



We are Lutheran...
the **Nebraska Synod ELCA**
Resource Materials for Lent 2018





INTRODUCTION

We are Lutheran

Introduction

Welcome to the We Are Lutheran resource materials for Lent 2018. This resource booklet was put together as part of the Nebraska Synod strategic plan as a way to address the goal: “To increase awareness of and commitment to what it means to live as ELCA Lutheran Christians and the gifts we bring to the world.” This set of materials is intended to facilitate conversations in our congregations around that goal while recognizing the scope of those discussions will be broad and will most likely engage many topics not mentioned in these pages.

Building on the work of the We Are Church group, five themes are offered for the five weeks of Lent. Instead of designing a worship service ready for use, we have tried to provide background resources to aid in the planning of worship services, sermon series, educational activities, or any other ways your congregation might explore the theme. While the hope is that congregations engage this discussion in some way during Lent, the usefulness of these materials (or any others on Lutheranism) should not be relegated to one particular season. Learning from our past, discussing what it means to be Lutheran today, and pondering what a Lutheran voice might sound like in the future are certainly tasks that can happen at any place or time.

As an entry into this discussion we have chosen to focus on the five “solos” (Latin for “alone”) of the reformation: Faith Alone, Word Alone, Grace Alone, Christ Alone, and to the Glory to God Alone. Each statement provides insight into the theological and ethical values of our tradition. The weekly sections contain a brief treatment of past and present implications, along with questions about the future. Short excerpts from Luther’s catechism, scripture connections, and hymn suggestions also accompany each theme. Creative resources, including original skits by Rev. Heather Brown and David Iversen plus artwork by members of the Nebraska Synod staff are included as an appendix. Finally, recognizing Lutheranism’s increasingly ecumenical focus, there is also an appendix containing a discussion guide and ecumenical reading resources.

Here are just a few ways you may choose to engage this resource:

- focus on a hymn written by Luther each week
- use the five themes for a preaching series during Lenten worship
- recruit a drama troupe to bring interesting Reformation characters to life
- invite someone from a neighboring faith or denomination to explore the uniqueness of their particular faith tradition, which in turn often helps us articulate our own
- choose a book from the ecumenical reading list for group discussion
- use the hymn and scripture suggestion each week during Lenten worship
- use the included graphics for bulletins or publicity or consider a whole church coloring project with the five “solos” from Illustrated Children’s Ministry.

goo.gl/SAsDvh

Other resources helpful in exploring “We Are Lutheran”

- Lutheranism 101 - Culture or Confession published in “Living Lutheran” by Kathryn Klienhaus (2007) with a free study guide (What Does It Mean To Be Lutheran) available for congregations. Available online at goo.gl/Cymp6S
- The recorded live-stream of the Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation held March 2, 2017. Available online at goo.gl/ahshnL
- “Together By Grace: Introducing the Lutherans” edited by Kathryn A. Kleinhaus. This is a resource book includes sections on Lutheran basics, Lutheran history and practice, and a wide range of stories from the global Lutheran family. More than thirty contributors—teachers, pastors, bishops, activists, and global Lutherans—have written for this resource. Together by Grace can be read “cover to cover” by individuals, or each section can be used as a session for small or large group studies. A leader guide is also available as a digital download. goo.gl/rPQWD8
- “By Heart: Conversations with Martin Luther’s Small Catechism”. A richly illustrated, in-depth exploration of the Small Catechism. Suitable for group discussion, an adult study or personal enrichment. Connects your life today to the biblical and historical context of the Small Catechism. goo.gl/frpe7K

May the Spirit inspire and guide your conversations.

In Christ, The “We Are Lutheran” working group:

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INTRODUCTION



GRACE ALONE

Grace Alone - Sola Gratia

We believe, teach, and confess that our righteousness before God consists in this, that God forgives us our sins by sheer grace, without any works, merit, or worthiness of our own, in the past, at present, or in the future, that he gives us and reckons to us the righteousness of Christ's obedience and that, because of this righteousness, we are accepted by God into grace and regarded as righteous. Formula of Concord, Epitome, III.2

Past Perspective

God's grace has always been present in the teachings of the church. What is significant about the reformation's take on grace is the word "alone". "A number of late medieval theologians held that while God takes the initiative in bestowing grace, humans contribute also to salvation by virtue of free will even independently of grace" (Hanson, 49). Luther's struggles with this are well documented. He tried many ways to contribute to his own salvation only to end up in despair. Luther's sense of sin may have been more developed than some people but it is true that in the late medieval church the law was a more present reality in people's lives.

"In the form of the Ten Commandments law was used as the basis for hearing confession. Priests interrogated their parishioners by going through the commandments one by one and asking if they had been broken...The Ten commandments were also presented as a way to merit grace. By keeping the Commandments, with the aid of grace, people accumulated merit that qualified them to receive eternal life" (Gassman and Hendrix, 55).

Luther's breakthrough came as he lectured on the book of Romans. In studying Romans 1:17 he realized "that God's righteousness was not a punishing righteousness but a passive righteousness, that is, a gift by which the merciful God justifies sinners by grace and by faith alone" (Gassman and Hendrix, 78). Salvation is entirely the province of God, enacted by the grace of God alone, because humans are bound by sin they cannot be saved according to their own will. Salvation is accepted by humans through faith, that is, trusting God's promise of salvation, even as faith also is a gift from God.

Present Perspective

"There's no such thing as a free lunch." As a people, we are deeply suspicious of things that are "free" and are always looking for the catch to a freely offered gift. So what's the catch with salvation by grace? It sounds too good to be true and even today, discussion of salvation often includes an earnest, well-meaning person asking "have you accepted Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior?" Lutheran theology, rooted firmly in grace alone, can help us think through how to respond to this question and the pervasive attitude that our actions influence how God thinks of us and treats us.

Future Questions

How do we share this counter cultural message of grace alone? How do our words, our rituals and our actions instill graciousness into the lives of those who come after us? What does a focus on grace mean for future ecumenical relationships, whether around the world or within our own communities? In a world where people are suspicious of anything “free”, how is the church called to proclaim the radical notion of grace alone?

Scripture Connections

- Ephesians 2:8-10
- Romans 11:1-6

Hymn Connection

- ELW #600 *Out of the Depths I Cry to You*. Text and Music: Martin Luther. This hymn is a paraphrase of Psalm 130. Luther used it as an example of something people could sing at communion when he was trying to get others to write such hymns (Westermeyer, 439).

Catechism Connection

Among the many references to the necessity and power of grace in Luther’s Large Catechism is this excerpt from the teaching on Holy Communion. When speaking about people who refrain from the sacrament because of their “fitness”, Luther says,

People with such misgivings must learn that it is the highest art to realize that this sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. For we are not baptized because we are pure and without sin; on the contrary, we come as poor, miserable people, precisely because we are unworthy...but those who earnestly desire grace and comfort should compel themselves to go [to receive Holy Communion] and allow no one to deter them ...

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GRACE ALONE



FAITH ALONE

Faith Alone - Sola Fide

We believe, teach, and confess that faith alone is the means and instrument through which we lay hold of Christ and, thus, in Christ lay hold of this “righteousness which avails before God.” Because of him “faith is reckoned to us as righteousness” (Rom. 4[:5]). Formula of Concord, Epitome III. 3

Past Perspective

Faith alone is arguably the defining characteristic of the reformation and the historic denominations of the reformation. In a church structure that claimed the grace of God was accessed through the work of prayer, the purchase of indulgences and other such responsibilities of humanity; the claim that faith is the sole way to participate in the grace of God was a staggering blow to the institution of the church, and a freeing of the individual for relationship with God.

As a student he [Luther] had learned that the righteousness of God was the standard by which God judged and punished sinners. Since that standard was revealed through the law, Luther, like other Christians, tried as hard as possible to obey the law in order to become righteous in God’s sight. If, however, righteousness was revealed in the gospel, as Luther now realized, then he became righteous through faith in Christ, not through the law. (Gassmann, 56).

Faith then became the only way to access the gracious gift of God. In addition, the reformers claimed that faith is a gift from God and therefore placed the entirety of the work of salvation on God.

We believe, teach, and confess that this faith is not a mere knowledge of the stories about Christ. It is instead a gift of God, through which in the Word of the gospel we recognize Christ truly as our redeemer and trust in him, so that solely because of his obedience, by grace, we have the forgiveness of sins, are regarded as godly and righteous by God the father, and have eternal life (Kolb and Wengert, 495).

Present Perspective

So is faith a noun, a verb, or both? Luther is quoted as saying, “The true, living faith, which the Holy Spirit instills into the heart, simply cannot be idle”. I often recall my first experience with a car hoist, a wonderful tool that raises a vehicle high enough for a person to stand underneath. My head knew the hoist was safe but it wasn’t until I actually walked under the vehicle that one might truly say I trusted that hoist. As stated in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification:

According to Lutheran understanding, God justifies sinners in faith alone (sola fide). In faith they place their trust wholly in their Creator and Redeemer and thus live in communion with him. God himself effects faith as he brings forth such trust by his creative word. Because God’s act is a new creation, it affects all dimensions of the person and leads to a life in hope and love.

Future Questions

If faith is a gift from God, what about those people who claim they are without faith? Has God not given them faith? How do is faith nurtured in ourselves and others? And what about God’s faithfulness? How does God as subject of faith, instead of object of faith, enter into our practice of people who live by faith alone? Discussion of faith alone may also be a good time to bring up ecumenical partnerships and differences. Both the “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” and “From Conflict to Communion, Lutheran-Catholic Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017” are excellent documents to spark discussion of where faith in the one gospel may be leading the church.

Scripture Connections

- Hebrews 11
- Romans 1:16-17

Hymn Connection

- ELW #743 *Now to the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray*. Text: Medieval German leise, Stanza 1; Martin Luther, Stanzas 2-4. Music: J. Walter. The first stanza of this hymn dates from the 13th century. Martin Luther felt it was a worthy hymn to keep in the cannon and added three more verses of his own (Westermeyer, 607).

Catechism Connection

In his explanation of the third article of the Creed, Luther asserts in the small catechism that faith is a gift, received through the Holy Spirit working in and through the church. How does this assertion still shape the church five hundred years later?

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins- mine and those of all believers. On the last day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

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FAITH ALONE



WORD ALONE

Word Alone -Sola Scriptura

Therefore, before the conversion of the human being there are only two efficient causes, the Holy Spirit and God's Word as the instrument of the Holy Spirit, through which he effects conversion. Formula of Concord, Epitome II.9

Past Perspectives

At its heart the proclamation of sola scripture, or Word Alone, is a proclamation about authority. In the first five centuries, Christianity was defined by a combination of Scripture and confessions of faith, especially the Apostles' and Nicene creeds. During the Middle Ages, the church in western Europe granted increasing authority to the decrees of the bishop of Rome, the pope. Councils of the church also issued rulings that required obedience and gradually became part of the church's body of law (Gassman and Hendrix, 48). These laws and rulings were given equal authority in determining the faith alongside scripture, the creeds and the teachings of early theologians. However, these sources often came into conflict, raising the need for a way to resolve the differences of opinion between the sources.

Luther and the reformers solved this conflict by elevating the Word of God as the highest authority in matters of faith. When conflicts or a new problem arose it was scripture that the reformers looked to for clarity and answers. While some argued that since the church determined the canon of scripture the church had authority over the Bible, the reformers were able to refute this argument by defining the Word of God as first and foremost Jesus,

God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Word who was made flesh and dwelt among us...Given this biblical understanding of the Word of God, what makes the Bible the word of God is not that it is infallible, nor that it can serve as a source of authority for theological and religious debate. The Bible is the Word of God because in it Jesus, the Word incarnate, comes to us (Gonzalez, 30).

Present Perspectives

Authority is still at the heart of many discussions about the Word of God, usually as it relates to scripture. A large segment of American Christianity uses the phrase "bible believing church" to claim the authority to use scripture as a selective "rule book" in order to enforce a particular moral or theological agenda. Lutherans have a different approach, acknowledging that each person brings a particular bias to the interpretive task and that the texts themselves arise out of a particular historical, social and cultural setting. Yet through these ancient words, we believe the Holy Spirit continues to stir up faith and speaks to a contemporary world through both the demands of the law and the grace of the gospel. The Word of God often challenges us to wrestle with difficult topics that do not always find consensus. In the ELCA, our experiences with drafting, discussing, and approving various social statements have born this truth out. In a time when historic sources of authority are being called into question, what authorities do we look to for answers about questions of faith? Is it the

Bible? Prayer? The church? Facebook? Personal experience? Where do we turn in times of conflict for answers?

Future Questions

Given that the books in the Bible were written in a particular time and place for a particular people, how do we use it as a source of authority for questions that it doesn't directly address? In what ways does the Word of God as embodied in Christ, proclaimed from the pulpit, and read from the bible, shape conversation about future issues? Consider exploring one of the ELCA's Social Statements as an example of how to address a question such as, "Does the Bible say anything about how I interact on social media?"

Scripture Connections

- John 1:1-14
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Hymn Connection

- ELW #509 *God's Word Is Our Great Heritage*. Text: Nikolai F.S. Grundtvig. Music: Martin Luther. Grundtvig wrote a Danish version of A Mighty Fortress and included a fifth original stanza which has become the text for this hymn (Westermeyer, 341).
- ELW #517 *Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word*. Text: Martin Luther. Music: J. Klug

Catechism Connection

Below is an excerpt from Martin Luther's Large Catechism, on the First Commandment. The content may be helpful as a meditation during worship, as a newsletter article, as a starting point for adult forum discussion, or in other contexts. The words of this commandment remind us that God alone is the source of the Word that gives life.

The intention of this commandment, therefore, is to require true faith and confidence of the heart which fly straight to the one true God, and cling to him alone. What this means is this: "See to it that you let me alone be your God, and never search for another....Whatever good thing you lack, look to me for it and seek it from me, and whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, crawl to me and cling to me. I, I myself, will give you what you need and help you out of every danger."

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WORD ALONE



CHRIST ALONE

Christ Alone - Sola Christus

Our churches unanimously confess on the basis of God's Word and in accord with the content of the Augsburg Confession that we poor sinners become righteous before God and are saved only through faith in Christ, and that therefore Christ alone is our righteousness. Formula of Concord, Epitome III.1

Past perspectives

The confession of Christ responsible for salvation is at the heart of the Christian faith.

Salvation in the New Testament is not some vague feeling of fulfillment, not the filling of every kind of need, not a reward for heroic effort nor the realization of one's human potential. Salvation in the New Testament is what God has done to death in the resurrection of Jesus. Salvation is what God has in store for you and me and the whole world in spite of death, solely on account of the living, risen Christ (Braaten, 113).

While there are many theories about how this works (atonement), they all fall short in some way in their attempt to explain just how Jesus' death results in salvation. In the end the reasoning and function of how Jesus saves through the cross is a mystery, but the promise is clear and made certain by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. The love of God, revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is at the very center of the good news we proclaim as Christians. Therefore, everything must go back to Christ and Christ alone.

Present perspectives

We live in a religiously plural society. When we begin to talk about what it means to be Lutheran or even Christian many of our congregation members will probably wonder: What does it mean to confess Christ alone while living with Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu etc. neighbors and engaging in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue? This seems to contradict the exclusive claim of Christ alone, even when the various loopholes that have been created are taken into account. On the other hand, it also seems to be a betrayal of the good news of Christ (as well as the biblical witness) to declare that Jesus is but one path to God and that all will be saved, therefore making it impossible to confess Christ alone.

In his discussion of this issue Braaten, notes that there is a universalist message within the exclusive claim of Jesus the savior of the world; "Because Jesus is the unique and universal Savior, there is a large hope for salvation, not only for me and others with the proper credentials of believing and belonging to the church, but for all people whenever or wherever they might have lived and however pious they may have proved themselves to be" (Braaten, 112). The key in this approach is hope, we do not know for certain how salvation will work out but given the universal language used in the New Testament of Jesus as the Lord and Savior, we have good reason to hope in God's mercy for all people, a hope that comes from confessing Christ alone.

Future questions

As technology advances it becomes more and more tempting to think that we can save ourselves. How do we keep Christ at the center and explain to others that Christ alone is our salvation?

Scripture Connections

- John 14:1-6
- Acts 10:34-43

Hymn Connection

- ELW #411 *We All Believe in One True God*. Text: Martin Luther music: Latin Credo c. 1300. This is Martin Luther's chorale version of the Nicene Creed (Westermeyer, 230).
- ELW #746 *Our Father, God in Heaven Above*. Text: Martin Luther music: V. Schumann. "This hymn is an abridged version of Martin Luther's (#263) versification of the Lord's Prayer, pressed from nine stanzas into four" (Westermeyer, 609).

Catechism Connection

Below is an excerpt from Martin Luther's Large Catechism on the Lord's Prayer, the prayer taught to the disciples by Christ. The content may be helpful as a meditation during worship, as a newsletter article, as a starting point for adult forum discussion, or in other contexts.

In the second place, what ought to impel and arouse us to pray all the more is the fact that God has made and affirmed a promise: that what we pray is a certain and sure thing. As he says in Ps. 50:15: Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you. And Christ says in the Gospel in Matthew 7:7: Ask, and it shall be given you. For every one that asks receives. Such promises certainly ought to awaken and kindle in our hearts a longing and a love for prayer.

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CHRIST ALONE



GLORY TO GOD ALONE

Glory to God Alone - Soli Deo Gloria

If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true one. Conversely, where your trust is false and wrong, there you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God. The intention of this commandment [the first], therefore, is to require true faith and confidence of the heart, which fly straight to the one true God and cling to him alone. What this means is: "See to it that you let me alone be your God, and never search for another." Large Catechism, "The First Commandment"

Past perspectives

Usually listed at the end of the five "sola", Soli Deo Gloria draws a circle of purpose around all that comes before. Grace, Faith, Word, Christ; all are encompassed within the ultimacy of the God who is love. In his commentary on Transfiguration Sunday, Edwin Searcy notes,

*Given all the fire and brightness and dazzling clothes in these texts, God's glory apparently has to do with transcendent luminosity. Our culture often equates glory with fame, and with glory in winners of all kinds. But in Hebrew "glory" (**kabod**) means "weight" or "heaviness." God's glory is God's **gravitas**. To be in God's presence is to experience the massiveness, the immensity of God.*

The *immensity* of God grace, the *massive* faithfulness of God, the *weight* of sin Christ bore for the world, the *heavy* solidity of the Word's promise; all these reveal the glory of God. All speak the unimaginable "breadth and length and height and depth" of God's love, of God's glory.

"Soli Deo Gloria" reminds us that only God, the One who gives and sustains life, is deserving of worship and praise. Yet the phrase also urges us to consider that the *baptized life* is one lived completely for the glory of God. It is a call to a vocation of service in the kingdom that is now among us in hidden and unexpected ways.

In the not too distant past, a man lived *Soli Deo Gloria* in such a profound and practical way that 250 years later, people still feel the movement of the Spirit in his music. Johann Sebastian Bach was called the "fifth evangelist" by Dr. Albert Schweitzer and as a Lutheran musician, left a literal "mark" on his compositions to show the higher purpose of his work: SDG "Soli Deo Gloria". In commenting on his remarkable legacy, Robin High, MA MM, principal organist of Saint Michael Lutheran Church in Omaha notes:

"From my perspective, the most interesting composition where SDG seems to have its biggest and perhaps the only reason for its existence today is the 'B Minor Mass', a composition Bach assembled late in his life with no known reason for composing it other than for 'the glory of God'. There is a lot of information written about the history of the Mass, but to a large extent it is a compilation of what Bach considered among his best and most important compositions with ephemeral German texts rewritten with the timeless Latin words of the Mass and with music covering most of his career which he

transformed into one of the truly great monuments of western civilization and then initialed SDG.”

And it wasn't only on "sacred" church music that we find SDG initialed, but on many other "secular" works as well. Drawing from the well of Lutheran understandings of vocation, Bach saw all of his works as glorifying God and "edifying the human spirit".

Present perspectives

Music continues today in the spirit of Bach to give glory to God. "SDG Music Foundation" was founded in 1993 *"to enhance, promote and preserve classical sacred music in the biblical tradition at the highest level"*. Music of all varieties and styles continues to be sung and played by congregations around the world with the same purpose of Bach, to give glory to God. The "Gloria" angels sang in the sky outside of Bethlehem, continues in liturgical worship today. The Reformation spawned a flurry of musical expression including several hymns by Luther himself. That tradition continues through the work of other inspired musicians including Nebraska native Rev. Herb Brokering who penned "Earth and All Stars" and "Christ Is Alive! Jesus is Risen!".

Music expresses "glory to God alone" in a powerful voice yet the whole story of a person's life can also declare God's glory. David Mayen was a young boy living with his family in South Sudan. Then without any warning an eight year old could discern, the life he knew ended. Violence forced him away from his family. He hid in the jungle and ate what he could find. He fled on foot to several different countries over the course of many years and eventually came to the United States as a refugee. Now he has his own family, a bachelor's degree and is a candidate in the Nebraska Synod for ordained ministry. Yet he says, it was in the jungle trying to make sense of the loss had experienced that he realized that nothing is really his own. All of us are "renters" of what we have. God is the ultimate giver and to God alone belongs the glory. In that truth he found strength and courage that would help him overcome extreme hardship and eventually lead him into a life of ministry where he continues glorifying God in all he does.

Future questions

David is called into the great unfolding of God's mission in the world, but so are all of us. In our daily life, whatever our vocation, we live out our baptismal identity as children of God who live, not for ourselves, but for the glory of God. What does that mean for you? For your congregation? For the church that is always being re-formed by the good news of the gospel?

Hymn Connection

- ELW #440 *In Peace and Joy I Now Depart*. Text: Martin Luther, based on the Nunc dimittis. Music: Martin Luther
- ELW #499 *O Lord, We Praise You*. Text: German hymn, 15th cent., Stanza 1; Martin Luther, Stanzas 2-3. Music: J. Walter. This hymn actually predates the Reformation and was sung as a post-communion hymn at the mass and in the Corpus Christi procession. While he agreed with the theology of the first stanza as indicating communion under both kinds he was less enthusiastic about the other stanzas so he wrote two of his own so that this popular hymn could continue being used in worship (Westermeyer, 329).



GLORY TO GOD ALONE



GLORY TO GOD ALONE

Catechism Connection

Below is an excerpt from Martin Luther's Large Catechism, on Holy Baptism. The content may be helpful as a meditation during worship, as a newsletter article, as a starting point for adult forum discussion, or in other contexts.

In baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and practice all his or her life. Christians always have enough to do to believe firmly what baptism promises and brings-victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts.

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Appendix A - Lenten Dramas

The following pulpit dramas were written by Pastor Heather Brown and her husband, David Iversen, and used at Christ Lutheran Church, Pickrell NE as a Lenten series in 2017. These dramas were presented in a "Reader's Theater" format during mid-week Lenten worship services on Wednesday evenings. They represent imagined conversations between historic figures from the Reformation and highlight different parts of Luther's Small Catechism. The sixth drama was used on Maundy Thursday.

DRAMA ONE: The Ten Commandments

MARTIN LUTHER: So, you want to know something about The Ten Commandments, do you? Well, let me think about where to begin....

You already know about me, don't you? I was an Augustinian Monk who created quite a stir. In fact, I made the Pope in Rome really, really angry! I was even excommunicated. I was supposed to be killed! How dare I argue against the practice of selling indulgences to the poor peasants! In 1517, I posted 95 Theses on the Cathedral Door at Wittenburg. I wanted to start a debate about this false practice. The Pope called for my execution when I wouldn't back down. But God protected me. That's why I can stand here today and tell you my story.

JOHANN TETZEL: (*enters from side door*) Martin Luther! Martin Luther! Just who do think you are? I've heard about you! I tried to sell indulgences to some peasants, and they refused! They told me that Dr. Martin Luther said there was no need to buy indulgences. That they could go directly to God and ask for forgiveness of their sins! Where did you get such an idea? How dare you disobey the order of the Pope in Rome!

LUTHER: Well, if it isn't Johann Tetzel! Do you really think people can buy God's forgiveness with money? I used to believe that myself until I started teaching theology students at the University. For the first time, I began studying the Bible. Allow me to ask, have you ever read the Bible before?

TETZEL: Why is there a need to do so? The Pope knows that we are all under God's judgment for every single sin we commit on this earth! The peasants must first go to their parish priest and confess their sin. But that's not enough! It takes more than that to earn God's favor. They must purchase indulgences (*lifts one up as an example*) for themselves AND their loved ones who have already died. No one wants to end up burning in hell-fire.

LUTHER: You've got it all wrong, Tetzel. Indeed, human beings are sinful and unclean. But if you read God's Word, you will discover that he loves human sinners, and wants them to repent and return to him. In Matthew Chapter 4, Jesus says, "Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven has come near." He doesn't say, "Repent and buy indulgences to earn God's favor." You can't buy God's forgiveness.

TETZEL: That's blasphemy! Human beings sin everyday! How can God possibly forgive them if they confess their sins directly to him? God requires more!

LUTHER: Johann Tetzel, you have shown-up today at the right time. These good people (*points to the congregation*) want to know something about The Ten Commandments. So I was going to tell them why The Ten Commandments are part of my Small Catechism. Tetzel, do you know what The Ten Commandments are?

TETZEL: Of course I've heard of the Ten Commandments!

LUTHER: But can you tell me what they are?

TETZEL: I shouldn't have to!

LUTHER: Okay, Tetzl. Let's talk about The Ten Commandments. Each and every Christian should study them and truly understand their meaning. God gave Moses The Ten Commandments as a guide for the people of Israel. When the Israelites were set free from bondage in Egypt, they needed a law to live by. So God made a covenant with them. He said, "I will be your God, and you will be my people. Take the First Commandment, for example. It says, 'You shall have no other Gods before me.'"

TETZEL: Wait! Then where does that leave the Pope? And what about the Holy Roman Emperor?

LUTHER: Don't you understand, Tetzl? You ask me, what does this mean? It means that we are to fear, love and trust God above all things! Above anything else! That's part of the FIRST TABLE OF THE LAW!

TETZEL: What in the world is the FIRST TABLE OF THE LAW?

LUTHER: That's what we call the first three commandments. Those are the commandments that are about how Christians are to relate to God. Then there's the SECOND TABLE OF THE LAW.

TETZEL: Crazy Luther! What are you talking about?

LUTHER: The SECOND TABLE OF THE LAW includes commandments four through ten. Those commandments are about how we are to relate to other people. For example, the Eighth Commandment says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."

TETZEL: And what does this mean, Mr. Know-it-All?

LUTHER: It means that we are to fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander, or lie about our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain his actions in the kindest way. Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

TETZEL: You can't be right!

LUTHER: Tetzl, God wants you to read the Bible for yourself. God wants Christians to understand why he sent Jesus, his only Son, to die for the sins of the world.

TETZEL: That's outrageous! I've had enough of this! (*storms out*)

LUTHER: Well, that's all for tonight, folks. Our time has run short. You're going to have to come back next week to hear about The Small Catechism. There's so much to tell you. We may even hear something more from good old "Johnny T". And don't forget: THIS IS MOST CERTAINLY TRUE! (*Luther looks at the audience and winks twice*)

DRAMA TWO: The Apostle's Creed

POPE LEO: Good evening! Allow me to introduce myself. I am Pope Leo, the Holy Father of the Roman Catholic Church. And I am the one who has to figure out how to put down Martin Luther's heresy. Wait a minute. Who is that? (*Tetzel enters*)

JOHANN TETZEL: Greetings, Your Excellency. I am Johann Tetzel, your loyal subject. I have just returned from trying to sell indulgences in the German territories.

POPE LEO: Wonderful! And how much money have you raised for me, er, uh, I mean, the Holy Roman Empire?

TETZEL: (*Looking ashamed*) I am sorry to report that much of my efforts with the German peasants were fruitless.

POPE LEO: What happened? Don't the villagers want to be saved from their sin? Don't they want to avoid the fires of purgatory, and rescue their loved ones, too? Tetzel, you are a failure!

TETZEL: Your Highness, it's not my fault! You know as well as I do what Martin Luther has been up to! He's been studying the Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek and translating them into the German language. He claims that the Bible says nothing about the people's need to buy indulgences.

POPE LEO: The Roman Catholic Church has a long-standing tradition of requiring human sinners to purchase God's forgiveness.

TETZEL: But Your Excellency, Martin Luther thinks that people should read the Bible for themselves. He keeps quoting Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is a gift of God."

POPE LEO: A gift? A gift? Well if that's the case, faith is an expensive gift!

TETZEL: That's not all, Your Highness. Luther also says that Christians should be taught The Ten Commandments, The Apostle's Creed and The Lord's Prayer -- in their own language. He says that knowing these things will help Christians grow in faith and understand how much God loves them.

POPE LEO: If the German peasants learn these things in their own language, they will misuse such knowledge! They can't possibly read the Bible for themselves and truly understand it.

TETZEL: Luther has even written a little book, The Small Catechism, so that every father can teach his children about the Christian faith right in their very own home.

POPE LEO: In their own home? In their own home? How can German fathers be trusted to teach their children Christianity?

TETZEL: You should see what Luther has written about The Apostle's Creed. He claims that the Creed has three parts, or 'articles', that describe how God relates to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

POPE LEO: The Apostle's Creed is a sacred part of our Catholic tradition and cannot be rightly understood by the common people. The Creed must be preserved and protected by the Roman Catholic Church!

TETZEL: Take the Second Article for example, about Jesus Christ. Luther's followers are being taught that Jesus came to save human sinners. In Luther's Small Catechism, the Germans are reading words like these: "He has purchased and freed me 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."

POPE LEO: Nonsense! I am the Bishop of Rome. Everyone knows that I hold the keys to God's kingdom.

TETZEL: And not only that, Your Highness. There's more! Luther has written about the Third Article, on the Holy Spirit. Listen to this: "Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins – mine and those of all believers."

POPE LEO: What? Martin Luther is a subversive and he must be stopped! We've heard this kind of heresy before in the Holy Roman Empire, haven't we? Remember John Hus? 100 years ago he was sentenced to death and executed.

TETZEL: Be careful! Remember that Martin Luther has Prince Frederick on his side. If Luther is executed as a heretic, you may anger the German nobility. And then, who knows what might happen.

POPE LEO: Luther's teaching is like a disease that's spreading in the very heart of our holy church. It must be purged!

TETZEL: Be very careful, Your Excellency....

POPE LEO: Away with you, Tetz! (*Tetz exits fearfully.*) Martin Luther is the one who needs to be careful (*wrings his hands*).

DRAMA THREE: The Lord's Prayer

(Martin is sitting at a desk piled with books, busy with his studies and writing, as Katie speaks from nearby).

KATIE LUTHER: Good evening, everyone! I am here tonight because my husband, Martin, is preoccupied! Right now he is busy studying the Bible—the Book of Romans, I think. Martin is ALWAYS busy these days. When he's not studying, he's teaching. Always teaching! When he's not teaching his students, he's teaching our children.

In fact, Martin has put together a little book called *The Small Catechism*. It's a book about the things he believes every Christian should study and take into their hearts. The three main parts of *The Small Catechism* are about The Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer and The Apostle's Creed. Martin wrote *The Small Catechism* so that every father could teach his children about the Christian faith. And teach them at home.

MARTIN LUTHER: Katie, please allow me to interrupt. These people need to know something more about why I wrote *The Small Catechism*. Some time ago I visited the Catholic parishes in our region, and I was shocked! I met very few people who could recite the Ten Commandments, The Lord's Prayer, and The Apostle's Creed. Those who could had learned it all in Latin and they didn't understand what any of it meant. Many of the priests themselves did not comprehend these spiritual truths as gifts from God. I believe that God wants us to study them and treasure them. Christians should not only memorize these things, but we should all learn them by heart. There is a difference! *(He turns back to his studying)*

KATIE: The Lord's Prayer was especially important in our home. Martin himself was always praying. He spent 3 & 1/2 hours a day in prayer. He prayed through The Ten Commandments, The Apostle's Creed and The Lord's Prayer every single day. When he was especially busy, he felt he needed to spend even more time in prayer. He said it helped him let go of the worries of the day.

Martin felt that the Introduction to The Lord's Prayer gave him great comfort. "Our Father who art in heaven." In *The Small Catechism*, he wrote, "With these words God wants to attract us, so we come to believe he is truly our father and we are truly his children." Jesus knew how much our Heavenly Father loves us. And Martin wanted us all to find rest in that love.

MARTIN: *(Jumps up)* And then there's the Fourth Petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." I explained this petition by saying, "We ask in this prayer that God cause us to recognize what our daily bread is and to receive it with thanksgiving." We shouldn't take God's gracious love for granted. We are all so blessed. And remember, "This is most certainly true!" *(Luther looks at the audience and winks twice)*

KATIE: That's enough for now about prayer in our time. What is it like for you to pray nowadays? The Scripture tells us that "the grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of the Lord stands forever." Do people still pray in order to let go of the worries of the day? Do people still treasure The Lord's Prayer like Martin hoped they would? I wonder.....

DRAMA FOUR: Holy Baptism

MARTIN LUTHER: Good evening, everyone. This has been a most interesting Lenten series on The Small Catechism, hasn't it? There's been so much to share with you. Sometimes I haven't known where to begin. Of course, you know by now that my Small Catechism includes sections on The Ten Commandments, The Apostle's Creed, and The Lord's Prayer. And that I originally hoped that fathers would use The Small Catechism to instruct their children in the Christian faith at home.

GOD: Martin Luther! Martin Luther!

LUTHER: I hear a voice from heaven! Could it be the voice of God?

GOD: Yes, Martin, it's me. I am your Heavenly Father. I have been watching your activities there on earth. And it's clear to me that you are making a difference in the lives of my people.

LUTHER: I've been trying, Father. I've been working really hard, day after day. And I've made some people pretty angry along the way.

GOD: After what I have seen, Martin, all I can say to you is this: "Well done good and faithful servant." You have put your very life at risk for the sake of the Gospel. You have helped Christians know how to be certain of their salvation. You have let people know that forgiveness is not something that can be purchased. That salvation is a gift that comes through faith alone.

LUTHER: Thank you, Heavenly Father. I couldn't have done any of this without the Holy Spirit giving me strength. And now, I am telling these people here about The Small Catechism I wrote, and why it's so important.

GOD: You need to tell them that the next part of your Small Catechism is especially important, because you talk about The Sacraments. You studied the Bible and discovered that you could only find two sacraments that were named in the New Testament: Baptism and Holy Communion.

LUTHER: That's true, God! And I wanted people to have a clearer understanding of what a sacrament is. Nowadays the Lutheran Church teaches people that ***a sacrament is a gift of God's grace, commanded by Christ, with a physical element attached.***¹

GOD: Exactly! Let's talk about Holy Baptism, the sacrament where people become part of the Body of Christ. You say that a sacrament is a gift of God's grace, commanded by Christ, with a physical element attached. So Martin, how is baptism a gift of God's grace?

LUTHER: It's a gift of God's grace because of the promises that God makes to the person being baptized, that God will forgive their sin, that they are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. And most of all, that God will love them unconditionally, even when they don't deserve it!

GOD: Wonderful! So, where exactly is baptism commanded by Christ?

LUTHER: The best example of Christ's command about baptism is in his final words to his disciples in Matthew Chapter 28 – "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."

GOD: Very good, Martin. Now, what is the physical element attached to baptism?

¹Note: Credit here is given to Rev. Rich Melheim, Faith Inkubators and the "Head to the Heart" confirmation curriculum for defining a sacrament as "a gift of God's grace, commanded by Christ, with a physical element attached." (<http://www.faithink.com>)

LUTHER: The physical element is something used in baptism that comes from the earth. Here, we are talking about the water. Heavenly Father, you use a common, ordinary thing like water, but it becomes extraordinary because it is connected to your Word. The water becomes a visible way that you show love and grace to your children.

GOD: That's exactly right, Martin! And didn't you write a special prayer that shows how I have used water throughout Scripture to love, bless and save my people?

LUTHER: Indeed! Nowadays it's known as "Luther's Flood Prayer" and it is said by the pastor every time someone is baptized. It tells how the baptized person becomes part of the relationship God has had with his people throughout time -- going all the way back to Creation of the world.

GOD: Why don't you share that prayer with us right now, Martin?

LUTHER: Okay, here it is. "We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning your Spirit moved over the waters and by your Word you created the world, calling forth life in which you took delight. Through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family, and through the sea you led your people Israel from slavery into freedom. At the river your Son was baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit. By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection you set us free from the power of sin and death and raise us up to live in you." *(Slides that illustrate the image in each sentence may be projected on a screen as Luther says this prayer).*

GOD: That sure tells the story of how I've used water throughout Scripture. And it goes all the way back to Creation.

LUTHER: Yes it does. And now for the ending of my "Flood" prayer. "Pour out your Holy Spirit, the power of your living Word, that those who are washed in the waters of baptism may be given new life. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen."

GOD: Amen and Amen!

LUTHER: I've talked long enough about The Sacrament of Holy Baptism as it is in my lifetime. What is it like in the present day? Do people still think it's important to be baptized? Do they still see it as a gift of God where God makes special promises to his children? And that through water and the Word, they become a part of God's great story? I wonder.....

DRAMA FIVE: Holy Communion

GOD: Hans Luther! Hans Luther! (*Hans enters*)

HANS LUTHER: Who is calling my name? I don't see anyone!

GOD: It is me, your Heavenly Father.

HANS: Is that you, God?

GOD: Yes, Hans. It's me, the Most High God. I have known you all your earthly life, ever since your parents, Katie and Martin, brought you to the baptismal font when you were just a babe. They promised to raise you in the Christian faith. And they did a good job!

HANS: Thank you, God. Why have you called me?

GOD: I have called you here because I need your help.

HANS: What can I do?

GOD: I want to make sure that everyone has been paying attention to what we've been trying to teach them about your father's work.

HANS: Okay.

GOD: Tell us about your father, Hans.

HANS: My father was an Augustinian monk who had taken vows when he entered the monastery. But as he began studying the Bible, everything changed for him.

GOD: Why?

HANS: He felt that the people deserved and needed to know what the Holy Scriptures were actually saying. He felt that they needed to know how much God loved them, that God was a loving and caring Father who is with us every day -- not an angry and distant God who is far away. He wanted the people to know that you, God, "so loved the world" that you "gave your only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

GOD: How did he do this?

HANS: My father protested against the selling of indulgences by posting his 95 Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg in 1517, which started the whole Reformation. He ended up having to go into hiding to save his life. It was at that time that he decided that he needed to translate the Bible into German so that the people could read the Scriptures for themselves.

GOD: How did your parents meet?

HANS: My Mother, Katie, was a Catholic nun who became interested in my father's teachings and ran away from her convent in 1523. She went to Wittenberg, where she ended up marrying my father two years later.

GOD: Last week, the people gathered here were reminded about the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and how and why it is considered a sacrament. I have called you here tonight, Hans, to share the meaning behind the Sacrament of Holy Communion. They have been learning about your father's Small Catechism during this Lenten Season. I want you to help them understand his thinking. Do you remember what your father taught you?

HANS: Yes, God. I remember that my father taught that a sacrament is a gift of God’s grace, commanded by Christ, with a physical element attached.²

GOD: And how is the Sacrament of Holy Communion a gift of my grace?

HANS: It is a gift of your grace because through The Lord’s Supper, we receive forgiveness of sin. My Father wrote in his Small Catechism that “where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation.”

GOD: And where are we told that Holy Communion is commanded by Christ?

HANS: The Bible tells us that on the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying: “Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.” And he said the same thing about the wine, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

GOD: And what visible, physical element is attached to the Sacrament of Holy Communion?

HANS: It is the wine and the bread.

GOD: Exactly! Why was this so important to your father that he risked his life for it?

HANS: My Father wanted the people more fully comprehend what happens during The Lord’s Supper. In 1517 there was so much misunderstanding about the bread and the wine. Some people would actually keep the bread in their mouths after they received it at the communion rail. When they left the communion rail, they would take it out of their mouths and keep it with them throughout the week. My father helped clear up all this confusion by explaining that Jesus intended for us to eat the bread and drink the wine. They are his body and blood and are meant to be consumed, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, his body and blood would enter into our bodies as well.

GOD: Excellent! One more question for you, Hans. Why did your father write his Small Catechism in the way that he did?

HANS: I was only 3 years old when my father wrote The Small Catechism. I would often point to things around our home and say, “Was ist das? Was ist das?” In English one would say, “What is that?” Or, “What does this mean?” My father decided to use these very same words in The Small Catechism because he wanted to make it as simple as possible for the people to learn, remember, and understand. That’s why the question “What does this mean?” appears after each explanation.³

GOD: And what other familiar phrase did your father include?

HANS: “This is most certainly true!”

GOD: AMEN! Thank you for your help, Hans!

*Note: Credit is given to Rev. Rich Melheim, Faith Inkubators and the “Head to the Heart” confirmation curriculum for defining a sacrament as “a gift of God’s grace, commanded by Christ, with a physical element attached.” (<http://www.faithink.com>)

³Note: See Timothy Wengert’s Luther’s Small Catechism: 500 Years of Reformation-Study Edition (Augsburg Fortress, 2016), p. 9

DRAMA SIX: Voices of the Reformation

HANS: You're welcome!

(A large cross is displayed in front of the congregation. After the characters finish their concluding remarks, they place a picture on the cross before they exit).

Martin Luther: I am Martin Luther. I was inspired by the Holy Spirit to reform the existing church. I tried to live a true and honestly spiritual life. I tried to understand God's will for me and my people by reading and translating scripture. I tried to help Christians know how to be certain of their salvation. I fiercely protested against the sale of indulgences and the corruption I experienced within the Roman Catholic Church. I let the people know that forgiveness is not something that can be purchased. Instead, I tried to show them that salvation is a gift of God which comes through faith alone.

(Martin Luther places a picture of the Bible on the cross).

Johann Tetzel: Martin Luther was a rebellious and stubborn monk. He spent too much time studying things like The Ten Commandments and talking about God's grace and forgiveness of sin. Instead, he should have encouraged people to pay allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church and to the Holy Father. Pope Leo was the divinely ordained intercessor between God and the people. Martin Luther did nothing to help the church in a time of financial need.

(Johann Tetzel places a picture of the Ten Commandments on the cross).

Pope Leo: How could Martin Luther have discouraged the people from buying indulgences? He told them that indulgences were not necessary to save themselves and their loved ones from eternal damnation. He quoted the Bible and said that people were saved "by God's grace through faith." He believed that the people should be taught The Apostle's Creed in their own language. He claimed that by doing so the people would grow in their faith and understanding of how much God loves them. He encouraged people to read the Bible for themselves, and so he translated the Bible into the German language. He undermined the authority of the Roman Catholic Church and our need to raise revenue. When I confronted him, he refused to recant. I had no choice but to excommunicate him. May God have mercy on his soul.

(Pope Leo places a symbol of the Holy Trinity/ Triune God on the cross).

Katie Luther: My Martin worked very hard to try and understand the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures, and especially the Lord's Prayer. He tried to live a godly life. He tried to live his life as authentically as possible as a follower of Christ. He believed that the people needed to know for themselves what God was trying to tell them through the Holy Scriptures. So he spent countless hours studying the Bible and translating it, and preaching and writing about the Word of God.

(Katie Luther places a picture of praying hands on the cross).

Hans Luther: My father believed that The Sacraments of Holy Communion and Holy Baptism were extremely important. He said that it is through the visible elements of water, bread and wine that God shows his love and grace to his children. Indeed, my father taught that The Sacraments are a gift of God's grace, commanded by Christ with a physical element attached.⁴

(Hans Luther places a picture of bread, wine & water on the cross).

⁴Note: Credit is given to Rev. Rich Melheim, Faith Inkubators and the "Head to the Heart" confirmation curriculum for defining a sacrament as "a gift of God's grace, commanded by Christ, with a physical element attached." (<http://www.faithink.com>)

Jesus: “I am the bread of life. I have come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly. Whoever believes in me, though he should lose his life, yet shall he live. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever believes in me lives in me, and I in them. Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age. You are my beloved children, in whom I am well pleased.”

(Stands in front of cross with arms outstretched, then turns and exits).

THE END

Appendix B

“We Are Lutheran” Ecumenical Supplement

Although we are commemorating our 500th year of tradition, there are still plenty of other Christians who live and believe differently about the Five “Solas.” This brief addendum adds some ecumenical flavor to many of the issues that are important to the Lutheran tradition. These suggestions only tease at the breadth of the Christian tradition, but all of them offer significant ways to understand the grace of God, faith in Jesus Christ, the power of the Word, and the work of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God. Here’s some ways you may use this material:

1. A Group study. Some of the materials are suited for congregational study, and perhaps a small group of congregants would wish to read something to go alongside our Lutheran tradition?
2. Personal study. If you have not read a classic of theology recently, perhaps this is a time to remember how and why others express their faith?
3. A Dialogue partner. Use one of these resources to help deepen the congregation’s understanding and living of the Lutheran tradition, by studying how someone else seeks to express their understanding of God, Jesus Christ, the Word, Grace, and Faith?

Sola Gratia

Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology, Rosemary Radford Ruether, (Beacon Press: Boston, MA, 1983)
Burning Center, Porous Borders, Eleazar S. Fernandez, (Wipf & Stock: Eugene, Oregon, 2011)

Sola Fides

The Phoenix Affirmations, Eric E. Elnes, (Josey-Bass: San Francisco, CA, 2006)
The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything, James Martin, SJ, (HarperOne: New York, NY, 2010)

Sola Scriptura

The Gospel According to Maria, Mayra Fernandez, (Twenty-Third Publications: Mystic, CT, 1995)
Short Stories by Jesus, Amy-Jill Levine, (HarperOne: New York, NY, 2014)

Solus Christus

A Theology of Liberation, Gustavo Gutierrez, (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY, 1973)
Love, Violence, and the Cross, Greg Anderson Love, (Cascade Books: Eugene, OR, 2010)

Soli Deo Gloria

Indecent Theologians, ed. Nicolas Panotto, (Borderless Press: California, 2016)
Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?, Brian D. McLaren, (Jericho Books: New York, NY, 2012)

Additional Ideas for Activities and Engagement

A discussion for councils or other leadership groups.

Read: 1 Corinthians 12

Discussion:

1. As a group make a list of the gifts and talk about each one.
 - a. What do they mean?
 - b. Which of their members have some of these gifts?
 - c. What are some of the activities that the congregation has participated in in the past that have gone really well?
 - i. What was it about those activities that went well?
 - ii. Where are there current needs in the community?
 - iii. What are some of the gifts of this congregation?
 - d. Take some time to think about all your members of the congregation, are there members close to burnout because they are asked to do everything? Can you give them this season of lent off and look at having the gifts of some of the others lifted up?
 - i. How can this become a devotional practice rather than one more thing that must be completed?
 - e. What will make this Lent different than any other Lent?
 - f. What are some of the problems in the community are there ways that the church can have some impact on these difficulties?
 - i. Is there an activity that this congregation can take on this Lent to have an impact on those difficulties?

Activity Suggestions

Banners:

1. Purchase 5 pillowcases and some Fray Check. Wash and iron the pillowcases and then cut through the seam so that the tops can be hung as a banner and the closed pillowcase portion hangs down.
 - a. On each pillowcase quilt the focus words for the week using the colors of the reformation.
 - b. Paint the solid outline of the words on the pillowcase and let the children in the congregation decorate them each week.
 - c. Draw pictures on each pillowcase to represent the text that correlates with the lesson.
 - d. Tie-dye each pillowcase and then paint the words on them.
2. Purchase rolls of ribbon and cut them into 3 foot long pieces purchase enough permanent markers for each participant. Have a different color ribbon for each week. Have the ribbons on the table and ask participants to either doodle on the ribbon or write down the words that hit them the strongest from the passage. Take all the ribbons and either:
 - a. Weave them all together to form one large banner.
 - b. Purchase a dowel and attach each ribbon to the dowel so that each ribbon is free hanging. Each dowel can then be attached to the processional poles and carried during worship.
3. Have the first lesson in the worship space and have a serious conversation about your space. Are there areas that these solas can be brought into the space you have, or is it time to focus on these solas by getting rid of some of the current things in your worship space? How do these solas focus our worship time together back on God? See what the congregation bubbles up with and let them take it on to clarify their own worship habits.

Other thoughts with banners.

Many congregations have beautiful and heavy banner stands and processional poles that are difficult for children to carry. It is easy to purchase some PVC pipes and spray-paint them to match the congregational décor. These are light enough, and inexpensive enough that the children can carry them and not have to worry about them too much.

Chalk:

Each week, towards the end of your time together, give each member a piece of chalk. On the sidewalk or pavement have them write/draw:

- The phrase of the week.
- A picture of how they live out the theme of the week.
- Something that was interesting from the lesson.
- Something that they would like to tell others about the lesson.

The real strength of chalk is that it is an approachable medium. Children love it and it can bring out the child in each adult heart. It's also one small step for members to comfortably start to talk about their faith outside the church. Can we give them a word or phrase to take out into the world today and if they can visualize taking it out, could it then be verbalized?

Woodworking/building:

Is there a way that your community could either covenant to build or design something focusing on these solas? What would that look like in the community? If something was built, could there be an option to build one thing a week for the community? Some thoughts:

- Word alone, Grace alone, Faith alone, Christ alone, Glory to God alone.
- Word alone: Build a tiny free library for the front yard of the church.
- Grace alone: Build a tiny free food pantry for canned goods that anyone can take from when needed. Publish about it in your local paper.
- Faith alone: What does your faith mean? Why is it important? How could something be built that reflects this faith?
- Christ alone: Think about the space that your communion ware is kept, is there a way to build something that holds these elements that will be sacred?
- Glory to God alone: Take some time to look at this phrase, what does it mean and where are places that you see God's glory? Is there a place in town that you would like to invite others to see God's glory by making a bench or resting place?

Walking prayer:

Have the group (or members of the group) meet once a week/night and walk through town. While they are walking ask them to say a simple prayer for each house that they walk by. Have them take note of things in town that need to be fixed and bring that back to the congregation to work on.

Meditative doodling:

Take the following base pictures and either print them out and put them on the table or add them to your bulletins. Invite people to color, doodle and sketch all over them then hang them up for decoration.



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