The
Appalachian Lutheran

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The Revival Mission Project

From the Appalachian Lutheran League Board of Directors

The Appalachian Lutheran League has specifically identified non-Lutheran congregations that desire Lutheran doctrine. We are in communication with these congregations. The locations of these congregations vary widely across Appalachia. We will share these locations in the future as it becomes appropriate. I can tell you this, the prospects of what God may have in store for us are very exciting.

Also, we have also specifically identified LC-MS congregations across the 6 districts in the region where direct Word and Sacrament ministry is needed.

In addition, we are beginning to identify locations in which conservative, confessional Lutheran doctrine is desired.

With these types of very different opportunities that are in front of us, we created a "model" approach that may fit well into either scenario. We have always had this in mind: that whatever approach we take, that it ***directly relates to Word and Sacrament ministry***. God gives the growth, while we sow seed and water.

Here is a brief description of the model:

***3-4 months of monthly pulpit supply *over and above* what the congregation already may have budgeted and planned.**

***A 1-week "revival mission" where 1-2 pastors spend time with the congregation and community: preaching the Word in and out of season, teaching confessional Lutheran doctrine, and visitation within the congregation and out in the community. The pastor(s) can then more accurately assess what the next steps at that *preaching station* might be.**

With this work, we need help…

Help Wanted

People are called to faith in Christ by hearing His Word. We are seeking liaisons for future preaching stations to feed the sheep. If you are in an area or a congregation that you think could benefit from Christian doctrine and preaching with the Holy Scriptures as the only infallible norm and rule of faith, we would like to hear from you. A liaison is someone who would help set up a place and time for either a one-time preaching station or a regular one. If this might be you, contact us through our link on our website *appalachianlutheranleague.org* or our Facebook page.

Work Wanted

Are you a Lutheran in Appalachia without a church? Are you a Christian congregation in Appalachia without a preacher? Are you wanting to know about God? We want to know, and we want to help. Contact us through our website form.

We believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is our Lord who has redeemed us, lost and condemned creatures, purchased and delivered us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, in order that we may be His own, and live under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true, because the Bible says so.

Finding Lutheranism in Appalachia

Joni Burns, Secretary for A.L.L. and Member of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Parkersburg, WV

Greetings from West Virginia!

I'm going to attempt to tell my story of how I came to convert to Lutheranism, but please bear with me as I am not a writer and my memory may not recall the exact chronological order of events, but I will do my best.

I was blessed to be raised in a very religious family – my parents and all my grandparents loved The Lord. As the joke goes, my parents were drug dealers – they drug me to church every time the doors opened. The majority of my young years were spent in a non-charismatic, non-denominational church. I remember once asking my dad what denomination we most closely resembled, and his response was "probably closest to the Nazarenes." At any rate, my parents raised me up in the way I should go. Unfortunately, once I got out on my own, I departed from that way. I never stopped believing – but I certainly was not living my life in a way that would please and honor God. Through my adult years, I would go through periods of time where I would go to church regularly wherever my parents were going at the time. My dad and I would discuss what The Bible said about various issues, and we had really good debates that were great exercises in searching the scriptures. I am ever so thankful for that & for him. I miss having good theological discussions – even when I wasn't living like I should, I enjoyed talking about what The Bible said.

Fast forward to my older years. I was 57 and the Holy Spirit was really working on me – drawing me back to the church. I had felt that tug for a LONG time but chose to set it aside because of so many things going on with "life". I don't think that COVID had any particular impact, but it did bring our attention to the fact that we weren't going to live forever. I told my husband that I wanted to find a church and asked if he would attend with me – he said yes without hesitation. He was not raised in church like I was, although they did attend from time to time.

Because I was the one raised in church, I was the one to do the research on where we should go. Initially, my thought process was pretty rudimentary. My first thought was to go where my mom goes, because that would make her happy. She attends a Methodist church, and their conference was careening toward what they have become today but it had been delayed by COVID. I knew I didn't want to start somewhere that I knew I would leave – even though her congregation is pretty conservative. I also knew that I didn't want to walk into the church and see a "stage" with band instruments laying around instead of an altar. Nor did I want contemporary music or a female pastor. My list of negatives was getting long, and available churches were becoming fewer. I was frustrated.

I was seeing what our modern churches were allowing – and promoting – and I knew I didn't want that - this is not the church of Scripture.

Somewhere in this time frame, I happened to read about how the idea of the pre-tribulation rapture came to be. I had grown up thinking that **everyone** believed that. It truly was like someone had dropped a bomb on me. If I had been taught **that**, then what else had I learned that was false?

At the same time, I was thinking about what the church believed about sexuality and other social issues when I was young compared to what is happening now, and it's dumbfounding to me how we have allowed this to happen in 50 short years. I wondered what else the church had allowed to creep in in the previous decades – this was very concerning to me. I shifted tactics. What do I WANT in a church? I want reverence. I want holiness. I want a church that is not afraid to push back against society and tell them they are wrong and sinful. I want a church & pastor who are not afraid to tell ME that I am wrong and sinful. I wanted to get as close to what the early church would have been. Because of that, I briefly entertained research on Roman Catholics and the Orthodox, but I just couldn't reconcile all their teachings with scripture. Specifically, Mariology has reached a very concerning level. I wondered what the next step would be…Anglican? We have a local Anglican congregation. I went to school with the pastor there. I watched a service on YouTube and it didn't connect with me. Things were pretty informal, and they played more modern music. Not what I was looking for.

At some point, I had thrown a Facebook comment out about looking for a church and a gal I went to school with invited me to a Lutheran church in town. It's a beautiful old church. Visually pleasing, for sure. I didn't know a thing about Lutherans, though. That's just not a "thing" around here. You can find a Baptist or Pentecostal or even a Methodist church on every corner…but Lutheran? No. So, I decided to look this particular church up on the internet to see what they were about. Perhaps they were the answer to my dilemma! I don't wish to disparage anyone - I am just being honest about my thought processes here. I know for a fact there are good and decent Christians who attend there. That said, their website talked a lot about serving the community and that everyone is welcome. That's not a bad thing in and of itself, but it didn't say a lot about their actual beliefs which threw up some red flags for me. It did mention that it belonged to the ELCA and provided a link, so I went there. That website (at the time) greeted me with a cover photo of pastors – men, women, non-binaries – wearing rainbow stoles. Check that one off the list.

I looked briefly at the ELCA history page where they mentioned that there had been a split with other Lutherans who were more conservative, so off I went on another internet search. I first searched "Lutheran churches near me" and several popped up. I visited each website and learned that there was another one or two ELCA churches in the general vicinity, another that was WELS, and one LCMS. I looked at the LCMS church's website and was pleasantly surprised – a "What We Believe" tab! Better yet, it had a "What About" tab! **That "What About" tab was a treasure trove that linked to detailed information about all the subjects I was concerned about. I was so excited!** I poured over that information for hours on end and finally felt hope - this church seemed to be aligned with scripture AND addressed cultural hot topics with grace.

And that was the turning point.

From there, I continued to study LCMS beliefs and stumbled onto a YouTube series from Matt Whitman and the 10-Minute Bible Hour where he interviewed Pastor Will Weedon about the Lutheran Church. This was priceless – what a gem! I also found Pastor Anthony Masinelli's YouTube series on "What Lutherans Believe" and learned SO much from him. I finally watched a Divine Service on YouTube from St. Paul Lutheran Church in Parkersburg, West Virigina. Coming from a non-denominational background, I didn't yet understand everything and had some questions about certain topics (infant baptism, confession & absolution, closed communion), but I felt good about it. We decided to visit. I was nervous because I wanted my husband to be comfortable and I was afraid a liturgical church might be perceived as too formal by him, but we were welcomed and an older couple

who sat in front of us took us under their wing and the rest is history. We took confirmation classes with Pastor Dan Golden and on April 3, 2022, my husband was baptized and we were both confirmed. Praise be to God!

I feel like I have discovered the best kept secret in West Virginia (and Appalachia) and want to talk about it to my friends, but I find that they don't really want to hear it. I thought my Christian friends would be interested in what I've learned but that does not seem to be the case. It's not that I'm trying to actively "flip them", but I do think that the way we were raised is in error about a few things. It is my nature to want to know the truth, and I assumed that would be the case with others, but it seems some are content with the status quo – whatever that may be for them. So this part has been a bit deflating. I would be so excited to share with them what I have learned.

So that's the long and winding road I took to discovering Lutheranism in Appalachia. It's probably a bit rambling, but I hope it helps someone in some way. I continue to study and by the grace of God, grow in my faith. I'm so very thankful to be here – my only regret is that I did not grow up Lutheran & raise my children this way.

Prayer: Grace and Peace to You

Rev. Mark Hartsough, A.L.L. Board Member, New Hope, Newark/Granville, OH

In the last few weeks, we have, as a society, been confronted with some horrific killings, and specifically, the assassination of Charlie Kirk. Mr. Kirk, was certainly an outspoken Christian, and witnessed to many. There have been others and, to be sure, one does not need to look far to find any number horrific crimes against humans. We live in a broken world and as a result of that, there is evil.

Exodus 20 says, **"You shall not murder"**. Sadly, murder is all around us, school shootings, robberies, drive by shootings and there are certainly more. These are all terrible events, lives and futures are ended. The families of the victims no matter what the circumstances, will never have their loved one to hug, laugh with and talk to again. The family of all these victims will live with the pain of that loss for the rest of their lives. When watching the news and there is a murder reported, no matter who the victim is, I pray for the family left behind.

The assassination of Charlie Kirk shares all these qualities. A widow will be left to raise their two children without him. This is a terrible loss for any family. But, there is more to this that has struck our society. Every news source covered this shooting wall to wall. Social media is covered with news and opinions about this breaking of the Fifth Commandment. Mr. Kirk was not afraid to confess Christ to thousands of people. It my prayer that he truly trusted in this God given faith. Please pray with me the following prayer for the loved ones that will miss him over the years. (This prayer can be used for anytime the Fifth Commandment in this physical way.)

Heavenly Father, we come to you this day asking you to be gracious, to the family of Charlie, whose life was tragically ended and he rest with You now. We pray Lord comfort them in their grief, deliver them from anger, and grant them knowledge of Your loving care at this time. We ask Lord that You grant them the Holy Spirit to provide them peace that the only You can bring. We pray Lord they are comforted by the sure promise of the resurrection of all flesh where we will all be with those that died in faith. Through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord and the Holy Spirit, who lives and reigns with You, One God now and forever. Amen.

I think the reason this murder touched our country so much is because it violates our understanding of the way society should work. Our country was designed as a "supermarket" of ideas. We were built on the notion that if we have differences, we can discuss them and put back the ideas we don't want. This murder violates that. This murder causes anxiety and stress.

As I am writing this, the authorities said, "We got him". Jesus told Pilate that his authority comes from God. God has given us government to protect us and punish evil. Romans 13 says, **"For he [the**

government] is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer." It is our prayer that this suspect receives a fair and trail and if he is the guilty party the government would carry out their duty to us. We also need to pray for the shooter, if it is this man or another.

Heavenly Father, your Son told us we are to Love our enemies. On our own we cannot do that but, through the faith you give us in Your Son, we can. We pray Lord that by Your Spirit, the shooter would be called by the Gospel. We would pray Lord that you would adopt him into Your family and convict him of his sins, including this one. May he repent from his sins and seek the forgives that can only be provided by Your Son. Through Jesus Christ, Your Son our Lord, and the Holy Spirit, One God now and forever. Amen.

So, what do we do from here? Repent! Jesus says in Matthew 5, **"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool! 'will be liable to the hell of fire."** We may not have climbed on a roof with a rifle and shoot someone but, Jesus tells us we are guilty. It is easy to see the speck in someone else's eye and ignore the log in our own. Repent! You are baptized, turn from your sin and look to Jesus alone for your salvation. It is through this faith alone that anyone can be saved. Maybe your trust has been in the country or government more than Christ. Maybe you look to another thing to put your trust in rather than Christ. Repent!

Moving forward, I will not watch the video. The things we see become imprinted in our minds. I pray for those that witnessed it live and will never be able to remove that image from their minds. Instead of watching that video, pray. Read His Word. And, reflect on the words of Romans 8, **"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

Devotion: Salvation Economy

Rev. Wes Hromowyk, A.L.L. Board Member & Pastor, Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Columbus, OH

Whenever someone buys a new car, one of the things the person looks for is fuel economy. How many miles will this vehicle get per mile? We all know that the car will never live up to its expectations, for the rating is based on perfect working conditions: flat roads, no head wind, and the automobile's engine operating system working at its fullest potential, etc.

In the same way, when I began a small-scale chicken farm, I researched what hens had the best "egg economy." What breeds would be the most efficient layers that I could get the most bang for my buck? It did not take me long to realize that hens, too, needed the perfect laying conditions to reach their potential. None of them ever attain their advertised efficiency.

After each day of creation, God deemed everything, "good." After He created man and woman on the sixth day, He **"saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day" (Gen 1:31).** Humanity had perfect "salvation economy" before the fall into sin. Adam and Eve lived up to the standard God had given them. But, **"just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Rom 5:12)**, now no one is able to live up to the standards that God expects for His beloved creatures. In fact, Paul makes clear, **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).**

Unlike our cars and chickens that can at least get close to having the efficiency and production we anticipate, man is a lost cause. There's no hope for us to do all the works God demands in His law, and **"without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb 11:6)**. Thanks be to God for Christ Jesus, who purchased us not with gold or silver, but His holy precious blood, and innocent suffering and death. When we live in repentance, we believe that Christ Jesus has nailed all our sins to his flesh on the cross. We trust

that God does not see our inefficiencies and inadequacies, but sees Christ's perfect righteousness that covers us like a cloak. For **"as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27).**

Christ Jesus is our perfect salvation economy. If we relied on our cars to get or exceed their gas mileage as advertised, we would live in constant anger and frustration. If we relied on our chickens to lay the number of eggs that they were supposed to lay, we would never have enough. **"All who rely on works of the law are under a curse, for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them" (Gal 3:10).** We demonstrate "grace" to our vehicles and the animals we care for simply by continuing to make wise use of them. How much more so does our God superabundantly show His favor toward us, not for our sake, but for Jesus' sake. We rely not on our works but on God's promises for salvation.

"Salvation economy" is simple. Repent of all the things you think, say, or do that are contrary to God's will as revealed in His Word. Trust that Jesus died for all those sins. **"By grace you have been saved through faith; it is the gift of God – not of works – so that no one may boast" (Eph 2:8-9).**

Appalachia: A Place, A People, A Peace

Rev. Emer. Paul Becker, A.L.L. Board Member, Concordia Lutheran Church, Kingsport, TN

Thinking about why I love and support the Appalachian Lutheran League, and encourage others to do likewise embraces such a wide range of opportunities and blessings that I might distill into the following containers:

A PLACE chosen by God; a PEOPLE created in God's image; a PEACE that can rule hearts and minds in Jesus Christ.

Since being called by God to serve Concordia Lutheran Kingsport Tennessee in 1994, I have had the privilege of traveling through much of northeast Tennessee, western North Carolina, southwest Virginia, eastern Kentucky and West Virginia, the hills and hollers, lakes and rivers, farms and small towns of Appalachia. Nowadays you can pass through the region on four lane interstate highways, but 40 years ago a two-lane winding country road was the norm and remains the best way to experience the unique beauty of the region we have come to call home.

My wife and I were privileged to home school our four children here and take them on trips to stunning waterfalls, hiking and camping on the Appalachian Trail, rafting on the rivers and picking apples in hilly orchards. Although we were fortunate travel across many parts of America and experience awe, majesty and grandeur along the way, it is always in the creation of Appalachia that we find powerfully revealed both terror and tenderness in the loving heart of our Creator. The terror / threats / law remind us that we are not God, we are not in control, and that our proper response can only be as Solomon said, Here is my final conclusion: fear God and obey his commandments, for this is the entire duty of man. For God will judge us for everything we do, including every hidden thing, good or bad. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). The tenderness / promises / Good News tell us that God truly cares for us and wants us to enjoy not only his blessings but fellowship with Him both now and in the life to come. God chose this place for us and we are more grateful than words can express.

Secondly, I have come to love the PEOPLE of Appalachia for their acceptance, arts and attitude. One of our charter members who became a dear friend told me, "We didn't know we was poor until the government told us! What he meant was they accepted the cards they had been dealt and worked hard to make the best of it. I'll never forget seeing the storage area of grandmother's garden filled with cans of beans and other preserves to feed her family through the winter. Cheerful spirits combined with hard physical work of weeding or building and maintaining a cattle fence line over rough terrain produced a strength and resilience of character worthy of liberty.

In the midst of all this labor, time was found for the Appalachian arts of quilting, story-telling, blue grass music and my favorite, shaped noted hymn singing as preserved in song books such as The Sacred Harp and Southern / Kentucky Harmony and well represented in many contemporary hymnals. All of these are alive and well today and draw people from near and far to enjoy this unique part of American culture.

Accepting others with a friendly, helpful spirit characterizes Appalachia as well. I have heard more testimonies than I can count of people moving here from other parts of the country all saying the same thing: we have never before experienced a welcome like this! Here folks recognize our common humanity, common struggles, shared sorrows and the same Savior Jesus Christ even if a healthy Christian fellowship has eluded them.

This brings me to the final reason I love and support the Appalachian Lutheran League, the PEACE of God that can rule our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ. It was Appalachian Lutheran pastors like the Henkels who planted churches in West Virginia, southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee which in part formed the Tennessee Synod and published the first English translation of the Book of Concord in 1850. Sadly derailed by the War between the States, confessional Lutheran presence and activity in Appalachia largely diminished and the region was overlooked unto this moment when a group of grassroots pastors decided something could be done in this harvest field.

What has happened as a result of most protestant churches being ignorant of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel? A general lack of Good News flowing from confession of sins and the Holy Absolution, the blessings and gift of new life in Holy Baptism and the divine strength of Jesus' real presence in Holy Communion. The peace of God flows through the Divine Service from the opening invocation and sign of the holy cross to the final blessing of shalom / peace / wholeness/ In between are readings from the prophets, apostles and evangelists, the praying of Psalms and singing of hymns from almost every century of church history, the preaching / application of God's Word to our lives today and prayer for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their need, set in the context of the Church Year that takes us through the life of Christ and the ministry of the Church, every year. All of these treasures deliver the PEACE of God that can rule our hearts and minds. When it does, people will see that truly with God all things are possible. May God bring to completion the good work He has begun in the Appalachian Lutheran League.

Resource: ***How Many Religions Are True?***

Reprinted from: "The Narrow Way Simply Shown," By Rev. Dr. Adam C. Koontz with Rev. Adrian N. Sherrill & Rev. Andrew Richard, 2024, www.adcrucem.com

There are thousands and thousands of different beliefs and practices worldwide that you might call "organized religion." There are even more private beliefs and practices that people do on their own that you could also call "religious." Are those all the same? Do they all get you to the same place?

No, they don't because they can't. All religions other than Christianity boil down to: "Do this so that you can be saved or fixed," or however they express the goal of what they believe and do. Every other religion than Christianity is ultimately a religion of coercion - laws, regulations, controls, and commands – that pretend you can satisfy a deity to escape punishment for your sins. This is not God's Law as we read it in Scripture, but selective inventions and additions by us as we desperately try to avoid and evade the truth of the Bible.

You might be using healing crystals to overcome something horrible that happened to you, washing before Friday prayers in a mosque, or climbing stairs on your knees in Rome while holding a rosary. The idea is always the same: "do something to get something".

Christianity is the only true religion because it is the only religion of the gospel. It is not defined by what you do or don't. God's good news defines that everything necessary for salvation from sin, shame, death, and Hell has been done and brought to you in Jesus Christ, the world's Savior. That's the only religion you can rely on. That's the only true religion.

Devotion: The Congregation as the Center of Community

Rev. Daniel Golden, A.L.L. Board President, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Parkersburg, WV

I have heard many stories of how a church used to be the center of the community in so many aspects. These are usually regaled as the "good ol' days." Ask someone old enough to remember, and they can tell you about community functions that always took place at church. Now, even though it is not likely a Town Council meeting will take place in your fellowship hall these days, I do believe there is way to approach this.

Why even consider this? Because there are many good and Godly reasons to do so. If **"Bad company ruins good morals"** (1 Cor 15:33) then good company builds good morals. What better company is there to keep, than the company of a Christian? When you think about our daily relationships with people inside and outside the Christian church, whom are you called to serve and support? **"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith"** (Gal 6:10).

And how are Christians called to deal with each other? **"Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you"** (Luke 6:38).

So not only are we called to do these things, the blessings and benefits are abundant. We are taught this - by the very thing that the word "community" comes from: Communion. When we receive the Lord's body and blood given and shed for the forgiveness of sins, we are confessing also that we are of like minds with the others we are surrounded by. The benefits of that community with Christ, is forgiveness, life, and salvation.

In *communion*, we have something in *common* with others. We are brought together in the same faith in Christ. During times other than Divine Service, this *communion* doesn't just stop. In fact, we use another word for that means the same exact thing: Fellowship. Community, Communion, in Common (like the common cup!), Fellowship. This is the life of the Christian. So what other benefits come from our Christian community? To put it simply, *every single aspect of our daily life.*

Think about all the ways you lived your life last month. Did you need a repair on your home done, and get gouged? Did you need to hire someone for your business, while the recently unemployed man at church heard nothing about it? Did you overpay for eggs at the grocery store, while another church member offers to sell them at an affordable price? Are you looking for a Christian spouse, and found nothing but heartbreak? Outside the Christian community, aren't you more likely to be frustrated with the dealings of the world? **"As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to slaughtered'"** (Rom 8:36).

What if we had a job posting board at church? What if we had a directory that listed the talents and skills of everyone's profession? What if we had a singles dinner? What if we had a baby-sitting service? What if we had a grocery or produce or clothing co-op? The possibilities are quite endless.

I guard myself now from ever saying we are "too" busy. And maybe, just maybe, there's an aspect of your daily schedule or to-do list that could recenter itself in a place where 2 or 3 are gathered in His

name. A place where frustrations and anxieties are promised to be relieved: among your brothers and sisters in Christ.

When Christ and church are at the center of your life, you can't help but find other good people surrounding Him.

Appalachian History: The Rev. Paul Henkel and Zion Church: 1806 to 1819

From "The Lutheran Church in Mason and Jackson Counties of West Virginia" by George C. Weirick, A.B., M. Div. (excerpts reprinted with permission of the author's family)

"In the spring of 1806 John Roush, the living in Point Pleasant, wrote to his friend and pastor, Paul Henkel, and urged him to come to Mason County. Pastor Henkel and Elizabeth began the trip on Monday, July 7, 1806. George Ruddell accompanied them. There were enough Lutherans and other friends along the 250 mile trip that on most nights they could stay with someone they already knew. Pastor Henkel preached in Lewisburg, Virginia (now WV) on Sunday, July 13, 1806. On Monday July 14 the Henkels were told that it would be impossible to get the chaise over the road to Point Pleasant so they continued on horseback …They arrived in Point Pleasant on Tuesday, July 22, 1806 and were met by John Roush and his wife Dorothea."

"The Mason County trip was supported by the Lutheran Ministerium Synod of Pennsylvania. Later, on June 13, 1808, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania meeting in Lebanon, PA officially designated Paul Henkel as traveling missionary for Virginia (which then included Mason County), North Carolina, and Tennessee."

"Between 1806 and 1819 Pastor Henkel made eight trips from New Market, Virginia to Point Pleasant. Point Pleasant became his base of operation for other parts of Mason County and for Ohio. His ministry in Mason County included conducting preaching services, services of Holy Communion, instruction in Luther's catechism, confirmations of both youth and adults, and baptism for person of all ages but especially the children. He usually preached on the historic texts for the day."

"In Mason County Pastor Henkel's first organized congregation was in or near Point Pleasant and was called Jager Church (which in German means hunter). From Point Pleasant and the Ohio Valley, Pastor Paul Henkel moved west. Churches in Tennessee and Ohio also claim him as their organizing pastor. Later, he and Pastor Stough who had organized Lutheran churches in northern Virginia (now West Virginia), Pennsylvania, and Ohio, organized the Lutheran Synod of Ohio in 1818 which later became the Ohio District of the American Lutheran Church."

"Pastor Henkel was a leader of the conservative movement in the Lutheran Church. He fought his theological battles in the Shenandoah Valley against the Rev. Samuel Simon Schmucker, a Princeton Seminary graduate who was considered a liberal Lutheran. The theological debates between Pastors Henkel and Schmucker resulted in the multiplication of Lutheran church in the Shenandoah Valley."

"We can always ask "what if" questions. What if Pastor Henkel had remained in Mason County? What if he had established a seminary as Pastor C.F.W. Walther did twenty-five years later in Perry County, Missouri? What if he had sent pastor-missionaries to communities in the west instead of going himself? … Of course, the answers to these questions are lost forever in the past, but they do make some interesting speculation."

Sermon: Eighth Sunday after Trinity

Vicar Adam Cranford, A.L.L. Board Member, Davidson County Lutheran Mission, Silver Valley, NC

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and **the Lord Jesus Christ.**

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold [*him*] guiltless who takes His name in vain." (Exodus 20:7)

What does this mean?

"We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks."

In my experience, this is definitely in the running for the position of Most Misunderstood Commandment when it comes to the modern church. Strangely enough, most Christians seem to think they've managed to obey if they never use God's name to call damnation down on something or someone. In fact, that law is still on the books regulating what may and may not be said on television, a holdover from a time much more influenced by religion than entertainment. However, this captures only a small sliver of what is covered here in this commandment. What does it mean to "take God's name in vain"? Some modern translations try to clarify things by instead rendering it "You shall not misuse the Lord's name." But even that is using a shotgun instead of aiming for the bullseye.

The problem is that while language influences culture, the reverse is true as well. And our culture has almost completely lost the necessary connotations in any word that's available to us; almost, but not quite. There is still one instance that everyone understands, even if it might be falling a bit out of style, even becoming disreputable in some circles. That is when a new bride takes her husband's name. She doesn't "take" that name just to write it on "Thank You" cards or on the mailbox that they'll share. She takes it to carry with her for the rest of her life; she takes that name as her own, to be called by that name and known by it. This is the same way in which the Bride of Christ takes His name. Just as a wife represents her husband in how she conducts herself, at no time is a member of the Church ever representing only ourselves, because we carry the name of Christ, our Lord and God.

This is what so offended Martin Luther when the Romans attempted insulting the churches of the Reformation by calling them "Lutheran," and even more so when members of those churches started accepting and using the label themselves. He said, "I ask that my name be left silent and people not call themselves Lutheran, but rather Christians. Who is Luther? The doctrine is not mine. I have been crucified for no one. How should I, a poor stinking bag of worms, become so that the children of Christ are named with my unholy name?" Eventually though, it became readily apparent that the name had come to have far less to do with him than with the God he served; in other words, it had become synonymous with "Christian" simply because Lutheran teachings were the words of Christ as found in Scripture, rather than self-justifying traditions.

A strange thing about that though, is that in the modern day, for many people, the Lutheran name has taken on an entirely new meaning. Through abuse of that same Scripture by many who falsely claim that name it has instead become all too often associated with liberalism and departure from both the Law and the Gospel. Here at Holy Trinity you support our work at the Davidson County Lutheran Mission specifically because of the fact that while there are many "Lutheran" churches there nearby us, there is not even one that can be called confessional, or Scriptural. The single, most damning difference between us and them actually comes down to one word. We teach that Scripture **is** God's Word. They teach that Scripture **contains** God's Word. That one little difference gives them license to pick and choose what they will keep, and to add freely to Scripture to suit their own devices and desires. I've seen at least one sermon I can remember where they blatantly skipped over the portions of Scripture they didn't like, and even admitted they were doing so in the process. It's not dissimilar from what our initial complaint with Rome was about 500 years ago. They utterly negate the Law by saying things like "God would never punish you for just being who you are." They hang flags that celebrate flagrant sin in their chancels. Ultimately they leave the Gospel powerless, not because they say it wasn't enough but because they make it as though sin is either nonexistent, or of no consequence, or that it's something we can overcome by our own power through supporting the right social programs. As Jeremiah prophesied against the false prophets of his day, we can certainly say of the false Lutherans:

"They continually say to those who despise Me,
'The LORD has said, "You shall have peace" ';
And [*to*]everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say,
'No evil shall come upon you.'
But if they had stood in My counsel,
And had caused My people to hear My words,
Then they would have turned them from their evil way
And from the evil of their doings." (Jer. 23:17, 22)

The so-called pastors who teach such things are certainly of the kind that we heard Jesus describe today as wolves in sheep's clothing. It's not surprising that their numbers are shrinking. What they're preaching is a message that treats God more like an excuse than the Lord of All. It leaves them with a message of poison and death for the faithful, and for those secure in their sin, well they can sin just as well and just as easily whether or not they've gone through the trouble of getting up early on a Sunday to have their ego stroked. Can you imagine what it's like for the faithful living under that? Would you leave? Where would you go?

There is certainly no shortage of other churches no matter where you are here in the Bible Belt. But there is still a problem. Think of what Paul said today in our reading from Acts, "I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God," and think of what I told you about baptism sermons last week, about the teaching that it has nothing to do with salvation. What do they do with Peter's words to "be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins?" (Acts 2:38) Well, typically, they skip over it. They teach the same of the Eucharist, that is that it has no effect toward salvation, and once again they typically skip over the part where Jesus says it's His blood "shed for the remission of your sins." (Matthew 26:28)

They make both these means by which God bestows His grace as if they have no effect for the sinner, and worse they make them to be as though they were works done by that sinner for God instead of gifts from God.

Baptism is taught as your first act of obedience after becoming a Christian. By ignoring what God says about what baptism is the Gospel is instead turned into another Law. It's something you have to do for God, not something that God does for you. The Eucharist is taught as being an act of worship. They'll also tell you that you better not partake of it if you know of sin in your life, and they will tell you to examine your life closely to make sure you haven't forgotten something and might therefore "partake in an unworthy manner". Think about that; are there any of you who don't have to repent daily? And where do you go for God's assurance? Who needs the grace offered in Communion except for sinners? Once again, the Gospel is turned into Law. And if you try to tell them that God says this is where and how He forgives you, they'll reply that the works of man can't save you. There's no comfort in baptism or communion in these churches; in fact many of them will even actively encourage you to get re-baptized over and over again every time you think you might need to re-demonstrate your faithfulness. "Maybe you've realized you didn't **really** mean it last time but this time you're sure. Were you baptized as a child, an infant even? Better get dunked again! Oh wait, you weren't dunked at all, just sprinkled? To the tub with you, it doesn't work unless you're fully dunked!" "But wait. Work to do what? I thought you said this doesn't save me?" You can see, it's just Law on top of Law to the effect of making you chase your tail trying to please God.

This is why it's so important that we recognize whose name we carry in this world. We do not represent a God who ignores sin and allows all to come as they are without washing them first. We also don't represent a God who makes us work for our salvation and leaves us without tangible points of hope in our journey. When we say we are Lutherans, we don't mean that we're Martin Luther's followers; what

we mean is that like Him we follow the full counsel of God; we don't just pick and choose the portions that make us feel warm and fuzzy or the ones that make sense to our own frail little minds.

As we can see by those who misuse our name, it doesn't help to teach only Gospel, leaving sinners to believe there is no Law, and so, no need for the Gospel in the first place. It also doesn't help to teach only Law, to the point that even the Gospel becomes another Law that we can't fulfill any more than we could the first one. To be a Christian is to be *simul justus et peccator*; we are simultaneously both saint and sinner. We are sinners by our own volition and action; we are saints by God's love and mercy. There is a Law to be fulfilled, but He fulfilled it for us. There is a Gospel to be bestowed, and He gives it to us through His **whole** Word and through His Sacraments. That is the God whom we serve and whose name we bear throughout our days in our vocations. Apart from Him there is no hope, but when adopted into His family, and given His name, you find all the hope that is ever needed. Amen.

Information about the Appalachian Lutheran League can be found at appalachianlutheranleague.org

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