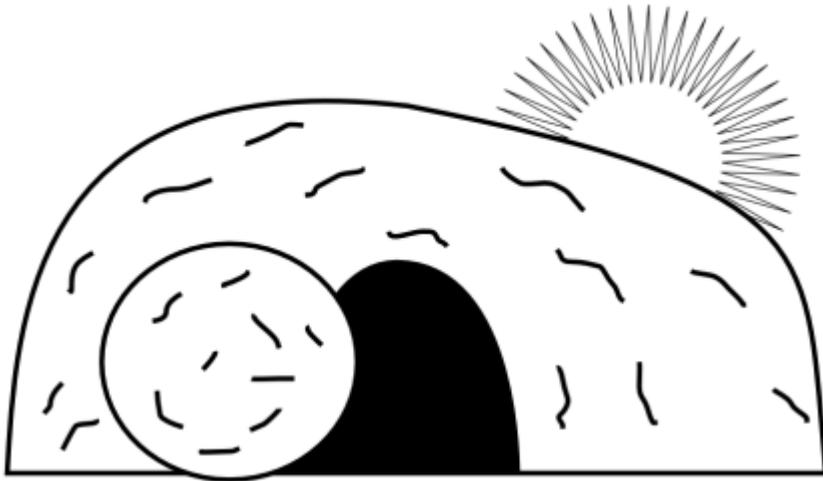


THE AGAPE NEWS!

St. Matthew Lutheran Church Calgary, AB

Since 1913 proclaiming the Good News of the love of God toward us through His Son Jesus Christ!

SPRING/SUMMER 2019 Newsletter



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PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

What is your identity? You may answer this question in different ways. You may say things referring to your ethnical background or citizenship, like: “I am Canadian” or “I hold a dual citizenship”. Others will refer to sports like: “I am Flames”, “I am Oilers” or “Stamps”, while still others may declare: “I am an engineer”, a student, a plumber etc. referring to their occupation.

In my case, I hold a dual citizenship” Brazilian and Canadian. Last fall we had a burglar coming to “visit us” in our house while we were sleeping during the night. Among a few valuable things he stole, he also took all our four Canadian passports with him – to do “God-knows-what” with them (He really does know)! Of course, we had to file a police report and gather all the paperwork again to order new passports. It was a scary experience and to replace some of the stolen things, it cost us a lot of money too. However, among the stolen things were also some pastoral things like a briefcase with the communion ware and a bible. We pray that he or she will read God’s Word and get to know Christ in his heart (and perhaps even return my belongings)!

That thief may have stolen our passports, but he could not steal our identity as Canadian citizens! My point with all this story is this: we do not have a stable dwelling in this world anyways. The apostle Paul writes this to the fellow Christians in the city of Philippi (Eastern Macedonia): *“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Phil 3.20). We have been bought by the blood of Christ, we have been born again in the baptismal waters. We have been declared “God’s children”. Check out what St. Peter tells us: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a **people for his own possession**”. (1 Peter 2.9)

This means we **Become**, **Believe** and **Belong** (I found those three “B-words” as a motto in a Catholic school). In holy Baptism (another big B-word), we **Become** God’s children. The Holy Spirit gives us faith; therefore, we **Believe**. And, since we enter the fellowship of the saints, we also **Belong** to Christ’s family, his church. This is our true



identity – the one that lasts forever and even transcends this earthly life – passing through the gates of death to eternal life.

You and I carry Christ in your I.D. We claim to be “Christians” and this identity can never be stolen. Jesus said: *“My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them out of My hand”* Jo 10, 27). Isn’t that just comforting and wonderful? I hope you treasure the fact that you are God’s child.

A friend of mine once was asked what his horoscope sign was. He said: “I am baptized – that’s my sign”. I thought this was a great answer! Whenever we make the sign of the cross in our Sunday worship and liturgy, we are invited to remember with thankfulness that we have been given new life in baptism through Christ’s sacrifice on that cross. He now lives and promises to be with us until the end of times.

So, who are you after all? I know you have many vocations; you wear many hats. But, leaving beside all other things that can help you identify yourself as who you are, keep the most important one: You are a beloved and baptized child of God, that’s your identity. And nobody can snatch you away from God’s hand. And, if you have come this far reading my message, I wish you a great time reading this newsletter. And I invite you to come and be nourished in your faith by worshipping with us on Sundays, when we meet with others who share the same I.D. with us. Also, come and be part of our monthly bible studies! In Christ, we have a new identity. St. Paul says this in his second letter to the Corinthians: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” 2 Cor 5:17

Pastor Markus Zeuch May 2019, Anno Domini

FROM OUR BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

THE BOARD OF ELDERS

The best description of what the Board of Elders responsibilities are is found in the Constitution of our church.

It states that the Board shall consist of at least 9 men including the Chair of the Board. The basic objective of this board is the spiritual welfare of the Pastor, the

congregation, and also everything pertaining to congregational well being and worship. A copy of the Constitution can be found in the church office.

The members of our Board of Elders are: Walter Wagner, Brent Warren, Vern Goss, Bernd Kubke, Randy Haynes, Dana Salter and Ernie Schulz. Pastor Zeuch and the chairman Peter Graumann also attend the meetings. We meet on the first Thursday of each month.

We open the meeting with a hymn and a prayer, and then discuss items from the present agenda, related to our mission and ministry at our congregation. The meeting is closed with Luther's evening payer.

Respectfully submitted by Ernie Schulz, Head Elder

YOUTH MINISTRY

We had our youth group leading us in worship for the special "Tenebrae service" on Good Friday this year, under the leadership of Elizabeth Schieman and the music of our organist/pianist Johnson Philip. At present, we don't have Young Adults gatherings anymore, but we want to thank Naomi Robak for having served in this ministry before.

Youth gatherings are usually held twice a month on Fridays. Please check out our calendar in this newsletter. Youth meetings for the next couple of months are: sleepover on May 24-25, June 14 & 21. We are sending 6 youth and 1 leader to the National Youth Gathering in Langley, BC in the beginning of July. We want to thank everyone who donated to make this possible. We will start up again with regular Friday youth events in September.

Submitted by Elizabeth Schieman (Liz)

FELLOWSHIP AND PR

We have had numerous coffee hours over the past months, in December we provided refreshments for the Chinese Choir event, special coffee hours after Sparkles and German Children's choirs.

We also had a sausage fund raiser for the kitchen upgrade, thanks again to Leo Hartfelder for making the loved sausage for us. Leo and Bernie also provided the bratwurst for 2018 Oktoberfest, it was again well attended and a success.

The best news I can share is our kitchen renovation is complete, and we are very happy with the results. Legacy Kitchens did a great job for us and we certainly recommend them! Most of all we are grateful and blessed by the continued support from our Congregation to make it all possible.

We collected non-perishable items for the Veteran's Food Bank in memory of Ray Hessler and the Women's Centre, thanks to Sherry Luft and Lorraine Duncan for dropping off the items just before Christmas.

We have had numerous coffee hours over the past months, in December we provided refreshments for the Chinese Choir event, special coffee hours after Sparkles and German Children's choirs.

We also had a sausage fund raiser for the kitchen upgrade, thanks again to Leo Hartfelder for making the loved sausage for us. Leo and Bernie also provided the bratwurst for 2018 Oktoberfest, it was again well attended and a success.

St. Matthew's Book and Bake Sale was a success with the proceeds being donated to Concordia Seminary for a student in need. Thanks for Lori Salter and Andrea Sovary for spear heading this sale and of course everyone who donated books and delicious baking for the event.

We remain In His Service,
Ingrid Feist-Anderson, Chair Fellowship and PR

OUR BIBLE STUDIES

MONTHLY BIBLE STUDIES are usually held EVERY FOURTH WEDNESDAY of the month at 6:30 p.m. We often offer audio-visual studies with a great participation by the group. As God's child and a member of a Lutheran church, you are not just invited, but **strongly encouraged** to attend and grow in God's Word. There are no bible studies in July and August.

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES are usually held EVERY SUNDAY at 10 a.m. with some exceptions. Please check our website before you go or call the church office.

GERMAN BIBLE STUDY EVERY FIRST WEDNESDAY of the month @ 1 p.m. followed by the delicious "Kaffee und Kuchen" mostly home-made by our German-speaking ladies. There are no bible studies in July and August.

OUTREACH TO OUR COMMUNITY

Community Kitchen – The clients are marvelled with our new kitchen. We put the community kitchen supplies back up in our new cabinets. With the adjustable shelving, the items could all stand up safely so not to leak. We also cooked 24 meals on Monday for those involved in the community kitchen. We typically help about 5 seniors with hot meals. We also teach the folks cooking skills and the safe handling of food. Many of our clients also enjoy the social aspect of planning and cooking together. Three of the people who met through the community kitchen also get together and go out for karaoke and find relief for their isolation and loneliness. We have two cooks left before we shut down for summer.

Spinz – A – Round – We still attend regular Spinz and pick up food for a couple of schools who have hungry kids. We also restock our food cupboard with some of the non-perishable food items and pick up food to use in the Community kitchen. We help about 13 kids and 5 seniors.

Bridgeland Inter-Agency Meetings – We had our last meeting on March 19th at the new central Calgary Public Library. They have 30 meetings rooms that anyone with a library card can book for free. We did the booking on line. A member of the library met us and gave us a presentation of all the workshops they offer to Calgarians. It is a beautiful building with excellent meeting rooms, complete with AV equipment.

On a different note, the economic issues in Alberta are catching up with our agencies in Bridgeland. In particular, the Bridgeland daycare that is located in the Calgary Housing tower just down the hill from the church is experiencing economic hardship. Their rent from the City of Calgary has gone from \$25,000/year to \$41,000/year starting January, 2019. They support many of the new Canadians and low-income people in the Tower and special needs kids. This rent increase may put them out of business unless they can find more income. A suggestion was made that they put themselves on the casino volunteer list as that one project could cover the extra rent for 2 years. The only issue is getting volunteers to help fill the casino spots. I did say that if they got a date that they could come ask St. Matthew for help and we could probably take some of the shifts. This may or may not happen. Things will probably get worse for all these groups as property tax will also increase over the next few years. If we host another choir, I'm hoping we will consider this group to share the income with.

Respectfully submitted by Heather Graham-Navis.



A Brave Journey Continues in Canada....

By Theo Dillenberg

With hearts filled in gratitude and faith we note that our family is making good progress adjusting to their new home in Canada. They have established a busy routine during the first ten months in Calgary. Both parents, Rabie and Faiza, and the children, Esam and Awadia, continue to attend ESL classes daily. Their English is improving gradually; practically speaking, they have mastered the “double-double” at Tim Horton’s. Esam is working at Level 4 and will enter Level 5 (the highest) in April 2019. Awadia will master Level 3 soon and likely progress to Level 4 shortly. At supper daily, the children quiz the parents in English and reinforce highlights from the day’s instruction. Public transit no longer is a daunting prospect; grocery shopping has been conquered, including the occasional mission to Costco. To be sure, the family continues to be amazed at the expensive cost of living in general, not to mention the realities of winter framed by the cold snap of February 2019.

Circuit committee members have been focused on providing assistance navigating the circuitous bureaucracy of Service Canada/Alberta. We have attended many medical and dental appointments with the family, while achieving a baseline of health issues through an Arabic speaking family doctor and dentist. The staff at the Centre for Newcomers has been extremely helpful in providing comprehensive support services and job placement. Esam and Awadia enjoy making use of the great facilities at the Village Square Leisure Centre. Indeed, the journey has been akin to “drinking from a fire hydrant” in terms of learning the range of Canadian norms and practices. A wonderful Potluck Fellowship attended by some fifty Circuit congregants was held at Foothills Lutheran Church on 16 September 2018. At the event, members were introduced to the family and learned some of their hopes and aspirations. Rabie would like to work one day in the oil and gas sector – he is a welder by training; both Faiza

resettlement function involves checking on the family periodically, practicing English, meeting for coffee, and reinforcing success! The family resides at **1204-550 Rundlehorn Circle N.E., Calgary – tel: 587.472.0564.**

LUTHERAN HOSPITAL MINISTRIES – SOUTHERN ALBERTA

God is truly blessing Lutheran Hospital Ministries-Southern Alberta. We had a successful Walk/Run for Love on April 27. Our walkers, a lot of old friends and quite a few new ones, showed up with enthusiasm, and donations. Our goal this year was to collect \$20,500. The total pledges the walkers brought in total \$20,415. We depend on our faithful walkers and their generous sponsors to keep us going. God bless them!



The funds we collect go towards direction and encouragement for our visitors, training of new volunteer visitors, and supplying printed materials to support our workers in their mission of “Bringing Jesus’ healing and promise of salvation to Lutherans who are in hospitals and care facilities, and their families”. We also provide continuing education events for our visitors.

We are always looking for new visitors and board members to carry out our mission of visiting the sick and lonely. We thank our volunteers greatly for their love and service. Our next training session for visitors is scheduled for October 19 at St. Matthew Lutheran Church.

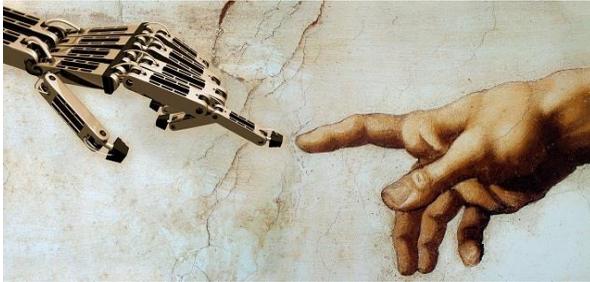
We look forward to 2019 and the ministry it has for us. There is always a need for new board members and visitors. Please call our office at (403) 264-4045 if you are interested in helping Lutheran Hospital Ministries in any one of these ways.

We thank you for all the ways you have supported Lutheran Hospital Ministries in the past and hope you can continue to help us in 2019 and beyond.

FROM “THE CANADIAN LUTHERAN”

From The Canadian Lutheran website

Faith, Technology, and Science Fiction



By: Bill Anderson

Roddenberry and Star Trek

“Space, the final frontier...” My first foray into technology was watching *Star Trek* in the 1960s. I was

only five years old when it originally aired in 1966. But when ITV Edmonton did re-runs in 1975, I was totally hooked and obsessed. Now my wife Joan and I spend five hours a week in the deepest, outermost parts of the galaxy.

Gene Roddenberry originally pitched *Star Trek* to the networks as a “wagon train to stars”—picking up on the other cultural obsession with Westerns in the 50s and 60s. As I often tell my students, every artifact is a reflection of the artist’s philosophy, beliefs and values, as well as the cultural milieu in which it is created. Roddenberry was a complex man with a complex relationship to theology and religion. He grew up in a Southern Baptist home in Texas and was very involved with church activities. He later rejected the faith when he was around 14 years old.

Roddenberry has been portrayed often as an atheist. Late in life, however, he asserted that he believed in some concept of God (a form of deism) but rejected organized religion. My own analysis of Roddenberry’s philosophy is that he appears at certain points to function as an atheist but always as a secular humanist. His complex relationship with technology and theology can be seen the various manifestations of the *Star Trek* franchise.

In the original series, reflections of Roddenberry’s atheism, or rather secular humanism, was more sublime—even though in public discourse he could be quite harsh against organized religion. This may be because it would have damaged ratings had the show overtly criticized religion, since at the time religion was still well-regarded and widely practiced. Yet the concept of God or spirituality have been a mainstay of the *Star Trek* franchise throughout.

Roddenberry gave strict instructions that *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was to be thoroughly secular—that there was no place for religion, superstition, or mysticism. But *Star Trek* betrays subtle cognitive dissonance between science and religion: it can't seem to get away from religion and even at times portrays it in positive ways. *Star Trek Deep Space Nine* (which came out after Roddenberry's death) is a case in point: this series has an abundance of overt religion, spirituality and mysticism can be found. Generally, though, religion in *Star Trek* is usually portrayed as primitive, emotional and unreasonable.

Religious themes, ideas and imagery are found throughout all *Star Trek* series (see, for example, *Ex Astris Scientia's* [summary here](#)). This relates to one of my own obsessions: non-religious artists (especially those in science fiction) who are obsessed with religion and religious themes, ideas, and imagery. Roddenberry is no exception in the *Star Trek* franchise. The same is true also of Ridley Scott (discussed later in this essay).

The current *Star Trek* series *Discovery* is perhaps a re-assertion of Roddenberry's original philosophy—complete with a superficial and stereotypical portrayal of ignorant and backward Christians, as in the episode “New Eden”. Here the superiority of reason and science (*scientism*) is strongly asserted by the Science Specialist Burman—complete with the assertion that “technology saves all.” But even in that episode, doubt is cast upon the totality and efficacy of science and technology over the mysterious and faith, as masterfully conveyed by Captain Pike's framing of the issues.

Roddenberry and *Star Trek* (and atheism in general), have a major problem to solve. *Ex Astris Scientia* puts it well: “The question crops up whether *Star Trek's* philosophy can offer anything to replace religion?” The irony pointed out in *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* is that science and quest (“voyage”) ultimately lead to a Creator God: Science and Technology intersect with *religious experience*.

Modernism is the broader philosophical background to *Star Trek The Original Series*. Roddenberry's Utopian vision was based on the idea that science and reason could solve all of humanity's problems. There would be no more hunger, disease or war. The point, however, is that once human beings empty ourselves of emotion—become like Spock, as it were—and base our lives and actions on reason and the benefits of technology, we will achieve utopia. Kevin Cawley at Notre Dame University has made a recent case for philosophical apathy and its benefits to humanity in his article “What the World Needs Now”—and this is a characteristic of both Spock and Data in *Star Trek*.

Blade Runner, Transhumanism, and Artificial Intelligence

Enter *Blade Runner* (1982). Phillip K. Dick's book *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* was the basis for the Ridley Scott film *Blade Runner*, which presented a perspective on the rise of technology contrary to Roddenberry's. Instead of technology leading to Utopia, Dick suggests, it will lead to Dystopia.

Like Roddenberry, Phillip K. Dick was a complex human being with a complex relationship with technology and theology. According to Ridley Scott, Dick was a "Prophet of Science Fiction"—and his influence in the work of Scott is evident in many of his films, as well as many other science fiction movies. Scott, however, is much less sympathetic to religion (especially Christianity) than was Dick, who was a well-known Christian mystic.

Scott grew up in the Church of England but is no fan of organized religion nor the God of the Old Testament. Indeed, his movie *Prometheus* is his own portrayal of a mean and vindictive Creator God paralleling Genesis 1-11 (see the documentary "The Making of Prometheus"); much in the same way he portrays God as a "mean and vengeful little kid" in *Exodus: Gods and Kings*. Scott is also well-known for his obsession with origins and religion—including that fact that the main character in *Prometheus* is a devout Christian—namely Dr Elizabeth Shaw. In *Prometheus* there is a clear juxtaposition of technology and theology (faith).

Back to *Blade Runner*. A theological summary of the film is a formidable task: I spend three lectures on it in my pop-culture course. *Blade Runner*'s dependence on *Frankenstein* and *Paradise Lost* are well-known in relation to Genesis 1-3 (see Desser's "The New Eve: The Influence of *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein* on *Blade Runner*"). The big theological questions and problems which are explored in the film relate to theodicy ("Justice of God") and predestination vs freewill, among others.

Burnette-Bletsch, in the *Bible and Cinema*, provides a broad context for *Blade Runner* (like *Paradise Lost*) wherein these theological struggles are worked out in a veritable hell reflected the opening sequence of the film. Burnette-Bletsch notes that *Blade Runner* portrays God the Father Creator as an arrogant scientist who blames his creatures for evil (as in *Frankenstein*) rather than taking responsibility for creating them as such with built-in limitations like life-span. There is a tragic quality whereby God's creatures desire to seek their Creator and have a relationship with him, yet hate and blame God for creating them and placing them in an impossible situation. Thus

like the monster in *Frankenstein*, Batty hates and kills his creator, the corporate giant Dr. Tyrell.

The primary theological question explored by *Blade Runner* is: What does it mean to be human (Theological Anthropology)? This is where technology intersects with theology in terms of Artificial Intelligence, consciousness and sentience. If Roy and Pris as replicants are in fact conscious and sentient, as their behavior seems to demonstrate, should we be killing (“retiring”) them? Theodicy again raises its head in relation to predetermined capacities and limitations by which humans or replicants are imprisoned—an issue which the Apostle Paul addresses in Romans 9-11—which still needs to be taken seriously.

The ultimate message of *Blade Runner* is that ultimately humanity will save themselves through technology—but it’s a message than runs squarely against biblical revelation. Ironically, the film intuitively undermines and succumbs to its own premise: technology does not lead to utopia but rather dystopia.

It is no coincidence that Ridley Scott makes a callback in *Blade Runner* to the Tower of Babel imagery in the 1929 classic *Metropolis*. Like the Fall in Genesis 3, the Tower of Babel narrative reminds us that the essence of sin is this: Pride leads to a false sense of not needing God the Creator and to Rebellion against him—that we can become “god-like” and make our own way. Ultimately a life built without God (including a properly revealed version of him) is a dead end.

Contemplating the Questions Technology Raises

Without a recognition of our sin and separation from God, life remains futile. We are left using technology to try to build our own way to heaven, to grant ourselves eternal life via transhumanism. These ideas—artificial intelligence and transhumanism—raise obvious questions about what it means to be human. What is consciousness? What is soul? What are life and death? Can technology really give us eternal life?

Transhumanism is yet another futile attempt to usurp God and save ourselves through technology. Even if we could upload our consciousness into a cybernetic body, the fatal flaw of transhumanism is that it remains subject to the fragility of our fallen world. What would happen when companies who manufacture parts go belly up or maintenance technicians can no longer be found?

Or consider the artificial eternal life transhumanism purports to offer: without God, there would be no ultimate meaning or purpose for continued existence. Or consider artificial intelligence: even if AI could achieve consciousness and sentience, it would

still be subject to the effects of the Fall in Genesis 3—and consequently be in need of salvation (cf. Romans 1).

Technology is a gift from God for which I am deeply grateful. Indeed, in my own week-daily prayer liturgy, I praise and thank God “for science and technology—which show us more and more of His Glory every day.” But technology is developing faster than our moral capacity to deal with it. Theology is in a unique position to handle the issues.

Think more deeply about the relationship between theology and technology at the Canadian Centre for Scholarship and the Christian Faith’s 2019 conference *Technology and Theology* (May 3-4, 2019 at Concordia University of Edmonton).

Rev. Dr. Bill Anderson is a pastor of Lutheran Church–Canada and professor at Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE). He also serves as Director of the Canadian Centre for Scholarship and the Christian Faith.



Human Rights, the Church, and Canada’s Summer Jobs Program

by *Colin Liske*

While it is true to say that the proper task of the church is the proclamation of the Gospel, it is also true that Christians need to relate to the world around them, a world where human rights are very important and where many new human rights are being claimed today.

As such, it is important to note that the new federal government Summer Jobs Program for 2019 may still violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Up until 2017 all applicants could freely express their own values. In 2018 they could not do so. That year the Summer Jobs Program required all applicants to tick a box which demanded that they attest to a number of relatively new legal rights that were set forth by the government, rights that run counter to the Bible.

The attestation required for the 2019 program is itself more general, stating simply that ‘the Summer Jobs Program will not be used to undermine or restrict the exercise of rights legally protected in Canada.’

Some of the rights in question have recently been added to the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977, as updated on June 19, 2017, saying that included in prohibited grounds of discrimination are sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. The requirements of the 2019 Summer Jobs Program also explicitly mention that these relatively new legal rights cannot be violated.

Further, the new Summer Jobs Program requirements state that projects or job activities that ‘actively work to undermine or restrict a woman’s access to sexual or reproductive health services’ are not eligible. Undermining or restricting is then defined as ‘weaken or limit.’

But what exactly does this mean? These new requirements for the Summer Jobs Program not only still contradict the Bible, but they also may very well violate the fundamental, natural freedoms of expression, of conscience, and of religion that are guaranteed in the Charter. Does ‘weakening’ a woman’s access to ‘reproductive health services’ also include speaking against this at a youth summer camp, or distributing such pamphlets? It probably does.

Our fundamental freedoms were historically and philosophically based on ‘natural law’ or ‘natural rights,’ which meant that they could not be changed. This philosophy says that all people possess these natural or fundamental human rights by nature, by the simple fact that they are human beings. Cicero, like other Stoics, taught in *The Republic* (first century B.C.) that ‘There is in fact a true law—namely, right reason—which is in accordance with nature, applies to all men and is unchangeable and eternal.’ In his *Second Treatise of Government*, John Locke, the British philosopher of 17th century England who so greatly influenced the shapers of revolutionary America, reflected Cicero and many others in speaking of this Law or State of Nature when laying down the philosophical foundations of human rights.

This understanding of natural rights asserts that such natural human rights must not be taken away from the people by governments. People have these rights by nature. These natural and fundamental rights are also to be distinguished from other legal rights that may be created in law by governments. This means that our core natural human rights cannot be superseded by, balanced by, interpreted by, or compromised by other newly created legal rights.

The tragedy of the attestation requirement in the government's Summer Jobs Program is not simply that it still appears to violate natural and fundamental freedoms, but also that it undermines the very basis of the existence of any human rights whatsoever—including every other new human right that might be created by law. Without a solid, unchanging basis of natural rights, the only authority for any 'human rights' that can be claimed at all is that held by virtue of power alone, legal power wielded by whichever government happens to be in power at the time. At such a point, the claim that 'might makes right,' as portrayed in Plato's *Republic*, is again live and well.

Nor does the notion that the new attestation can simply be applied to the 'active work' of the organization applying for funds provide any clarification, for it is in the very nature of these natural, fundamental freedoms to be carried out in public activities, not just in one's own internal conscious believing or thinking. Apparently, the government last year objected to certain participants in the Summer Jobs Program distributing pamphlets that reject some of the values the government promotes. But the writing and distributing of such pamphlets is an activity that is done in freedom of expression. Item 2b of the Charter says that freedom of expression includes 'freedom of the press and other media of communication.' Activities done in freedom of expression cannot be taken out of the public square. It is not freedom of expression when expression is shoved into a closet.

But how does all this relate to the Church? While Scripture does not speak the language of human rights, the law that St. Paul speaks of in Romans 1:18-27 and the conscience he references in Romans 2:12-16 (including this law that was 'written on our hearts') has always been in general agreement with the philosophic tradition of natural law in the western world. This tradition of natural law began in western philosophy at least with the Stoics, even before the time of Christ. They held that there were natural laws that governed ethics just as there were laws that governed the physical world. Luther himself appealed to conscience, as well as reason, at the Diet of Worms.

Together, these philosophers and Christians in the western world thus ultimately forged a political consensus on the basis of natural law. This culminated in the western tradition of law and human rights, which informed the constitutions of a number of countries in the western world, as well as the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. To begin abandoning this human rights tradition, as our federal government still appears intent on doing, is most perilous.

While the pursuit of human rights is not the primary task of the church, Christians and non-Christians alike would nevertheless do well to warn against the development of

new legal rights which undermine traditional fundamental and natural human rights. The survival of real human rights depends on it. In the meantime, Christians would be wise not to accept government funds through the Summer Jobs Program or agree to the new attestation; the details make it appear tainted. One cannot help but think of the columnist Father Raymond J. de Souza, who called the funds last year the government's "thirty pieces of silver."

Rev. Colin Liske is a retired philosophy teacher and Lutheran Church–Canada pastor living in Nanaimo, B.C.

MEET OUR NEWLY CONFIRMED (COMMUNICANT) MEMBERS:



Name: Macie Rae Knoll

Born in Calgary, AB

Baptized at: Knox United church, Jan 15th, 2006

Favorite bible verse: John 1:5

Favorite hymn from our hymnal: Come Thou font & on my heart
imprint your image

School: Dr. Gordon Higgins grade 8

Things you enjoy doing: Playing volleyball, Watching football, Dirtbiking and camping

What do you like the most in our church? Sermons

What new things would you suggest we could do to bring more people to church?

Start using other instruments like more guitars and drums. Have a band be apart of the services. When I attended foothills Lutheran church for the youth weekend, the music they played was played by a band. It was very upbeat and enjoyable. I think this would attract a younger generation of people. They played songs like 1000 reasons, cornerstone, mighty to save, this is amazing grace, Christ is risen, and in Christ alone.



Name: Vanessa Katerina Dean

Born in Calgary, AB May 2nd, 2006

Baptized at: Calgary, June 25th, 2006

Favorite bible verse: Psalm 138:7 “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me.”

Favorite hymn from our hymnal: I don’t have the hymnal here at home with me, so I cannot name one right now. But I would love to mention Reckless Love by Cory

Asbury, which we frequently sing in our school chapels.

School: Glenmore Christian Academy, Grade 7

Things you enjoy doing: Listening to music, singing music, playing guitar, school Drama Club, family time

What do you like the most in our church? I appreciate the community we have at our church and the kindness that is constantly demonstrated.

What new things would you suggest we could do to bring more people to church?
I have no suggestions right now.



Name: Ethan Korey Peter Graumann

Born in Calgary, AB June 30th, 2006

Baptized at: St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Sept 17th, 2006

Favorite bible verse: Psalm 34:8 Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!

Favorite hymn from our hymnal: Father Welcomes, #605

School: Captain Nichola Goddard School, grade 7

Things you enjoy doing: floor hockey, boardgames, computer games

What do you like the most in our church? ushering

What new things would you suggest we could do to bring more people to church?

N/A



Name: Lucas Rosas Zeuch

Born in Ottawa, ON January 16, 2006

Baptized at: Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Ottawa, April 16th, 2006

Favorite bible verse: Psalm 23

Favorite hymn from our hymnal:
“Were you there when they crucified my

Lord”

School: St. Ambrose School, grade 7

Things you enjoy doing: videogame, biking, travelling

What do you like the most in our church? Our pastor!!

What new things would you suggest we could do to bring more people to church?

Use more variety in musical instruments in worship

Name: Thomas Remington Weitz

Born in Rockyview General, Calgary, June 11, 2002



Baptized at: Robert McClure United Church, Calgary, June 22, 2003

Favorite bible verse: John 3:16

Favorite hymn from our hymnal: A mighty fortress is our God

School: Henry Wise Wood High School – Grade 11

Things you enjoy doing: Listening and playing music

What do you like the most in our church? Sunday service and the food!

What new things would you suggest we could do to bring more people to church? Outreach and evangelism.

CHRISTIAN RITES WE’VE HAD SO FAR

Since our last edition of the newsletter, we have had the following Christian rites taking place:

BAPTISMS - No baptisms

CONFIRMATION

Macie Knoll / Ethan Graumann / Vanessa Dean / Lucas Zeuch / Thomas Weitz

PROFESSION OF FAITH: On this upcoming June 9, at our joint service (starting at 10 a.m.), we will welcome two new members to our fellowship: Karin and Tim Hagg. Please take your time to meet this lovely couple and welcome them personally at church! God bless your walking together with us!

WEDDINGS – No weddings

FUNERALS

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints”. Ps 116. 15
The following brothers and sisters in Christ have been called to glory:

Margaret Nietschke – October 2018
Erwin Meiritz – November 2018
Sigfried Kubke – December 2018
Bernhard Kubke – December 2018
Hans Pilz – January 2019
Shirley Fralick – March 2019
Irma Kruger – April 2019



UNSERE DEUTSCHE SEITE

Unsere Orgel, Das „Neue Klavier“ und Neues Gesangbuch

Die Reparaturen haben begonnen und sind in vollem Gange. Wir erwarten im Kürze eine „neue“ gut klingende Orgel. Die Arbeit ist nicht leicht und Teile der Orgel müssen über den Balcon herabgelassen and außerhaus der Kirche repariert werden.

Im Spätherbst oder zum ersten Advent wird es dann soweit sein das neue Instrument einweihen zu können. Herzlichen Dank allen denen, die mit ihren Spenden diese Arbeit möglich gemacht haben.

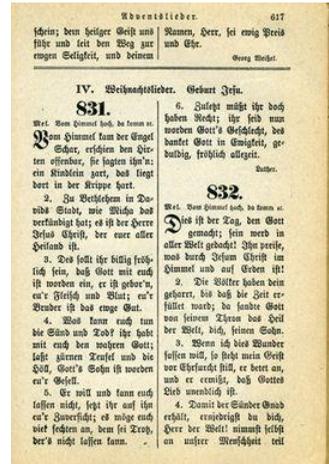
Herr und Frau Hooper

Unsere Kirche besitzt jetzt ein zweites Klavier (eigentlich ein drittes!). Das Ehepaar Mr. und Mrs. Hooper hat in ihrem Testament einen Baldwin Flügel der St. Matthew Kirche hinterlassen. Die Gemeinde ist dafür sehr dankbar.

Neues deutsches Gesangbuch

Das neue kleine deutsche Gesangbuch ist fast fertig. Alle Lieder, die wir oft singen, sind aus der Wolga in das neue Liederbuch übernommen worden. Nicht mehr lange und dann wird mit dem Drucken begonnen. Es hat lange gedauert aber all die Voluntär Arbeit hat sich gelohnt, jeder hat ja seine Arbeit und ist beschäftigt.

Eingereicht von Claudia Tiefisher



WAS GLAUBEN WIR UBER DIE ABTREIBUNG?



Aus der Website der SELK lesen wir: „In der Wegweisung für ev.-luth. Christen „Mit Christus leben“ der SELK (2007/2008) heißt es zur Abtreibung: „Christen setzen sich für jedes entstehende Leben ein, insbesondere für ungeborene Kinder, deren Leben durch Abtreibung bedroht ist. Dies kann unter anderem dadurch geschehen, dass sie betroffenen Müttern bzw. Familien nicht nur bei materieller Not durch konkrete Hilfeleistung

beistehen. Grundsätzlich setzen Christen sich für kinderfreundliche Lebensbedingungen und die Wertschätzung der Familie ein. Für die persönliche Gewissensentscheidung in der Frage der Abtreibung ist folgendes zu bedenken: Ungeachtet der gesetzlichen Regelungen des Staates bleibt die Tötung ungeborenen Lebens Schuld vor Gott. Abtreibung ist kein nachträgliches Verhütungsmittel, sondern die Vernichtung eines Kindes durch einen medizinischen Eingriff, der für die Mutter schwere seelische und körperliche Belastungen mit sich bringen kann. Es gibt Situationen, in denen Abtreibung als einziger Ausweg erscheint, vor allem, wenn das Leben der Mutter akut gefährdet ist. Auch im letzteren Fall bedeutet der Schwangerschaftsabbruch trotzdem Schuld vor Gott. Schwangere Frauen in Krisensituation benötigen unsere Gesprächsbereitschaft, Hilfe und Fürbitte, nicht aber Verurteilungen. Eine mögliche oder wahrscheinliche Behinderung eines noch nicht

geborenen Kindes ist kein Grund, es abzutreiben, denn es gibt keinen Anspruch auf ein gesundes und störungsfreies Leben. Auch das behinderte und kranke Kind steht unter dem Schutz Gottes, dessen Liebe jedem menschlichen Leben gleiche Würde verleiht.“

www.selk.de



FROM OUR ORGANISTS



Organ Update

The repairs on our beloved organ have now begun. The organ has been de-piped and the next step will be to remove part of the console and take it away for repairs. As many of you may know, it is the wind chest for the great which cracked in two ... while this is being rebuilt, the wind chest for the swell is also being rebuilt. Both wind chests are of the same age wood and it is just a matter of time (or another brutally cold and dry winter) and the swell wind chest will crack as well. Other repairs/upgrades are being done while the organ is pulled apart – upgrades that were not necessary and/or in the budget in the refurbishment done in 2016.

I am told that the repairs will take most of the year, but should be completed before Advent, 2019. Thank you again to all those in the congregation who donated generously to make the repairs possible.

Submitted by Claudia Tiefisher



HAVE A GIGGLE!

I hope these clean Christian jokes will get at least a little chuckle out of you. As the saying goes, "Laughter is the best medicine." Even Solomon said, "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones". Proverbs 17:22

One Sunday a pastor told his congregation that the church needed some extra money and asked the people to prayerfully consider giving a little extra in the offering plate. He said that whoever gave the most would be able to pick out three hymns.

After the offering plates were passed, the pastor glanced down and noticed that someone had placed a \$1,000 bill in offering. He was so excited that he immediately shared his joy with his congregation and said he'd like to personally thank the person who placed the money in the plate.

And there sat our Rosie all the way in the back shyly raised her hand. The pastor asked her to come to the front. Slowly she made her way to the pastor. He told her how wonderful it was that she gave so much and in thanksgiving asked her to pick out three hymns.

Her eyes brightened as she looked over the congregation, pointed to the three most handsome men in the building and said, "I'll take him and him and him!"



Don't Mourn Christendom's Death

By Roland Weisbrot

One need not look far to see the erosion of Christianity in the Western World. Churches are declining in number and closing, society is becoming increasingly secular, and Christians are being pushed out of various positions of power. Some even ask, is this the end of Christianity in the West? No. Absolutely not. Our Lord Jesus Christ told us that He would be with us to the very end of the age (Matt. 28:20b). I believe we should take Him for His word, because if we take Him for His word we will recognize that our faith and the Church will always endure. However, there is no arguing that there has been major decline amidst Western Christianity in the last century particularly. So what then are we witnessing the end of? Answer: Christendom.

Christendom, that is, the privileged and influential status Christianity holds in a nation, society, and culture. Christendom is marked by state-support/sponsorship, influence or control in matters of civic governance, and the Church's role as the primary educator in matters of morality, ethics, and belief. This is what is crumbling before our eyes, Christianity's preferred status in our countries. So why should we not be mourning this catastrophe of the modern age? Quite simply, because centuries of enjoying the privileges of Christendom has hollowed out our theology and our faith. Let me outline a few examples:

1. State-sponsorship is often coupled with state-interference
2. Exercising control over civic matters is not primarily what Christians are called to do
3. Forcing our societies to learn the tenants of our faith will not make the world a better place

1. State-sponsorship has afforded Christianity many nice things, massive cathedrals, unparalleled art, and unmatched corruption. A state-sponsored church will find that as the years pass away, so will its likeness to Christ. The state church always becomes a fat cat, then it silences portions of the Gospel deemed "offensive" or "incompatible" according to the state, and becomes burdened with simony and nepotism. The pews become filled with people not concerned about the faith they claim to practice but see the Church only as a civic duty that must be fulfilled, or even worse, a method of upward social mobility. Though there are indeed instances when state involvement in the Church has been beneficial, Emperor Constantine and his Ecumenical Councils come to mind, the vast majority of state involvement has been detrimental. One need look no further than the Scandinavian state-churches or the *Evangelische Kirche Deutschland* (Evangelical Church of Germany) to prove that point. In these churches, the government has used its funding as a way to effect changes in doctrine and belief, essentially compromising Christian orthodoxy. In other words, rip Christ out, put culture in. Thus, losing state-sponsorship may not be such a bad thing for the Church. This way we can confess our faith according to our own rules and traditions, without outside interference.

2. Christians, first and foremost, are called to be servants (Rom. 7:6; Heb. 9:14). This is not to say Christians cannot and do not perform civic duties, but they should do so in the spirit of servanthood. In other words, if a Christian is elevated to a place of civic power, he or she should not abuse it or use it to take advantage of those they are supposed to be representing. However, in Christendom, this distinction is often lost and power-hungry frauds who only used the Church as a means of social mobility

begin to dominate the ranks of the ecclesial and civic authorities. When this happens everyone suffers under their harshness, cruelty, and corruption. Additionally, when this power apparatus is eventually thrown off, the people are quick to blame the church for all of the problems. The French Revolution comes to mind. Thus, state churches can and often do irreparable damage to Christianity's reputation among the people. For me, this is another reason why Christendom's death may actually be good for our faith and our churches, so that we may once again become like Christ.

3. Those who do not want to listen will never learn. Likewise, those who do not wish to apply themselves will never succeed. It is a simple fact really, yet in Christendom, there is usually an emphasis on educating everyone in the matters of the faith. Now generally I do not really have a problem with this. Overall, I think some form of religious education is good for every person to have. That being said, just because the material is being taught does not mean it will be accepted and internalized. No amount of force or coercion will change that fact on a level deeper than outward appearance. As a result, forceful religious education, as often found in Christendom, regularly creates a group of angry and spiteful people who go through the motions but their hearts and minds, hate Christ and His Church. This is where so many of the Marxist and social-conflict theory scholars find their ammunition to claim the Church and the faith as the oppressor of the masses. What I am saying is, systemized and intensive Christian education should not necessarily be forced upon everyone. It is much better to leave intensive Christian education and the expectations that come with being part of the community of faith to the people who genuinely wish to participate in it. I realize this adversely affects the number of Christians, but arguably I prefer a smaller more faithful community to a large apathetic community.

In conclusion, these are some of the reasons I believe we should not mourn the death of Christendom in the West. As cheesy and cliché as it may sound, the Church desperately needs a revival and it needs to get back to the core of its purpose – service to God and to our neighbour. May we as Christians of the Western world not lament our loss of earthly power, but rather seek our citizenship and treasure in heaven above.



THE AGAPE NEWS is a periodic publication at St. Matthew Lutheran Church Calgary. It is usually printed and handed out twice a year. Articles are gathered from different contributors, members and non-members of our congregation. Selection, theological review and editing by Rev. Markus Zeuch. Many thanks to our secretary Andrea Sovary for all the hard work of printing, stapling and folding!

Please consider being a contributor for the next publications!

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Sunday services:

German worship service with Holy Communion 9:30 a.m.

English worship service with Holy Communion 11 a.m.

Sunday School 11:20 a.m.

BIBLE STUDIES:

German monthly bible study: the 1st Wednesday of the month 1:00 pm

English monthly bible study: the 4th Wednesday of the month 6:30 pm

English weekly bible study: every Sunday at 10 a.m., with some exceptions.

Please always check in advance by calling the office.

