



The Augustana Ministerium

A pastoral association formed to preserve and promote Lutheran pastors and a distinctively Lutheran Ministry of Word and Sacrament to Lutheran congregations.



The Truth About Vacuums

No, this is neither a vacuum cleaner infomercial nor an article on some space or container from which the air has been removed. It is instead a **brief look at the relationship between “the truth,” as God delivers it to man, and man’s understanding and application of it.** We begin where God’s Word begins: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6).

With these words, Jesus sets forth an eschatological claim against which all matters relating to man’s ultimate destination in life must be judged. The Lord God who created man and placed him in the Garden of Eden did His work in such a way that from the moment He *“breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”* (Gen. 2:7), man became an eternal creature designed and formed to be in eternal relationship with his Creator. The Creator’s goal is unchangeable (Mal. 3:6). What is changed is how the Lord God puts Humpty Dumpty back together again after man’s fall into sin. The lone Key that restores what man broke in the fall is the Man Jesus, who says, *“no one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

When Jesus precedes this eschatological reality with the words, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life,”* He puts Himself in the middle, in the very center as the route, the means, and the destination. He means that without equivocation, people of every nation, tribe, tongue, and land will be tested on the basis of their response to who He is. This Jesus Himself makes crystal clear when He asks His own disciples, *“Who do you say that I am?”*, and then He commends Peter for his correct response—*“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”*—with this words: *“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I say to you ... on this rock I will build My Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”*

(Matt. 16:15ff). Dr. Luther understood, as few others have, the true significance of Christ’s claiming center stage as He does in St. John’s Gospel. He put it this way: *“... all our teaching and faith must revolve about Christ and be centered in this one Person. We must discard all other knowledge and wisdom and know absolutely no one else than ‘Christ crucified,’ as St. Paul states, 1 Cor. 2:2”* (*Luther’s Works*, American Edition, Vol. 24, p. 32).

Everything important in life ultimately boils down to this “one Person.” How one views Him (understanding), determines how ones lives (application). To some degree, everyone’s day to day routine and life are affected by Him, the claims and threats He makes, and the gifts He promises and gives. None are more affected than Christians. Since every man in his fallen state is always, to some degree, deficient in his knowledge and understanding of the full *“I am,”* even the Christian is, to some degree, deficient in his day to day application. Thus the problem is twofold, for not only is there a deficiency between “the truth” God delivers and man’s understanding of it, but there is also a deficiency between man’s understanding and his application.

Metaphorically, the deficiency in either case can be thought of as a “vacuum,” a “void.” A vacuum means there is a pressure difference between two points, and this differential creates a condition which seeks to equalize the two pressures. It

is this principle which I hear Jesus applying when He says: *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to Myself”* (John 12:32). The word *“draw,”* like most words, has more than one sense to it. In Acts 16:19, 21:30, and in James 2:6, it conveys the sense of being dragged into something against your will. As St. John uses it here in 12:32, and earlier in 6:44, however, it is in the sense of a pull on man’s inner life by divine impulse: *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him”* (John 6:44).

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**Confessional Lutheran Laity
Supporting Confessional Pastors**

The Baptismal Strategy of God: Dying to Live

The evangelical Gospel of Scripture with which God has blessed our confessional heritage and sense of mission in the world is something radically different. It is not the message that we can have our way with God and satisfy our religious impulses and wants by making the right choices; rather it is the message that God has entered the world and touches our lives at various chosen places and ways to have *His way* with us, to fulfill His purposes and intentions, to execute His plan of salvation.

There is a gate through which we are taken into the kingdom of God. It is where God has entered our space and time to have His way with us. It is where God first nailed and killed us in the cross of Christ and then raised us up in faith as a New Creation, as His adopted Child into His family. The Gate to God is where He descends to us, where the Savior makes Himself and his saving gifts manifest. It is where he comes to have His way with us according to His pleasure, at His choosing. He comes to kill and bring us into a spiritual death, drowning us in a word-joined watery bath. From such a watery grave, God brings us forth as a new creation in Christ.

In our baptism, God kills to make alive—from death to life we have come. Christians are those who have fallen into the hands of the heavenly physician—in Baptism—just dying to

live. Indeed if there is no death, there is no life. And all of this is God's initiative and doing not ours.

Notice the great startling paradoxes here. The mighty creator God comes to us through the simple earthly gate of common mundane elements like human language, water, bread and wine. He hides Himself under opposites. And then to save us—*all His choice and doing*—He kills us to make us alive. He messes with us according to His saving designs so that we might die to live. Through the temporal, the common and mundane chosen places, the extraordinary, supernatural God makes Himself manifest—and under the paradox of opposites—He takes deadly aim on us, that we might be rescued from sin, death and the devil and brought to life eternal.

Only the Lutherans, after Luther, wish truly to acknowledge Baptism as the work of God carries the Christian from the beginning of life in Christ to the fullness of salvation. Christians may say: "I was baptized, I am baptized, and I will be baptized." Baptism is simultaneously a work that is accomplished at the beginning (It is the Gateway to God), it is a work that God continually accomplishes in the Christian's life and it is what He promises to accomplish in the end. In all aspects, God brings death that we might have life.

Notice the radical difference here—this is not human choice and commitment to acquire additional spiritual goodies from God—as if Christianity provides us with an edge for better spiritual living—*life goes better with*

God!—rather God moves in on us and crucifies us such that we might die with Christ to sin—and then gives us righteousness and life itself and the promise of the better day that is coming when all the realities of sin will be no more.

We make progress in Christian life by God's baptismal work—by being ever begun anew—we die to sin and we are made alive in the saving word of promise which manifests Christ and his justification. Dying to live is the signature of Baptism on the character of the Christian life. God slays and makes alive again and again—we die and are brought forth into new life in Christ again and again. God renews His baptismal covenant with us continually in His ministries of Law and Gospel.

What God began at the font He continues: Law and Gospel constitute the present-tense of Baptism for all of God's children—a daily dying and rising. They render us simultaneously sinners/saints as they kill and make alive.

The Rev. Dr. Steven Hein
Shepherd of the Springs Lutheran Church
Concordia Institute for Christian Studies
<http://www.concordia-ics.com/>
Colorado Springs, Colorado
Dean of Education

Body & Soul, continued from back cover

I am truly humbled that you have seen fit to provide these gifts to me and my family. With your assistance we have been able to "stay one step ahead" in paying day-to-day expenses, including groceries.

He continues by noting how he and his family and his parish will seek to honor your gifts by using whatever means are available to maintain the Ministry of the Gospel for those whom the Holy Spirit has Called him to serve. Such dedication is what is produced by the Gospel

freely given to sinners, and when it also leads you to support such preaching, it is dedication that is fulfilled in joy, in the remembrance that Christ's people care for one another both near and far, just as He has cared for us.

So far this year, direct aid to missionary pastors has totaled \$9,300.00, with another \$4,480.00 having gone for emergency aid. Our goal is to be able provide \$50,000 in such aid year, and we ask you to pray for that ability, and to you provide such support as the Lord allows.

It is this latter sense of the word “draw” which St. Jeremiah employs when he writes regarding what the Lord will again build in “*the latter days*” (30:24). The Lord calls her “*O virgin of Israel*” (31:4), and of her He says: “*Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you*” (31:3) The “*everlasting love*” and “*lovingkindness*” which draws and builds the “*virgin of Israel*” into that eternal relationship with the Creator is embodied in the person and work of the incarnate Christ. It is He alone who, as Redeemer, equalizes and thus nullifies the differential between God's ideal and man's manifold deficiencies, both as to his nature and his understanding and application when He “*forgives their iniquity and remembers their sin no more*” (31:34). As Christians gather together around their Head and partake more and more of the person and work of Christ in the hearing of His Word, receiving His absolution, and eating and drinking His body and blood, the body of Christ is nourished on the very things that draw, build, and sustain her as the “*virgin of Israel*” the Lord declares her to be.

The need for faithful preachers to carry on this vital, life-giving work of gathering the body around the Head that prompts St. Paul to write: “*How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!'*” (Rom 10:14f.)”

Nothing is more vital in these “*latter days*” than this need for faithful pastors out of which The Augustana Ministerium was conceived and born. Formed to preserve and promote Lutheran pastors and a distinctively Lutheran Ministry of Word and Sacrament to Lutheran Congregations, this past year alone TAM provided over \$32,000 dollars in mission and emergency assistance to such faithful pastors in dire need. This year we are seeking to double the funds available to aid the growing number of pastors needing emergency help while also increasing mission assistance. To that end, the Administrative Council adopted spending guidelines for 2009 reflecting the increase. If the Lord has so blessed you with material gifts sufficient to help us reach the \$50,000 dollar spending guideline for these two critical assistance funds we pray you will join us in equalizing the difference between need and resources by making either a one time donation or monthly contribution to this important work. Details are found elsewhere in this newsletter.

In Christ's service and therefore yours,

Rev. Bruce G. Ley, Superintendent
Holy Cross, Albany, Oregon
2 Corinthians 5:14-15

4th Annual Theological Conference

The Fourth Annual Theological Conference and Plenary Session of The Augustana Ministerium was held May 11–13, 2009, at Trinity Lutheran Church, Kearney, MO. We focused on the challenges of a confessional Lutheran ministry in a post-synodical age under the general theme *Pastoral Supervision in a Post-synodical Age*.

Some Lutheran bodies in North America are exercising pastoral supervision that is increasingly being shaped by legal considerations, Church Growth thinking, and disregard for the divinely mandated nature of the Pastoral Office. In response to these distressing and challenging conditions, how can Lutheran pastors who serve faithfully in the Office be supported and supervised? What would such supervision require and how might it be carried out with attention to matters of polity that can best serve the Gospel? How do we scripturally and confessionally relate to one another both within and without the synodical structures that we have inherited and new associations that are forming?

Four main topics were explored by an open general discussion format with a facilitator moderating each session. These discussions were recorded and are now available on *The Augustana Ministerium website* on the *Essays* page. A list of materials for you to study with regard to these topics can also be found on the website under the *Conference: Reading Lists* menu item.

The topics and facilitators included: 1) “Ecclesiastical Supervision,” Rt. Rev. James Heiser; 2) “The Confessional,” Rev. William Weedon; 3) “Church Fellowship,” Rev. Eric Stefanski; and 4) “Various Models of Church Polity and How They May Shape Ecclesiastical Supervision,” Rev. Dr. Kent Heimbigner.

This Delayed Issue

We apologize that this issue of the newsletter is coming to you so late. From ice storms to illnesses to work being done overseas, and all of the complications that have flowed from the same, the Dean of Communications was unable to get this to the printer when he had intended. Another issue is already in the works and, God willing, will be to you very soon.

Body and Soul

A lot of our focus in The Augustana Ministerium and Confraternity is on meeting the bodily needs of pastors and their families...but we'd ought never forget that giving such aid to them has an even greater impact than sustaining their bodies. When a faithful pastor is aided, it is a great encouragement to the people he serves in Christ, as well. When it is so easy for faithful Lutherans to 'feel alone' when they see the apparent success of those who conform the Church and Christ's doctrine to this world, it is good for them to see that others in Christ's 'little flock' care about them and want them to continue to receive the Word of God in purity and truth.

Thus, a pastor receiving aid wrote:

On behalf of my congregation...I want to express our thanks for your generous and continuing fi-

nancial support. The assistance of the Ministerium has meant a great deal to us, both in monetary aid as well as morale. As we continue to be a "small light in a dark world," your support helps ensure that the truth of the gospel will continue to be a beacon here...May God continue to bless the work of the Augustana Ministerium, as we work together to sustain, strengthen, and further the Kingdom of God in these challenging latter days.

The members of the parish he serves also attached their signatures. They wish they could fully sustain their pastor bodily and hope soon to be able to do so, but in the mean time, they rejoice to know that there are 'others out there'—namely *you*—who care about them hearing the Word of Truth rightly applied.

Another pastor writes:

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Donation Info

Make checks payable to:

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<http://www.augustanaministerium.org>

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Supporting Confessional Lutheran Pastors
Confessional Lutheran Ministry



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