



The Beacon Online

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The Beacon Online is the communication source for the SELC District.

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"Making Sense" of It All

"5th Sunday" Reformation thoughts during pandemics or worse
Rev. Kenneth Ballas, EM

Exactly 504 years ago this weekend, a Roman Catholic monk and university professor of theology named Martin Luther tacked 95 handwritten Latin "theses" to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. His purpose? Not to start a *new* church but hopefully to encourage open discussion on a growing biblically questionable "hot-button issue" of the day that was also a senseless drain on family budgets.

Of particular concern to brother Martin was the fact that *papal indulgences* were being widely peddled not only to help complete the building St. Peter's basilica in Rome but also purportedly to shorten the time "Aunt Minnie" (or someone else) would spend in a mythical place called "purgatory." Luther's daily contact with the written Word of God firmly convinced him that Pope Leo X's trafficking of indulgences flew in the face of the *completed* redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Partly because many elementary school children (like Calvary, Parma, Ohio's beloved perennial third-grader puppet "Gordy" who may not have classes on civil rights leader Martin Luther King's January birthday) easily become confused between these two Christian men with much the same name. The 16th century Dr. Martin Luther is arguably best known for his German translation of the Bible, hymn-writing and introduction of congregational singing and Small Catechism written especially for families with children. Thus the "Martin Luther" we talk about especially at the end of October is important to us mostly because of the supreme importance of our loving and ever-living Brother-Savior Jesus Christ for eternal life.

Dr. Luther's teachings have led generations of believers to realize as lastingly beneficial the central teaching of Scripture, namely, that GOD SAVES US BECAUSE

WE CANNOT SAVE OURSELVES! Without denying the *seriousness* of sin most graphically seen at the cross of the *sinless* incarnate Son of God, for Luther (and St. Paul before him) the *cross of Christ* primarily continues to reveal *the sacrificial love of God* for penitent sinners.

Sent to our troubled planet as the Father's Son in human flesh born of a human mother that holiest of Christmases, our Triune God objectively has made possible the rescue of even the worst of trespassers including one Saul of Tarsus. By the grace of God, our ascended Lord made it a special point to select this notorious former persecutor of Christians to become the great missionary-apostle St. Paul who, this side of heaven, continued to call himself the foremost of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15ff.).

As emphasized by the risen Lord's mercurial apostle Peter, no amount of gold or silver could ever *begin* to atone for what was already paid in full by the *innocently* shed blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19; 2:22). Although Scripture has many ways of expressing Gospel truths, knowing in faith that our merciful and forgiving God has already saved us by the *holy perfect life*, sacrificial death and, yes, resurrection from the dead of our flawlessly pure and righteous Brother-Savior is better news even than discovery of an ultimate cure for every kind of earthly disease, physical or spiritual (see Psalm 103:1-2)! ***Praise to You, O Christ!***

With good reason, we should teach our precious children that the "scary things" about Hallo-ween are not real and that our Savior Jesus is stronger than the sneaky devil. Although most hymn texts have a *context*, whether in the interest of "saving time" or for any other reason, care should be taken never to sing only the opening stanza of "A Mighty Fortress" (also known as Luther's "Battle Hymn of the Reformation") as our sinless Brother-Savior Jesus Christ is not mentioned until stanza 2!

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

(words and music by Martin Luther, 1524)

*A mighty fortress is our God, A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev'ry need, that hath us now o'ertaken.
The old evil foe, Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might Are his dread arms in fight,
On earth is not his equal.*

*With might of ours can naught be done, Soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the valiant One, Whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, Who is this? **JESUS CHRIST** it is,
Of Sabaoth Lord; And there's no other God;
He holds the field forever.*

*Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us;
We tremble not We fear no ill; They shall not overpow'r us.
This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none; He's judged, the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.*

*The Word they still shall yet remain Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain With His good gifts and Spirit.
And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife;
Though these all be gone, Our vict'ry has been won;
The Kingdom ours remaineth.*

(*LSB*, #656)



What your gift for Christmas Seals Can Do... For **75** Years, Your kindness to our Christmas Seal Outreach Makes a Difference!



For 75 years, our Christmas Seal Campaign at Lutheran Haven has served an integral role in supporting the Mission and Ministry of the Haven. Christmas Seals help fund our Benevolent Care Ministry which is so crucial to so many on our campus. It also funds special projects if folks choose to do so.

Lutheran Haven is home to numerous Pastors and Rostered Church Workers who have given their lives in service to the Lord. Our Benevolent Care Ministry simply

gives back to those who have given so much, but now find themselves in financial hardship.

Benevolent Care provides help for folks whose assets become depleted and they need to move to a higher level of care, those who have the ability to meet their monthly fees but may have difficulty with moving to the Haven, and for various emergency needs. Unfortunately, the cost of that care rose dramatically in 2020-21 through many factors outside of our control. It is our hope you will consider helping us in this upcoming 75th Anniversary Celebration by supporting this critical ministry. By doing so, you make a difference in people's lives every, single day!

Before Lutheran Haven opened our doors, Haven Christmas Seals were sent to the SELC churches and distributed through the local Slovak Luther League Societies. The Seals were not sold, but accompanied by an envelope, "for your generous contribution" to support the Ministry of Lutheran Haven. It was your generosity that helped open our doors to so many Pastors and servants of His church, and today it is your gifts that sustain our Mission and Ministry to those who've given so much.

It is our hope you will consider supporting the Haven in this monumental anniversary year!

If you would like Christmas Seal packets mailed to you, please contact me at the information below.

It's hard to escape the irony that when the first Christmas Seal Campaign began in 1946, tuberculosis was gaining a dangerous foothold in the United States. 75 years later, COVID 19 challenges us today, however "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Genesis 18:14. We rejoice and give thanks to Him for His provision through faithful servants like you. To Him be all thanks and praise!

Mary Ann McCunn, Development Associate
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**See next week's issue for a story about a young fundraiser
for the Lutheran Haven's Aquatic Center!**



Welcome to the SELC District

We are happy to welcome Rev. David Triplett and his wife Susan to the SELC District! The Triplett's live in North Ridgeville, OH.



ON GOD'S TIME

"The biggest shift for us, especially on Sundays, is that now we can focus on people and worship."

Rev. Jacob Baumann
Executive Pastor at theCross

VISIT INTERESTTIME.ORG TO READ THE FULL STORY!



Lutheran Church Extension Fund
> where investments build ministry

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Timing is everything - when it's God's timing and not ours, of course. Such was the experience of The Cross Lutheran Church (branded as theCross), a growing SELC District church that was planted in Mount Dora, Fla., in 2010. The church held its first worship service in a rental space in a retail plaza in 2011. Since then, they've managed without a permanent location. Over the years, theCross held office and meeting space across six units in the strip mall, while worship services took place in a high school auditorium. That meant setting up and taking down, week after week.

Read the complete article and see the pictures at Interest Time here:

<https://interesttime.org/on-gods-time-the-cross-lutheran-church/>.



An Update from Rev. Charles St-Onge at Ascension Lutheran Church in Montreal, Canada

In 2019 the mission team at Ascension put together a strategic plan for outreach and evangelism. The vision was simple – be a place of the Good News of Jesus Christ in our community. But how could we find ways to share that Good News with Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus and atheists who had no interest in walking through the doors of a church building? One of the ways Ascension has been doing this for many years is through teaching English as another language. Our deaconess, Emilie Stoller, teaches beginners on Tuesday evenings while a lay volunteer, Ruth Stone, leads an advanced conversational English class online on Thursdays. In just one

week this fall Ascension had students from Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Niger, Japan, Pakistan and Columbia. This is one of the ways we are intentionally showing our care for people in the name of Christ.

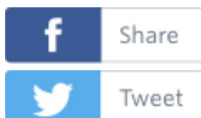
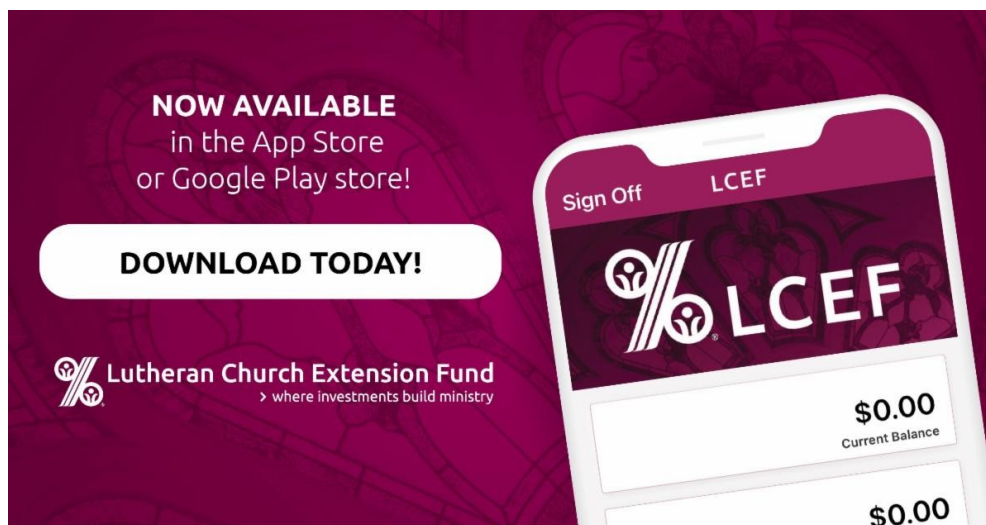
But where Christ is at work, Satan is also busy. The government of Quebec is working to pass a new law, Bill 96, that would make it illegal to teach English to new immigrants to Quebec. Deaconess Emilie and Pastor Charles' wife Deborah would not be allowed to request any services – including medical services – in English. This would, of course, be a violation of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That charter, however, can be bypassed by provinces through use of a "notwithstanding clause" in the constitution. No federal party will risk attacking the law for fear of losing votes in Quebec. All of this is being done in the interests of preserving Quebec's identity and culture from foreign influences. As the Quebec premier wrote this week, "national cohesion is very precious and must be cultivated from childhood. We must pass on to our youth more knowledge about our history, our culture, and the functioning of Quebec society." Left unsaid was the belief that that history cannot be passed on in other languages.

In these challenging times, it is good to remember the Good News that our identity does not rest in our place of birth, our heritage, or even our language (John 1:12-13). It rests in the Word of God, who has made us children of our heavenly Father by the Spirit who has given us faith in His name. We are strangers in every land, yet wherever the Gospel is proclaimed – in whatever tongue – we are also at home. Ascension will continue to be where that Good News is believed, shared and shapes our lives.



The LCEF Mobile App Is Here!

LCEF now has a mobile app! Available exclusively for MyAccount users, LCEF's free mobile app allows you to make transfers, pay bills and stay up to date with your balance—all from the convenience of your phone or tablet. The new mobile app is a great example of LCEF growing and evolving with today's tech-savvy Lutherans. If you are an LCEF MyAccount user, download the free app today from the [Apple Store](#) or [Google Play](#) store.



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