 percent of the congregations after they had chartered. Small groups gathering together and outreach events were still prevalent especially those that serve a purpose in caring for the neighbor. Social media is also on the rise as would be expected as it gives instant access for communication and developing awareness.





## 59% use social media



Q: "What were the top 3 forms of publicity most frequently used to communicate news of a new church in the community? (Select up to three)"



Less than 1% say radio or television ads, mailers to specific demographic groups, or telephone campaigns were their most successful form of publicity

Q: "What was the most successful form of publicity that attracted the most newcomers to your church? (Please select one)"



### A WORD ON USING SOCIAL MEDIA

It is true that we live in a tech savvy generation, but of course the church is more than pixels, video clips or soundbites. The church is cruciform and incarnational, an actual living breathing body of Christ made up of flesh and blood, baptized and redeemed, human beings. Nothing then can replace human interaction. That said, using online tools can be a very effective communication tool or means of outreach in that it is informative. Caution should be taken of course not to hide

behind an online persona that is not characteristic of the congregation that is being represented. In all things, we are called to be ambassadors for Christ. Therefore an online presence should have the goal of establishing connections via the concrete and tangible Word and Sacrament ministry of the church. Social media can therefore be used as a catechetical tool or a means of invitation, and it can be helpful in building up the life together of the church.

5

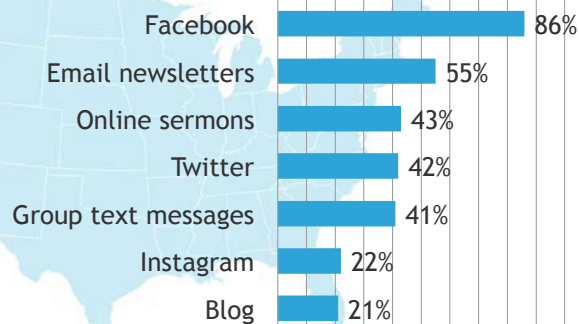
## REGULAR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION (YEARS 1-5)



Regular Electronic Communication (Yrs 1-5)

6

**86%**  
communicate  
through  
Facebook



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

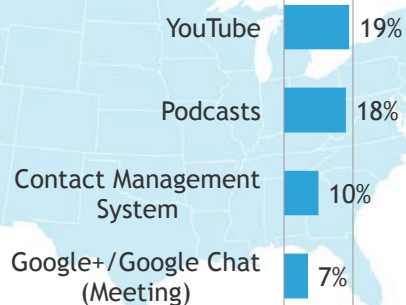
Q: "Which of the following (if any) electronic communication was regularly used for communication within your new church work during the first 5 years? (Select all that apply)"



Regular Electronic Communication (Yrs 1-5)

7

**18%**  
communicate  
through  
podcasts

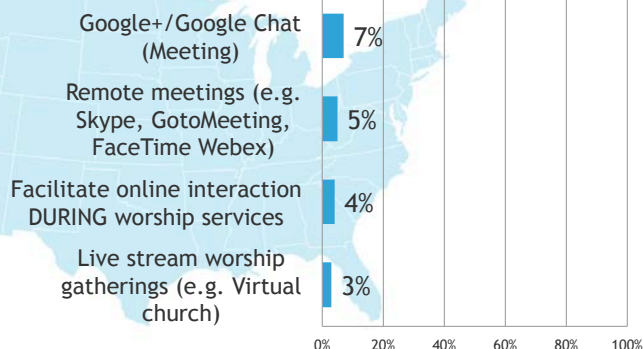


0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Q: "Which of the following (if any) electronic communication was regularly used for communication within your new church work during the first 5 years? (Select all that apply)"



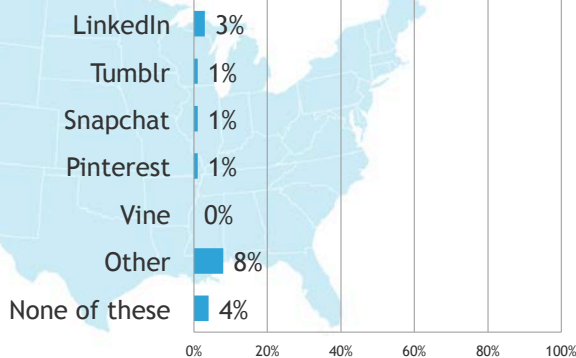
**5%**  
communicate  
through  
remote  
meetings



Q: "Which of the following (if any) electronic communication was regularly used for communication within your new church work during the first 5 years? (Select all that apply)"



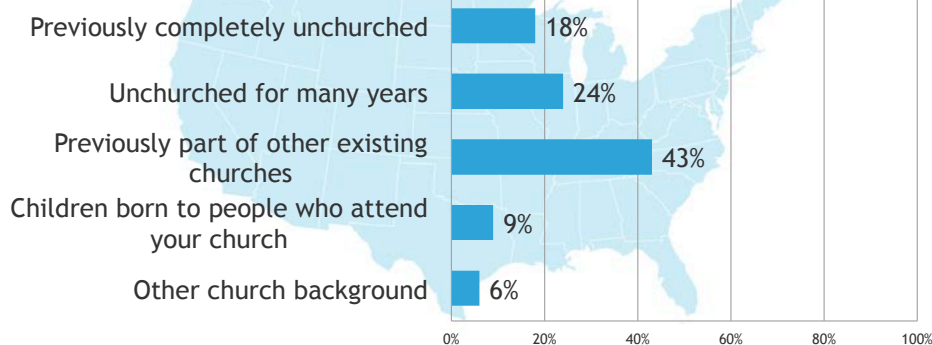
**4%** are not  
using  
electronic  
communication  
in the first five  
years



Q: "Which of the following (if any) electronic communication was regularly used for communication within your new church work during the first 5 years? (Select all that apply)"



**On average, more than 4 in 10 attendees are completely unchurched or unchurched for many years**

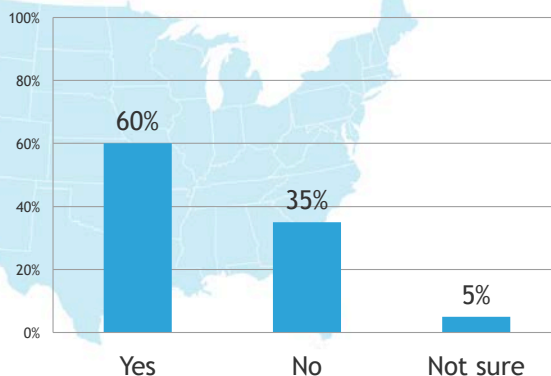


Q: "Among the people who have attended this new church work since it began, please estimate the percentage from each of the following church backgrounds. (If no one belongs to a particular group in your church, please mark 0%. Total percentages should add to 100%."



11

**60%** of congregations are intentionally seeking to reach a cross-cultural or multi-ethnic group of people from the very beginning

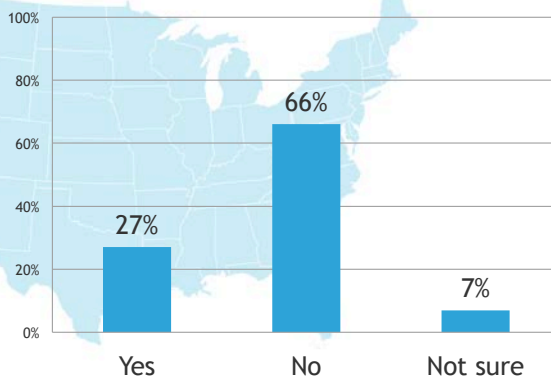


Q: "From the beginning, the church intentionally sought to reach a cross-cultural or multi-ethnic group of people."



12

**27%** intentionally encourage the development of a culture that connects with a particular ethnic population

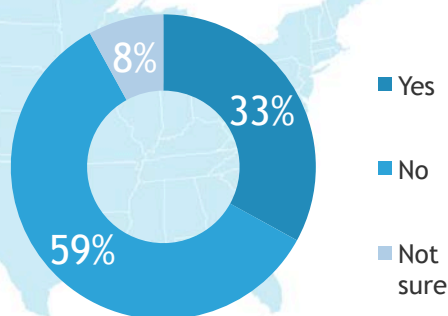


Q: "From the beginning, the church intentionally encouraged the development of a culture that connected with a particular ethnic population."



13

**33%** emphasize racial reconciliation as a primary part of the church's vision and practices



Q: "From the beginning, the church emphasized racial reconciliation as a primary part of the church's vision and practices."





Launch and Post-launch

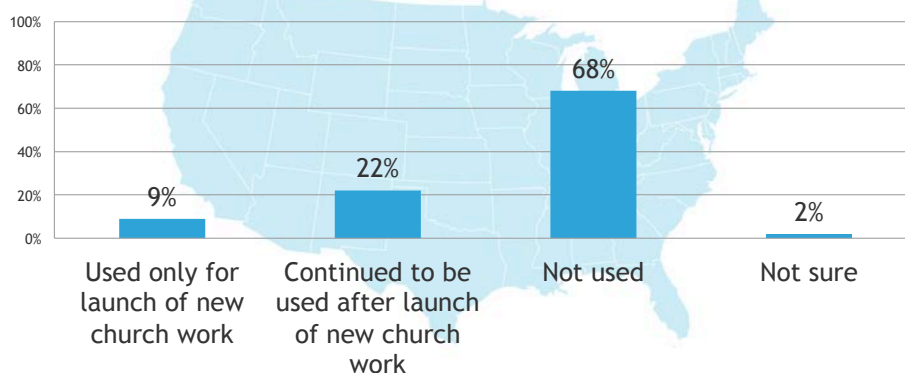
## OUTREACH ACTIVITIES



Outreach Activity

15

### Door-to-door evangelism



Q: "For each of the following outreach activities, please indicate if it was used by the church start, either when launching the new church work or continued to be used after the launch. (Select one response for each activity)"



### A WORD ON EVANGELISM CALLS

There are a few things to consider when planning to make evangelism calls. First, who should make them? The pastor, of course, should be engaged in following up on visitors, but it is also helpful to have others who this is not considered just part of their job. That said, it is best to have two to three people who also do visitations or canvas a neighborhood. It is helpful that they have some training in making these calls. It is also helpful to try to make an appointment first with visitors, as many people considered an unscheduled visit to be an obtrusion and a social faux pas. In some

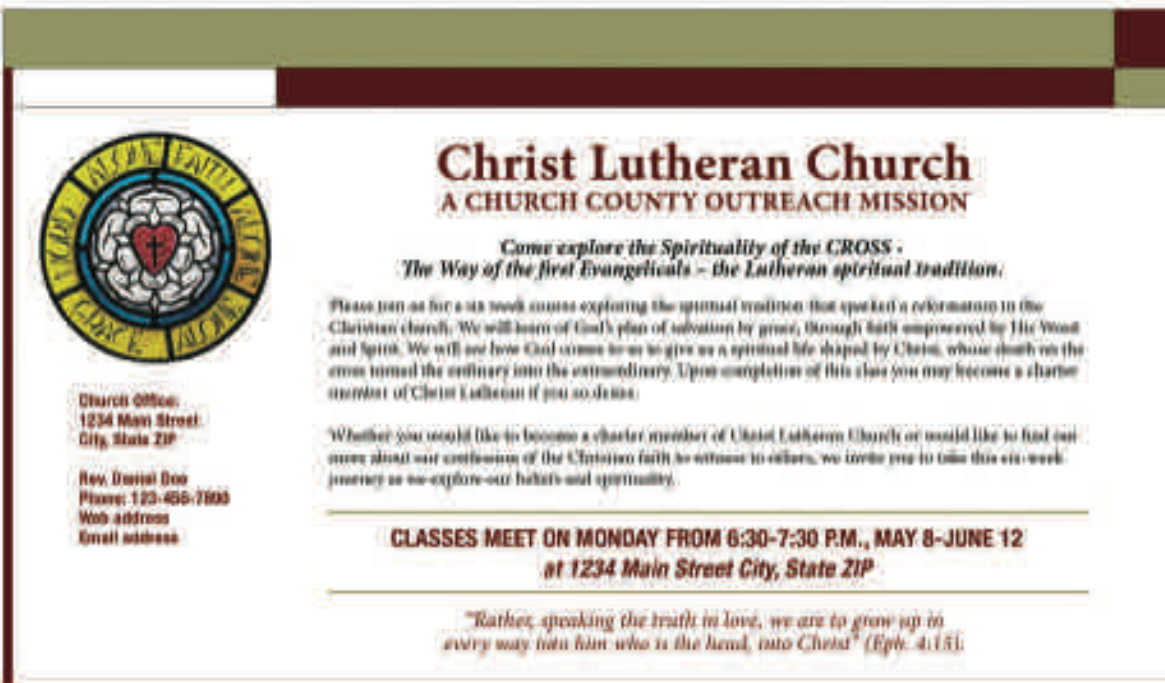
communities, canvassing a neighborhood for introductions, witnessing and invitations to the new church would be more receptive than others. A simple outline for an evangelism call includes an introduction to get to know each other better, a presentation of the Law and the Gospel in which Luther's Small Catechism is key, and then a closing of the visit and time to answer questions. This should be a time to witness and to show love to our neighbor apart from any undue pressure as the Holy Spirit will work through the Word as He pleases.

## TRAINING

Even lifelong Lutherans would do well to participate in a Lutheran education class which equips them to witness the faith in the context of starting a new church. Instruction classes and Bible classes are a great way to bring people together in the Word and to study the basics of the Lutheran faith. So, too, it will be important to equip the newly starting congregation to be prepared to give a witness in their everyday lives. Regardless of our various vocations, we all have opportunities to “make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you,” and ought always be prepared as Peter exhorts us in 1 Peter 3:15. Therefore the Small Catechism is truly the evangelist’s toolkit. It prepares us to defend the faith, to confess what we believe and so do the work of an evangelist.

## VOCATION

Every person has various vocations in which they may have contact with others. We know family members, other Christians, those outside the church, those of other faiths. So, too, we are citizens, parents, neighbors, co-workers, teachers/students, etc. These are relationships that God has given to us to foster in genuine love and care. There will be times when we are with people who are suffering, dying, questioning, going astray. And in these moments we have an opportunity to proclaim the Law and the Gospel as it applies to each circumstance. Again, the Small Catechism is the language of faith that equips and prepares us to make our confession. Through a relational approach to witnessing that provides practical resources for people to use as they speak of Jesus to others in the context of their everyday lives. *Every One His Witness* the LCMS evangelism program, will make use of current technologies for reference, training and witnessing resources, so that it can be delivered to the people who will be using it at little cost.



**Christ Lutheran Church**  
A CHURCH COUNTY OUTREACH MISSION

*Come explore the Spirituality of the CROSS -  
The Way of the first Evangelicals - the Lutheran spiritual tradition.*

Please join us for a six week course exploring the spiritual tradition that sparked a reformation in the Christian church. We will learn of God's plan of salvation by grace, through faith empowered by the Word and Spirit. We will see how God comes to us to give us a spiritual life shaped by Christ, whose death on the cross turned the ordinary into the extraordinary. Upon completion of this class you may become a charter member of Christ Lutheran if you so desire.

Whether you would like to become a charter member of Christ Lutheran Church or would like to find out more about our confession of the Christian faith to witness to others, we invite you to take this six-week journey as we explore our beliefs and spirituality.

**CLASSES MEET ON MONDAY FROM 6:30-7:30 P.M., MAY 8-JUNE 12  
at 1234 Main Street City, State ZIP**

*"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15).*

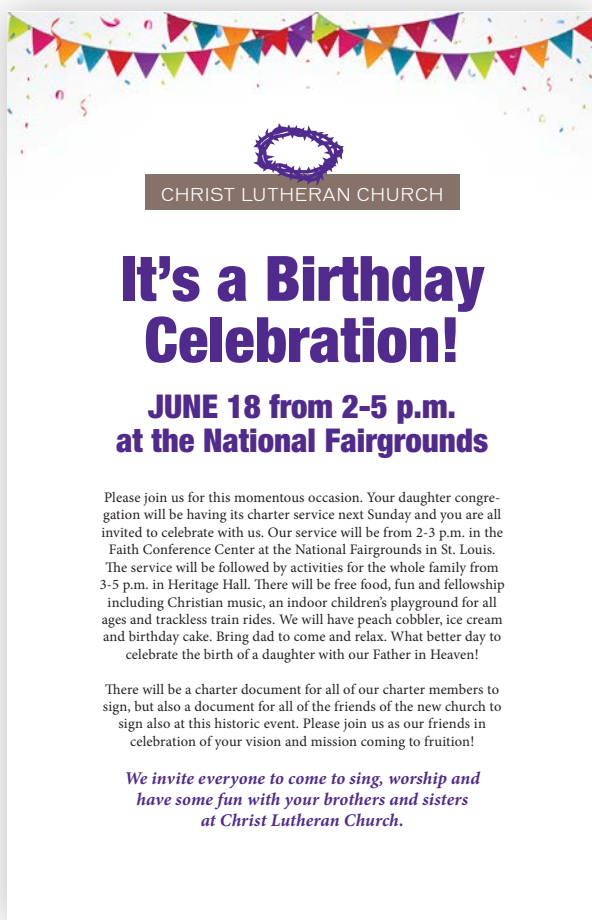
Church Office:  
1234 Main Street  
City, State ZIP

Rev. Daniel Doe  
Phone: 123-456-7890  
Web address  
Email address

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION – ADULT AND CHILDREN

Indeed, continual study of the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions are vital not only to our own spiritual well-being, but also to hone our ability to witness to others. The importance of Christian education will be vital to the health of the congregation and to family devotions and testifying to others. It will be important to have

a solid foundation from the beginning. So, too, Lutheran education through a parochial school is an opportunity to teach the faith and to bring families into the church. Any opportunity to teach the faith should be explored. Once the congregation is catechized and is prepared to charter, this is a wonderful chance to hold a charter service to announce the formation of this new born church as a witness to the community.



**CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

# It's a Birthday Celebration!

**JUNE 18 from 2-5 p.m.  
at the National Fairgrounds**

Please join us for this momentous occasion. Your daughter congregation will be having its charter service next Sunday and you are all invited to celebrate with us. Our service will be from 2-3 p.m. in the Faith Conference Center at the National Fairgrounds in St. Louis. The service will be followed by activities for the whole family from 3-5 p.m. in Heritage Hall. There will be free food, fun and fellowship including Christian music, an indoor children's playground for all ages and trackless train rides. We will have peach cobbler, ice cream and birthday cake. Bring dad to come and relax. What better day to celebrate the birth of a daughter with our Father in Heaven!

There will be a charter document for all of our charter members to sign, but also a document for all of the friends of the new church to sign also at this historic event. Please join us as our friends in celebration of your vision and mission coming to fruition!

***We invite everyone to come to sing, worship and have some fun with your brothers and sisters at Christ Lutheran Church.***

— A SAMPLE INVITATION TO THE CHARTER  
SERVICE FOR THE MOTHER CONGREGATION —



**CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

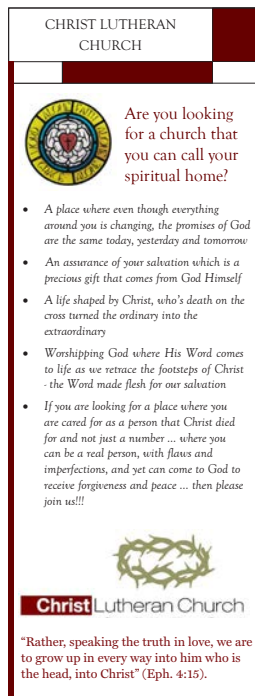
# Free Birthday Party!

**June 18  
2-5 p.m.**

**NATIONAL  
FAIRGROUNDS**

Free food, fun and fellowship including Christian music, an indoor children's playground and trackless train rides!

— A SAMPLE INVITATION TO THE CHARTER SERVICE FOR THE PUBLIC —



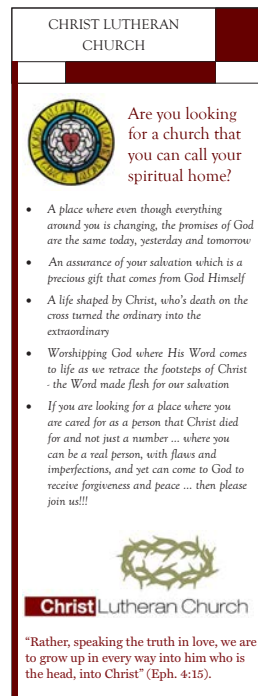
**CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Are you looking for a church that you can call your spiritual home?

- A place where even though everything around you is changing, the promises of God are the same today, yesterday and tomorrow
- An assurance of your salvation which is a precious gift that comes from God Himself
- A life shaped by Christ, who's death on the cross turned the ordinary into the extraordinary
- Worshipping God where His Word comes to life as we retrace the footsteps of Christ - the Word made flesh for our salvation
- If you are looking for a place where you are cared for as a person that Christ died for and not just a number ... where you can be a real person, with flaws and imperfections, and yet can come to God to receive forgiveness and peace ... then please join us!!!

**Christ Lutheran Church**

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15).



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— VISITORS CARDS FOR PLACES LIKE THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE —



CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

## Community Survey Sign-Up

- June 18 is Christ Lutheran's Charter Sunday and Birthday Celebration
- It will be held at the National Fairgrounds (2-5 p.m.)
- TO PREPARE FOR THIS EVENT WE NEED YOUR HELP.

**WHAT:** Hand deliver a Community Survey and Charter Sunday Celebration Invitation. We want to personally invite over 6000 households in the Church County area.

**WHEN:** May 13 and June 3, 9:00 a.m. each day

**WHERE:** Meet at the new Christ Lutheran Office 1234 Main St.

**WHY:** This is our first impression on the community. We want to show them we care and are serious about addressing the community needs.

**HOW:** All you have to do is ask some simple questions and give them an invitation to the celebration.

### THE QUESTIONS ARE:

- (1) What needs do you think our community has?  
(*Pre-K programs, elderly help, playground, soup kitchen, etc.*)
- (2) How can our church help fill these needs?
- (3) Is there anything we can pray about for you?  
(*You will bring prayer requests back with you so they can be prayed about on Sunday.*)
- (4) Do you have a church home?

Contact Vicar James (Church Office: 123-456-7890) if you have any questions.

**HELP, PLEASE. WE WILL NEED 200+ PEOPLE TO ACCOMPLISH THIS COMMUNITY OUTREACH.**



## THE LUTHERAN CHURCH PLANTS LUTHERAN MISSIONS

In the special edition of the “Journal of Lutheran Mission,” April 2015, is a translation of Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf’s essay, “The Lutheran Church Plants Lutheran Missions.” While this document is written through the lens of foreign mission, is there something to be gleaned for church planting in mission field USA? And by using this premise of “The Lutheran Church Plants Lutheran Missions,” it begs the question, “Can we be about domestic mission while at the same time maintaining a Lutheran identity?” Is it cause for concern when we say Lutheran mission or planting distinctly Lutheran churches, as this might hamper us? Even the words church and Christian are often taboo in the vocabulary of those who hope to start new ministries as they have negative connotations to the unbeliever or unchurched.<sup>69</sup>

To be sure, to say distinct, gives the connotation of exclusivity or a narrowing of options. But in

<sup>69</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf, “The Lutheran Church Plants Lutheran Missions” in *Journal of Lutheran Mission Special Issue* (April 2015), trans. Rachel Mumme with Matthew C. Harrison. [blogs.lcms.org/2015/journal-of-lutheran-mission-april2015](http://blogs.lcms.org/2015/journal-of-lutheran-mission-april2015)

reality, distinct means it is set apart from something else, nothing foreign in nature, nothing imported or alien, the very thing that one would expect. Even in secular organizations, they have a DNA that is embedded into their culture, they go to great lengths to ensure high standards and while slightly unique to their locality, the experience is similar and clearly recognizable, bound by that which is foundational to their values. All this is to say, distinct means to be who you are, that which identifies you. As Hopf therefore rightly points out, Lutheran mission, “since the holy apostle Peter’s Pentecost sermon, has been about the conversion of people separated from Christ, whom the Lord Himself adds to His fold...” And he goes on to say “For mission is nothing but the one church of God in motion, the actualization of the one universal, catholic church. Wherever mission enters in, the barriers that separate nation from nation fall down.” Not merely exclusive, but bridging location and time as the communion of saints, in the *una sancta*.

This is not to say that the central unifying focus of Lutheran mission should be the person of Martin Luther, but as Hopf says, “The *person* you can forget, but the teaching you must confess.”



And indeed from the name of a new church plant to the accoutrements that hang on the sanctuary wall, while they might be adiaphora, these things confess, and are informed by this Lutheran teaching. The importance of identifying something as Lutheran, Hopf contends, and is seen by Luther's reluctant use of his name, is that it is a "badge for those who recognized and confessed the rediscovered, pure Gospel in connection with Luther's testimony ... Thus this designation, as used in the name of a church or congregation, can and may not be misused as a demarcation of a particular church alongside others within the whole of Christendom on earth." In an age of relativism this can easily be lost in translation. The Lutheran church is distinct, not as one of many, but "in, with and under the poor form of the church of this confession, the one holy, Christian and apostolic church can truly be found and grasped in faith."

So it is that from generation to generation, the faith has been passed down: doctrine, practice, mission methods. This would seem to be the fatal flaw of a pop Christianity, that is ever new and novel: it can stake no claim to the one Church catholic, nothing that is timeless and universal, or even that which was handed down from the apostles. Just thinking logically, if it has not been passed down from the New Testament Church then where is its catholicity? Neither novelty nor target segmentation of particular people or interest groups will form full biblical unity. Hopf also warns against heresies and reductions of the truth of salvation, as they "rent asunder the confidence of faith": placing souls in peril, because false teaching leads away from the one true faith. Lutheran mission, Hopf contends, knows of "no way of salvation outside of the deeds of Christ in Word and Sacrament. And we can only be certain of and happy in these deeds of Christ where the purity of the means of grace is intact. For us a participation in the leaven of false teaching would amount to a denial of Christ and contempt for his means of grace." Therefore the ministry of saving the lost is found in that which has been "mandated, according to the command and promise of Christ. Christ's deeds done through Word and Sacrament need no addition on the part of zealous enthusiastic people."

*So too, Hopf says of Lutheran mission methods, "Only one single condition must be fulfilled under all circumstances and in every case: the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments may not be adulterated; their purity and integrity*

*must be safeguarded," as we see already in the New Testament. These are the mission methods to which Lutheran mission is bound, to the exclusion of any other means, in a closed communion. And this is what it is to be a confessing church. Just as the office of the keys requires both keys to be turned for them to be efficacious, so too if a confession only says we believe without ever saying we reject or even we condemn then it is no longer a confessing church that we speak of, but rather a conversing church who is simply part of the conversation. In this case there is no true unity in that which binds us together, but only a superficial peace among us, agreeing to disagree. Therefore Hopf urges the Lutheran church "not to tolerate or even recognize 'another Gospel.'"*

And there is no Pollyannaish understanding of what this will mean for the church. The language that Hopf uses is that of a war between mission and world ... a difficult battle against corruption, guarding oneself and not being united with those who practice false doctrine, division for the sake of the truth belonging to the cruciform figure of the church. The enemy in this war is real, and as we know it is not an adversary of flesh and blood, but we wrestle against the cosmic powers over this present darkness. So it is that Hopf reminds us that the devil will not rest in causing preachers to corrupt the message, and that there is a deadly danger for preacher and congregation alike of somehow adapting the Word of the Lord to themselves and of changing and corrupting it. This is not simply something theoretical or hypothetical or even academic, we speak much of making disciples and discipleship, and this is where it takes its form in the life of the church in the world.

It causes us to question as a church militant, what will be the cost if we make church out to be nothing more than a loving safe comfort zone that is focused on the needs of the individual seeker? If we cannot get people to commit to more than coming for a cookout and hear a Bible story, how will we get them to commit to learning the faith in enough depth to confess it? Or ask them for their vow to die for their beliefs when persecution comes? In these dark and latter days, we need fierce and bold confessors. We rightly have an emphasis regarding discipleship as it relates to loving our neighbor and telling others about Jesus, but this is no shallow undertaking.

Because what happens when these very same disciples are sent to lions? And not only will the mission lose its footing apart from true martyrdom, our voice is no longer taken seriously if we cannot seriously engage the world with intellectual integrity beyond simple personal feelings or relational touch points. With no need to pit head knowledge vs heart knowledge in a false dichotomy of mission objectives. To be sure, mission must bring heart, soul, mind and body into the fray and the truth of God's Word is what is at stake. This will truly require disciples who are battle hardened for an apocalyptic mission in which they will face the dragon and the very forces of darkness that are hell bent to consume this world. This is not just a fight for denominational traditions, or clinging on to some means of institutional preservation, this is a passing down of the Lutheran confession of faith with reckless abandon regardless of the cost.

And so, too, the lines are fast becoming blurred as to what delineates one confession from another. In the days of the reformation, it was clear, the boundaries for being of a certain communion were what was taught, believed and confessed. The concept of church shopping based on something other than the belief that is held by a church body would have been quite a foreign concept. What Hopf refers to as the:

*“confessional status of a congregation — the catechism in the instruction of the youth, the order of the Divine Service, of the liturgy and of the worship of the church (Gottesdienstordnung) according to the Agenda, the hymnal, the ordination vow and the promise of the pastor at his installation — all that receives its spiritual power through God’s efficacious Word of salvation at work in it. But this status also has validity at the same time and creates for itself in legal church orders appropriate earthly vessels for its divine content.”*

What makes a church body distinct then is that it has the same formulated confession in doctrine and practice: meaning uniformity, and yes even obedience. There is thus a need for church authority that is:

*“bound to the confession and to its functions that have no other foundation than the care of souls. ‘Lutheran churches’ are for us congregations (Gemeinden), and church bodies who are ordered and are being governed in this sense, whose lives are exclusively*

*oriented to the real marks of the true church of Jesus Christ.”*

This unity can be found, while avoiding legalism, as stated in Article III of the LCMS constitution in regards to the objectives of being synod: “6. Aid congregations by providing a variety of resources and opportunities for recognizing, promoting, expressing, conserving and defending their confessional unity in the true faith; 7. Encourage congregations to strive for uniformity in church practice, but also to develop an appreciation of a variety of responsible practices and customs which are in harmony with our common profession of faith.”

When the individual churches abandon this and all go their own way, the church at large “loses her self-understanding. She then becomes a trend, a group or a ‘family’ among many others standing closer or further from her within worldwide Christianity.”<sup>70</sup> The discussion of the essay then turns to specific foreign missions in which the confession is given to the nations. Hopf makes the case for a very organic understanding of church, mission, pastorate and laity — all of one living embodiment. Mission is through church and church is in mission, church believes and so she speaks, church receives and so she gives, church has been nursed on what she then provides as milk, church has been shown mercy and so in turn is merciful, church is nurtured and so she nurtures.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism — one head with one body. Church dogma then is a corporate source of life rather than left to individual endeavors, the idea of a non-denominational church no more than an assertion. Indeed as quoted, for a church to say it does not belong to any confession is either out of ignorance or they are blinded by pride, believing they can “soar on wings above the entire historical formation of the church and her doctrine.”<sup>71</sup> (see p. 20 of the Journal)

And as such, just as our physical bodies are designed for order rather than chaos, with the understanding that our hands and feet and eyes and ears all serve specific purposes, so, too, there is office and vocation to give order in the body of Christ. God’s mission most certainly involves the laity in both the administrative dimension and the spiritual as well. Mercy and witness and outreach all take place through individual vocations as it does also corporately.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 20.





But mission is not simply parachuting people into a mission field to convert souls, and then heading back to base. As Hopf points out rather than awakening a few or many souls, “souls should be led on to more. Congregations should be gathered and led. And then it is decisively important for the newly converted Christians and congregations in these places to give them pastors of the purest doctrine and wisest practice to care for souls.” This helps us to see the mission dynamic of the priesthood of all believers and the office of the public ministry, the importance of theologically trained clergy and well catechized evangelists.

And again it is not just systematic theology that we speak of, indeed, “The unbeliever will be awakened and wish to become a part of Christendom.” This includes sacraments rightly administered, which are not just theological abstracts in a vacuum, they are part and parcel to a baptismal identity. Mission then brings “the pure confession of Jesus Christ and with it the glorious treasures of our church to poor unbelievers, be they Gentiles or Jews. The church of God and her mission abide in the entire Word (JOHN 8:31; 12:48). The sacraments are not outward signs of grace for the mission, rather are essential means of grace.”<sup>72</sup> There are no unauthorized services and spurious worship in which either an individual or congregation has the

right to forsake the position of the church while claiming to do the work of the church.

Hopf explains that we are thusly compelled to formulate a self-understanding of what it means to be distinctly Lutheran. This should occur in that our interpretation of Scripture becomes the “foundation of Christian existence,” a “valid guide for life in the church of Jesus Christ,” which results in only Lutheran mission. But Hopf rightly points out the dangers of wearing down in the battle, to see mission as a neutral territory to take refuge in, in which we “flee into mission on the new frontier to form young Lutheran churches.” Churches not built on the “soil of old Lutheran Christianity,” but as a means to start that which is not Lutheran, and are based on “ecclesiastical goals or personal egos.”<sup>73</sup>

There is no way around it then, that Lutheran mission can only be carried out by a Lutheran church, bound by said confession. The core group, the newly charted congregation, the pastor, the church administration — all are bound to the same confession or else they should be rightfully critiqued, compelled not just by regulation, but by unity of Spirit. Again, agreeing to disagree about new mission impulses, in endless discussions that never bring consensus from an inner unity of faith, a unity that is presented in outward fellowship of the Divine Service, will lead only to a peace that is skin deep.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 22.



And make no mistake, disunity paralyzes mission. As Hopf gravely warns, “A crack in the unity of believing and confessing in the sending church becomes something that threatens to kill Lutheran mission.” Let there be no doubt, the strength of mission will weaken, disappear, and become paralyzed, for as Hopf says, “The work of mission is a work that truly founds the church and cannot be done without clear distinction between right doctrine and false doctrine.”<sup>74</sup>

Lutheran mission must borne out of a church “acting under the same authority and living under the same promise.” Missionaries in their ordination vows take on the divinely instituted Office of the Public Ministry and the mission mandate into which they have been called.<sup>75</sup>

It is a fine balance then for newly planted churches to live within their freedom of ceremonies and human orders while at the same time losing nothing of the old faith, meaning that which has been passed down. There must be a distinction between “truth and error, pure teaching and heretical teaching.” And as stated earlier this means not importing that which is foreign to our faith thereby replacing the old confession with a new one. There are certainly distinctives in Lutheran worship, our theology of the cross, properly distinguishing between Law and Gospel when applying the Bible, a right understanding of Divine Service, and a proper reverence when we come into God’s presence.<sup>76</sup>

Contexts will change, but our confession cannot be compromised to be more appealing to the masses. A Lutheran missionary is one who is not only instructed in the church’s confession, but is also “faithfully and diligently brought up into it” and they must “finally be pledged to it (which puts the capstone in place).”<sup>77</sup> A church can of course claim to confess the Lutheran faith and yet be only nominally Lutheran in their attempts to reach the lost, but as Hopf rightly drives home the point, there is a responsibility of the stewards of the mysteries of God. Not for the maintaining of a denomination, but that the very church they will plant will define church in that place distinct from all others.

But before we dig in our heels or jump into our foxholes thinking this discussion is simply about maintaining pure doctrine, not so fast. This entire discussion has been about confession, which inherently means *we confess*. It may not appear to have been treated in as much depth, or it was simply assumed, but Lutheran churches *doing* Lutheran missions, is about doing nevertheless. Hopf speaks just as strongly to the duties of a steward being trustworthy and faithful in their duty to *execute* the wishes of the master who entrusted you to carry this out. Jesus really did say baptize, teach, feed, give drink, find, clothe, wash, heal, visit, tell, etc. — we cannot just claim a pristine doctrine of election, but ignore the fact that faith comes from hearing. We are in the end times in which the whole world is groaning. “Woe to every Lutheran church who so misunderstands her confessional bond, as if she should and may introvertedly eke out her meager existence in seclusion, protect her stock and leave the parts of Christianity polluted or ruled by false doctrine to their own resources.”<sup>78</sup>

There is no room for non-confrontation anymore, living in comfort and false peace! Christ is coming, a war is happening and the church militant must bear arms and get into the fight! Lutheran mission leads to Lutheran churches, so there is a responsibility to preserve unity with all rightly believing Lutheran churches on earth, “but just as much responsibility to the testimony of the biblical truth of salvation and its consequences beyond all borders and boundaries of painful divisions in the church.” Now more than ever we are to heed the call to preach the pure Gospel starting at home and to the very ends of the earth.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.











