

# Our Savior Lutheran Church – LCMS

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Pastor Gregory Cumbee



## 2018 July Newsletter

### Church History: His Story (& Ours)

#### Introduction

It is a given that the knowledge of sacred Scripture is of the utmost importance to the spiritual life of a Christian. But thanks be to God for providing us with other Christian literature to better understand and apply the Word of God. Some believers prefer reading devotional material, others, bestsellers on hot topics, others would suggest biographies. Though all of these subjects can be helpful, in my opinion, they pale in comparison to the benefits that a knowledge of church history brings to the Christian life. As a young (and ignorant) believer I had a low view of church history. Since then, I have come to see that the greatest blind spot of contemporary American evangelicalism is its lack of historical awareness. The ten years I spent studying historical theology in college, graduate and post-graduate school have had a major impact on my spiritual growth, teaching, preaching, counseling, and evangelism.

#### Why Read a Bunch of Dead Guys?

##### 1. *God Commands It*

The Bible continually exhorts believers to search out and remember the past. Psalm 78 gives an inspired history lesson that God commands believers to teach their children. Yet Israel repeatedly forgets the past, inevitably strays, and fails. The New Testament says that historical events are the heart of the Good News. And so, when we look to the past, we may also glimpse just a little bit of what God promises us in the future. "For inquire, please, of bygone ages, and consider what the fathers have searched out. For we are but of yesterday and know nothing, for our days on earth are a shadow. Will they not teach you and tell you and utter words out of their understanding?" (Job 8:8-10) The pillars and monuments of the past serve as constant reminders of God's faithfulness.

##### 2. *To Understand Scripture*

Imagine if the church asked you to teach a one-hour Bible study class on the Book of Obadiah. You make the decision that you will only be guided by the Holy Spirit without consulting any other sources. You open your Bible, take out paper for notes, and pray for understanding. How far will you get in grasping God's message in this amazing little book? Let me know how that works out for you.

Without understanding the historical context of God's Word, much of Scripture remains veiled, particularly the Old Testament. Scripture does not tell us who the Egyptians or Babylonians or the Romans were. Jesus and the apostles made references to historical events they assumed their audiences would know.

A knowledge of history helps us to appreciate Gal. 4:4-7: "But when the *fullness of time* had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law." Among other things, that "fullness of time" that set the stage for Christ's birth was Alexander the Great's conquering of the world and uniting it in the Greek language (New Testament), the Roman Empire providing the *Pax Romana* or peaceful stability necessary to travel safely, and the excellent roads Rome built that were used by the early church to spread the gospel throughout the empire.

### **3. To Liberate Our Thinking**

The theology and worship of trendy, contemporary, broad evangelicalism has been criticized as being a mile wide and an inch deep. Whether we like it or not, we are all products of our times, and the current time is not a high water mark. Many modern believers may be accurately described as sincere, sweet, and shallow.

Church history helps to liberate our thinking from being stuck in the present by giving us the in-depth perspective of other ages. Whenever I hear a theological idea my mind automatically filters it through the relevant Scripture passages first and then through two thousand years of Christian thought.

If "Joe Christian" has an interpretation of Scripture that differs substantially from how the Holy Spirit led great minds of His church over two thousand years, then 99.9% of the time Joe Christian is wrong. For example, the topics of homosexuality and gender roles are controversial subjects today but completely agreed upon throughout most of church history. If we are teaching about these subjects in new ways, this should cause us to ask if we are reading our culture into the Bible and making it say what we think is important today instead of what it actually says. The burden of proof is always on the person who is introducing a new belief or practice into the church.

### **4. Knowing Our Roots**

A popular television show exploring the family trees of celebrities is "Who Do You Think You Are?" sponsored by Ancestry.com. Understanding your family tree sheds a great deal of light on understanding ourselves. If you are a follower of Christ, *church history is your family history*. Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church and church history is truly *His Story*. Theologian J. Nevin said his greatest regret was neglecting church history as a young man. He later realized that church history is actually the life story of Christ's family, and thus it was his own story that connected him to Christ. Without church history, a Lutheran cannot know who Martin Luther was, what he did, why it mattered, and how it changed the world. Without church history it is impossible for us to have intelligent dialogue with Christians from other traditions.

### **5. To Understand Today**

We should study the past to understand the present. The study of history is a humbling experience. It allows us to understand and sympathize with the plight of those who came before us. It helps us understand the blessings we enjoy today that were not always enjoyed in days past. It shows us that we are not so different from so many of our brothers and sisters in days past and helps us avoid sins and mistakes they may have made.

### **6. To Understand Tomorrow**

History is not just a study of the past in an attempt to understand the present but, is also an attempt to understand the future. When we see the patterns of days gone by, we can begin to formulate ideas about where current trends will lead and avoid heading down paths that have been shown to be ruinous.

A retired minister once gave me a puzzling piece of advice: "Greg, sometimes you must give people who are ignorant of the past the room to make their own mistakes." When I asked him to explain, he stated that he was not saying that I was smarter or more spiritual, but simply that my deep study of church history gave me 2000 years of perspective and pattern recognition that most other Christians lack.

Over the years, I have witnessed highly intelligent but ignorant believers make incredibly poor decisions. An historical awareness of where the trajectory of a certain idea or action has led the church in the past helps us to evaluate ideas and reasonably predict where they may likely end up in the future.

### **7. To Understand Providence**

As Christians, we are often guilty of dwelling in the present and looking eagerly to the future while forgetting all about the past. But in past, God revealed Himself in mighty ways providing for His people through trial and persecution.

“Jehovah blew with His winds, and they were scattered” is a famous phrase from 1588 when the Pope encouraged the Spanish Armada to set sail to England for a full-scale invasion to overthrow the Protestant Queen Elizabeth I. As believers watched the horizon fill with Spanish sails, they got on their knees and prayed.

The skies darkened, a violent storm rolled in, and the Spanish fleet was destroyed. This northernmost hurricane ever recorded is known in European history as “the Protestant Wind.” A knowledge of God’s hand of providence can serve as a valuable teaching tool as we prepare to face trials or persecution in our day. As the psalmist declares in 44:1, “We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us what you did in their days, in days long ago.”

## **8. To Understand Error**

In many ways, the history of the church is a history of action and reaction known as ‘the pendulum effect.’ Much of Christian theology has been developed and strengthened in reaction to error and heresy. While riding on a train in Japan a friendly lady with excellent English struck up a conversation with my wife and me. As the conversation progressed, she told us that she was also a Christian and she would love to have us attend their university bible study. She then gave us a lesson and music which I noticed was published by The Watchtower Society, the educational branch of the “Jehovah’s Witness.” If you had ten minutes before your train stop to explain the errors of her cult, would you know what say to make the most impact for Christ? If you had basic knowledge of church history, then the answer is “yes”.

You would know about the 4th-century heretic Arius and how the church responded to his false teachings, which the Jehovah Witnesses follow today. Using the power of music Arius wrote subtle hymns to catchy tunes that promoted his belief that Jesus was less than God. Arius and his followers sang these songs around the ports of the Mediterranean. *This strategy was so effective that at one point roughly half of professing Christians identified themselves as Aryans.* This forced the convening of the Council of Nicaea which refuted Arius and gave us the Nicene Creed. A knowledge of church history gave me the tools to expose the errors of Arianism and to present the Gospel to this sweet but deceived lady in ten minutes flat.

## **9. To Understand People**

Many of us enjoy considering who we would choose to sit for a meal with, were we able to select from all the people who are living or have lived in the past. The reality, of course, is that we cannot speak with our heroes who have lived before us. Yet by studying history we can come to know and understand them. We can come to see the parts of their lives that brought glory to God and the parts that brought Him dishonor. Even the best and brightest of Christians are still sinners who have blind spots and who made mistakes. By studying their mistakes we can seek to avoid the same errors.

## **10. Motivation To Persevere**

Every believer knows that we desperately need divine grace, motivation, and encouragement. Of course, Christ and His ordained means of Word, sacrament, and prayer are the essential means and motivation for perseverance (Heb. 12:2). Even so, we can also find motivation to persevere in the study of church history. Considering that “great cloud of witnesses,” the godly lives of believers from the past, can motivate and inspire us to “lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely ... [and to] run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). Are you feeling spiritually weary? Are you ready to give up? Throw yourself into the arms of Christ in Scripture but also into the pages of church history. Spend time reflecting upon the faithful lives and godly voices of the past, and their faith will motivate you to keep running.

*Soli Deo Gloria,*  
Pastor Greg



**Youth Coordinator** Do you enjoy working with youth? We are currently seeking adult leader(s) to oversee the OSL Youth Group. This person or persons would coordinate activities with our congregation's youth with the goal of assisting and leading them to know, love, and share Christ through fellowship, growth, and service opportunities. If this sounds like something you may be interested in, please contact Karen H. or the church office at 540-667-1459. We are praying for you!



**Vacation Bible School** Mark your calendars for our one day VBS Event on **Saturday, July 28<sup>th</sup> from 9am to 5pm** followed by a family BBQ at 5pm. Register your kids, grandchildren, and friends at <https://vbsmate.com/events/OurSaviorLutheranVBS/16934>. We need adult and youth volunteers to help at various stations, including storytelling, games, crafts, and decorating. You can volunteer for all

day, some of the day, or with pre-planning and preparations. Please prayerfully consider how you can help with this important gospel-sharing event, then, register as a volunteer at the link above or contact Karen H. or the church office at 540-667-1459. We are praying for you!

**VBS Foods** sign-up sheets are now available in the fellowship hall. Please bring VBS food by **Friday, July 27<sup>th</sup>**. Non-perishable items can be brought in on **Sunday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>**. Side dishes and desserts should be brought the same day as VBS. If you are planning to attend the Family BBQ, please sign the **BBQ Attendance List** in the fellowship hall so we can plan on the amount of meat needed.

Thank you for your kind support!

**VBS Invitations** are available at the Information Station in the Narthex. Invite friends, invite neighbors, invite family (grandkids)! **Invite and register** so we can plan for food etc.!

This beautiful Fourth of July arrangement was created by Alana Danko (with Bob as her right-hand man). Each week, it is a surprise and joy to see God's creation and beauty that comes from the Danko flower garden to bless us. Thank you Alana and Bob!



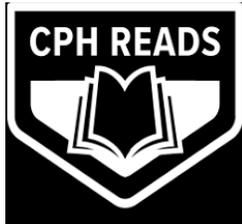
to the **40<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary Celebration of Cal and Julie S.,**  
**Friday, July 6<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-10:00 pm** at their home.

Please check your directory or call the church office, 540-667-1459 for the address.

*'Please no gifts – the presence of our friends is all the gift we need!'*



Thank you to all who have been busily knitting and crocheting shawls! We have given out two shawls to ladies receiving cancer treatments. If you know someone who could benefit from the comfort of a shawl and prayer, contact the office 540-667-1459. If you would like a small project to knit in between working on the bigger Prayer Shawls (knitters usually have more than one project going at a time), there are patterns for EASY baby sweaters and blankets on the **ABBACARE** table in the Fellowship Hall. They are simple and fun to make and the moms **ABBACARE** helps would certainly appreciate them! We already have three sweaters and one blanket completed on the table – check them out and see how easy they are to make!



For the past three years, Concordia Publishing House has offered a summer reading program, **CPH Reads**. **CPH Reads** has only one purpose: to point you to Jesus.

Unite with thousands of readers across the world to discover Jesus' love in books.

Read on your own or as a family.

For more information about the **CPH Reads** go to [cph.org/read](http://cph.org/read).

A **Church History Class** may be offered beginning in September. *Are you feeling spiritually weary? Are you ready to give up? Throw yourself into the arms of Christ in Scripture but also into the pages of church history. Spend time reflecting upon the faithful lives and godly voices of the past, and their faith will motivate you to keep running.* (from Pastor Greg's article in this issue) Please sign the **CHURCH HISTORY SIGN-UP SHEET** available in the fellowship hall if you would consider attending a class on Church History.



## The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

LCMS Stewardship Ministry July 2018 Newsletter Article

**“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).**

We celebrate this month because of the freedoms and liberties our country has afforded us. We are right to do this. We should be thankful for these liberties: the freedom to gather together to worship and to live out what we believe in our daily lives.

But freedom and liberty in our age has devolved. It has become a freedom from duty instead of a freedom for it. Indeed, freedom and liberty in our age has turned into licentiousness: a license to do what we want, when we want.

This license is a submission, again, to a yoke of slavery. For freedom as license to do what we desire when we desire it means we are slaves to our desires, slaves to our passions. Christ died to set us free from our sinful desires. In Holy Baptism, our Old Adam is drowned and put to death along with all sin and evil desires so that a new man may arise and live before God in righteousness and purity.

In Christ, we are a new creation. We are set free from the passions of the flesh so that we are free to do our duty and bear fruits of the Spirit.

Our duty is what God calls us to do as members of a family, society, and the church.

God calls us to believe in His Word and gladly hear and learn it. He calls us to pray for all people. He calls us to live in faith toward Him and in fervent love for our neighbor. He calls us to put the gifts He gives to us in His service. God calls parents to provide for their children and raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. And God calls children to honor their parents and provide and care for them when they are no longer able to do so themselves.

God calls the government to punish those who do evil and to reward those who do good. He calls citizens to pay their taxes and honor the governing officials as God's servants. He calls pastors to preach and teach the Gospel as well as repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And He calls hearers to support those who teach them with every good thing.

Christ died to set us free from the works of our selfish flesh, giving us the freedom and liberty to do our duty. Stand firm, then, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

## **CCAP CORNER**

CCAP - Winchester (the Congregational Community Action Project) has served the Winchester-Frederick County Community for 40 years by providing to those in need: food, clothing, personal and household products, baby food, diapers and financial help with rent, utility bills, prescription drugs, GED testing fees, heating and cooling.

**The following are some of the current, most-needed items, many of which are for our area homeless population:**

- Ready to eat soups
- Canned meats (Spam, ham, sardines, Vienna sausages)
- Other canned foods with pull-ring tops and/or in single-serving portions
- Laundry detergent (preferably pods)
- Toilet paper, gallon-size storage bags
- Chapstick, bedbug spray 91% alcohol
- Feminine hygiene products (tampons)
- Tents, tarps, nylon rope
- New underwear and socks in all sizes for men, women and children, but especially for women
- Men's jeans (especially sizes 28,29, and 32-38) and belts
- Disposable baby diapers in all sizes, but especially size 5



**Please place your donations in the CCAP box in the narthex.  
Thank you for your generosity! Questions? Contact Nancy B.**

## **BIRTHDAYS**

July 1	Taneha C.	July 25	Lawrence G.
July 11	Connie F.	July 28	Daniel H.
July 11	Dave H.	July 31	Jim G.
July 12	Jonathan D.		
July 15	Regan M.		
July 18	Dennis L.		
July 22	Karley P.		
July 24	Joey R.		
July 25	DeeDee W.		



## **ANNIVERSARIES**

July 14	Eric and Connie F.
July 22	Cal and Julie S.
July 29	Chuck and Renee K.

## **FLOWERS FOR THE ALTAR**

July 1	Dave and Nancy S.
July 8	Butch and Robbie K.
July 15	Joan J.
July 22	Cal and Julie S.
July 29	Volunteer needed

## **VOLUNTEERS IN JULY**

### **ACOLYTES**

July 1	Jennifer F.
July 8	Mattea K.
July 15	Zach A.
July 22	Josiah C.
July 29	Jonny D.

### **ALTAR GUILD**

Month of July – Scarlett C.

## **COMMUNION ASSISTANT**

July 1	Wayne W. Jr.	July 1	Mike and Rhonda S.
July 8	Bob W.	July 8	Mongold Family
July 15	Butch K.	July 15	Fredricks Family
July 22	Wayne W. Jr.	July 22	Joan J. and Ben and Naomi C.
July 29	Shannon D.	July 29	Dan and Bethany C.

## **GREETERS**

July 1	Mike and Rhonda S.
July 8	Mongold Family
July 15	Fredricks Family
July 22	Joan J. and Ben and Naomi C.
July 29	Dan and Bethany C.

### **LECTORS**

July 1	Janice W.
July 8	Nancy B.
July 15	Marilyn G.
July 22	Karen H.
July 29	Stephanie D.

### **NURSERY**

July 1	Renee K.
July 8	Sharon W.
July 15	Bethany C.
July 22	Regan M.
July 29	Hannah A.

## **OFFERING COUNTERS**

July 1	Larry G and Joan J.
July 8	Hannah A. and Phil M.
July 15	Dan C and Kendra G.
July 22	Tom A and DeeDee W.
July 29	Carol C. and Jill M.

## **USHERS**

July 1	Mike and Rhonda S.
July 8	Cal S. and Wayne W. Jr.
July 15	Eric and Curtiss F.
July 22	Phil M. and Robert R.
July 29	Bill H. and Bob W.

# July



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 10:00 am Worship with Holy Communion	2	3	4	5	6 Cal and Julie S. Anniversary Celebration 6-10 pm	7
8 10:00 am Worship with Holy Communion	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 10:00 am Worship with Holy Communion 11:30 Council Meeting	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 10:00 am Worship with Holy Communion	23	24	25 August Newsletter Deadline	26	27	28
29 10:00 am Worship with Holy Communion 11:30 OSLC Prayer Group	30	31				

