

# Agape

## SEPTEMBER 2024

ST. MATTHEW LUTHERAN CHURCH

111 years proclaiming Christ in Bridgeland!

By Rev. Markus Zeuch

Hello there!

Here we are back again with our Agape. I hope your summer was good and relaxing. It was for me! For those who were out of town, we are looking forward to seeing you at church! We are starting a new year of activities in our congregation. Soon our boards will meet to plan for the year. New beginnings are always full of hope. This year particularly has been a year full of new beginnings for me personally, as you know. I have settled in really well now in the parsonage. I love to walk, my dog in Bridgeland and interact with the local neighbours!



We also enter the fall season, when the hot temperatures give way to cooler days, some rain, (even snow in the mountains) and a sense of gratitude for the changing of seasons, the changing of colours in the trees, the warmth and coziness the season brings, inviting us for a cup of tea, a good book, maybe a delicious soup!

In September we see the streets filled with school buses again, taking kids back to school – and parents sipping their coffee with a sigh of relieve!

For some, September means back to church. We come together and meet again. The church is the place for fellowship, comfort, worship, growth, nourishment and Christian friendship. There is one thing I keep in my prayers: We still don't have a chair person or a treasurer (besides other positions). I pray that this year the Lord will touch your heart to consider volunteering for one of these vacant positions. At least for a short term – maybe a 2-year period? We have operated the church as best as we can without these positions, but it's time for each of us ask ourselves: how can I better serve God and this church I love? Do I wish this congregation to continue flourishing and growing? Do I want to see my children and grandchildren attending this church? Could I be a chair person (or a treasurer) for a period? Remember that our new bylaws now allow women to be chair as well. That was approved at our April 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. As you read this newsletter, consider yourself challenged to ask these questions and consider in your heart serving your church this way!



I continue to pray that somebody shows up at my office one of these days with a “here I am, I want to serve”!

P. Zeuch

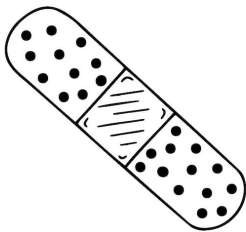
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## ARTICLE

In this edition I want to share an article written by pastor Robert Bugbee back in 2016 entitled “a place for comfort”. Enjoy!

If you read the New Testament faithfully, you will see that the early Christian congregations were not perfect places. Beautiful things happened in them, to be sure. Painful disappointments were there, too, however. Some people lied to the apostles about their giving to the church. Others were proud due to spiritual “wisdom” they thought set them above everybody else. Still others left the faith because they were too in love with the world.

So, the early Christians had to struggle. Pastors like Paul and Barnabas told believers to expect it. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said (Acts 14:22). Jesus’ followers faced pressure from a hostile world around them; no surprise there. They had to endure discord within the church family, as the Bible makes clear. Then there’s also the struggle going on inside you between temptations to sin and your desire to go the Lord’s way through faith in Jesus.



Struggles wear you down. They dishearten. This means the Church is full of people who need comfort badly. Sometimes you are one of them; I certainly am. You can be sure that there are others in your church family in the same situation. Our churches ought to be places where men and women find comfort.

What is comfort, anyway? In the Bible’s way of figuring, it’s not a sleeping pill or some magical formula that suddenly—*poof!*—makes trouble go away. It isn’t an easy word somebody speaks to make you numb, so you don’t feel struggles anymore. Years ago on *The Lutheran Hour* I recall Rev. Dr. Oswald Hoffmann describing comfort like this: to strengthen greatly. He meant that comfort

supports you—like one of those old-fashioned stretch bandages—so you hold together, have more stamina, can keep functioning.

Jesus' apostles spoke this strong brand of comfort into the early churches they planted. They didn't offer a fairy-tale promise to fix every problem in five minutes or less. They did pump fresh encouragement and strength to face the struggles in the power of God's Holy Spirit.

God's comfort is rooted in Jesus and what He has done for you.

Any worthwhile comfort you offer a believing friend in the body of Christ can never really come from you. Scripture calls our Lord "the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). This is comfort the faithless world does not know. It runs deeper than the typical pep-talks telling you to "keep a stiff upper lip" or that "things will turn out okay." The fact is my capacity to stay strong falls flat sometimes. I imagine you are like me in having lived through struggles that did not end very well.



God's comfort is rooted in Jesus and what He has done for you. He died to win your pardon. He was raised again to open heaven's kingdom to you. In Jesus you have God's pledge your prayers are being heard, and that He gives you power to cope... even if a given sorrow does not end well, or even if you have to endure a struggle that drags on without end. "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all... how will

He not also, together with Him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). One of those things God gives is help when you're up against it.

The Christian Church ought to be a place where people receive comfort for their wounds, whether pressures from the world around, bitter disappointments that surface even within the church, and the struggles you feel with personal sin and weakness inside. Comfort comes when Christ's Good News is faithfully preached, and when people feast on His body and blood at the Lord's Table. Comfort is also a powerful treasure you can share with other believers when you take a serious interest in them, stand by them when they're struggling, and speak to them the same comfort God has brought you in Christ.

You don't need me to point out that our Canadian society has changed. It doesn't affirm biblical Christianity much anymore. Many believers in Christ will quite likely not survive in the faith unless they live by Word and prayer. Local churches that hope to endure in the changing world around us will need to be ever more nurturing places where their people receive the kind of comfort you can only get from Jesus.

Armed with that God-given comfort, the early Christians coped. Their world wasn't easy on them. They weren't spared discord in their churches. They also felt the wearying struggle with sin inside, just as you do. But the comfort Christ brings carried them. That comfort, like a heartbeat, can be alive and real as you turn it loose and aim it at someone who needs it right now.

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**Rev. Dr. Robert Bugbee** served as Lutheran Church–Canada's third president (from 2008-2018). This article was originally published in the July/August 2016 issue of *The Canadian Lutheran*.




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**PRAYER FOR OUR YOUTH:** Please pray for the youth members who will be beginning their journey with studies at universities. May God grant them guidance and wisdom as they begin this new chapter in their lives. We also pray for our young members who are continuing their studies.

**BADLANDS PASSION PLAY:** On July 6<sup>th</sup> we had a group of 22 people who went to see the passion play at the biggest Canadian outdoor stage. I (pastor) was not able to go due to an emergency, but I only heard good things from those who went!

**MEMBERS PASSING:** It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing of our brother Al Wolff this last Sunday. **Albert Wolff** (88) was a faithful and active member of our church, having been an elder, a counter, a communion assistant and also helped organize dinners for special events. He also served as an ambassador of the Lutheran Laymen's League. He is survived by his wife Arlene

and daughter Karen (Jim), all members of our church. A funeral service will be held at our church on Saturday, September 7 at 1 pm.

One July 3<sup>rd</sup> we commended **Rick Erismann** to the Lord's care. Rick was baptized and confirmed at our church. He is survived by his parents, Willy and Gerda Erismann, faithful members of our church. May God bring comfort to the families in the hope of the promised resurrection to all believers in Christ.

### **NEW MEMBERS:**

We praise the Lord for the new members that have joined our church and for those being prepared to join us.

On August 4<sup>th</sup>, we received **Thomas Berhe Okbazgui** as a new member through profession of faith. Thomas comes from the Lutheran church in Eritrea. Welcome Thomas!

On August 11 we baptized **Aram Mulugieta**, son of Mulugieta Musa and Senet Asfha, from Eritrea. Welcome to our church family, Aram!

**Profession of Faith:** The following adults are getting prepared to be received as new members at our church:

- Gustavo Behne Miro, from Brazil
- Dawson Tarnasky, from Calgary
- Selam Negga, from Eritrea, Africa

We will welcome them to our fellowship pretty soon.

**SUNDAY SCHOOL:** Begins Sunday, September 8 for children ages 5 - 10 at 11am. Bring your children. Come learn about the many bible stories of God's love!!



### **FROM OUR PROPERTIES:**

**CONCRETE STEPS REPLACEMENT-UPDATE:** The concrete stairs project has had some delays due to project management issues and weather. Levels need to be poured individually and engineer inspections done between each level. There is also a landscaper and railings company involved in the project with the pieces sometimes being complicated to coordinate. The job is being constantly monitored by both the engineer and project manager. There are no concerns and we are happy the job is being completed to professional standards. As of June 25, 2024, \$11,550 has been donated from congregation members towards the stair replacement. The original project cost was \$60,000. No monies have gone to the contractor from the original job. If you would like to support this project, please indicate on your collection envelope "Stairs project". Thanks for your support and understanding.

**STAINED GLASS WINDOW DONATIONS:** We thank our Congregation for donations made toward the restoration of our first stained glass window. The restoration turned out beautifully and our members have voiced that they are pleased with the results. The total cost of the restoration was \$19,200.00, we have received \$13,250.00 in funds as of the end of July. To keep the Congregation informed we will update the amount of donations for this window at the end of each month. As discussed at numerous Congregational meetings unfortunately the majority of our windows are in poor condition and will need to be restored. Should you wish to make a special donation toward our on-going window project please indicate by marking the donation "Building Fund - Stained Glass Windows"

**RED CROSS ON THE STEEPLE:** You may have noticed that the cross on the steeple was in the dark for a while. Our property members have called a company to fix the red neon light, so that the empty cross symbolizing God's love in Jesus Christ for all humanity may continue to bring comfort and joy to all in the neighbourhood.

**DID YOU KNOW?** I have the opportunity to go up the stairs inside the steeple and look at our huge bell from up close. It came from Baltimore, MD and was built in 1913 – the year of foundation of our congregation! Here's a picture I took. It also has a loudspeaker on top, to spread the sound even farther! This 111-year-old bell has invited the people for worship for all those years!




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## WHAT'S PLANNED FOR SEPTEMBER?

- Sept 21 (Sun):** Communion service in German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m.
- Sept 2 (Mon):** Labour Day. Office is closed.
- Sept 5 (Thurs):** Board of Elders meeting @ 7 p.m. (on zoom)
- Sept 7 (Sat):** Funeral service for Albert Wolff @ 1p.m. (church)
- Sept 8 (Sun):** Grandparents Day!
- Sept 8 (Sun):** Communion service in German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m.
- Sept 10 (Tues):** Pastor leads worship at Bethany Riverview
- Sept 10 (Tues):** Resuming online Bible Study @ 7 p.m.
- Sept 12 (Thurs):** Meeting of the Tannenbaum Festival planning group
- Sept 14 (Sat):** Men's Breakfast @ 9:30 a.m. (church basement)
- Sept 15 (Sun):** Communion services followed by coffee hour
- Sept 17 (Tues):** Online Bible Study @ 7 p.m.
- Sept 22 (Sun):** Autumnal Equinox (fall begins!)
- Sept 22 (Sun):** Communion service in German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m.

**Sept 24 (Tues):** Online Bible Study @ 7 p.m.

**Sept 25 (Wed):** Pastor attending the Calgary circuit winkel

**Sept 26 (Thurs):** Parish Planning Council meeting @ 7 p.m.

**Sept 29 (Sun):** Communion service in German @ 9:30 a.m. In English @ 11 a.m.

**Sept 29 (Sun):** Online Bible study in Portuguese

Note: Pastor's days off are on Fridays and Saturdays, unless there's an emergency or an event taking place.



## UNSERE DEUTSCHE ECKE

### Was die Bibel von Großvätern und Großmüttern berichtet

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*Am 26. Juli gedenkt die Katholische Kirche der heiligen Anna und des heiligen Joachim, der Eltern der Maria und damit der Großeltern Jesu. Was berichtet die Bibel sonst noch über Großeltern?*

Methusalem war mit 969 Lebensjahren der älteste Mensch der Bibel. Er war der Großvater von Noah, der mit Hilfe seiner Arche den Fortbestand von Mensch- und Tierwelt sicherte. Großväter und -mütter tauchen in den Stammbäumen Israels auf. Jakob gilt

zusammen mit seinem Großvater Abraham und seinem Vater Isaak als einer der Stammväter der zwölf Stämme Israels. Nachkommenschaft gilt als Segen, der mit der Bundesbeziehung zu Gott verheißen ist: „Eine Krone der Alten sind Kindeskinde“ (Spr 17,6).

#### **Besonderheit in den Zehn Geboten**

Über das Zusammenleben von Großeltern und Enkeln erzählt die Bibel wenig. Der familiäre Zusammenhang war in der gesamten Bibel jedoch überlebenswichtig, da er die Altersversorgung garantierte. Die Weisung „Ehre deinen Vater und deine

Mutter“ ist als einziges der Zehn Gebote verbunden mit der Zusage eines langen, erfüllten Lebens in dem Land, das der Herr als Lebensgrund gibt.

Die Eltern sind Lebens- und Traditionsträger, deshalb sollen auch die arbeitsunfähigen, „lästigen“ (Groß-)Eltern nicht im Stich gelassen, sondern um- und versorgt werden. Sie sind die „Nächsten“, die Allernächsten jedes Menschen, zugleich Partner des Schöpfers in der besonderen Weise, dass sie ihre Kinder zur Welt bringen. Daher haben sie Anteil an Respekt und Hochschätzung, die dem Schöpfer zukommen. „Hat eine Witwe Kinder oder Enkel, sollen diese lernen, ihren Angehörigen Ehrfurcht zu erweisen und dankbar für ihre Mutter oder Großmutter zu sorgen; denn das gefällt Gott“ (1 Tim 5,4).

### **Der Vater Josefs und die Eltern Marias**

Stief-Großvater Jesu war Jakob, der Vater Josefs. Nur die Kindheitsgeschichten bei Matthäus und Lukas sprechen von den Eltern Jesu, Maria und Josef. Mehr nicht. Wenn aber Gottes Sohn schon hineingeboren wird in eine menschliche Familie, muss es auch mütterlicherseits Großeltern geben. Sie sind aber lediglich außerbiblich bezeugt im „Protoevangelium des Jakobus“: Joachim und Anna.

Die einzige im Neuen Testament namentlich erwähnte Großmutter ist Lois mit ihrer Tochter Eunike, der Mutter des Timotheus. Paulus schreibt von ihrem bemerkenswerten Glauben, den sie an ihre Familie weitergegeben haben, der für die spirituelle Entwicklung des Sohnes und Enkels bedeutsam war. „Ich denke an deinen aufrichtigen Glauben, der schon in deiner Großmutter Lois und in deiner Mutter Eunike lebendig war und der nun, wie ich weiß, auch in dir lebt“ (2 Tim 1,5).

### **Auftrag der Weitergabe des Glaubens**

Der Schluss liegt nahe, dass das überzeugende und begeisternde Glaubensleben von Großeltern und Eltern und dessen Vermittlung für die geistliche Entwicklung der Kinder ungeheuer wichtig ist. Zur Weitergabe der eigenen Glaubenserfahrungen ermuntert das Buch Deuteronomium (4,9) Eltern und Großeltern: „Vergiss nicht die Ereignisse, die du mit eigenen Augen gesehen, und die Worte, die du gehört hast. Lass sie dein ganzes Leben lang nicht aus dem Sinn! Präge sie deinen Kindern und Kindeskindern ein!“ Denn „die Huld des Herrn währt immer und ewig für alle, die ihn fürchten und ehren; sein Heil erfahren noch Kinder und Enkel“ (Ps 103,17).



Vom generationenübergreifenden Gotteslob spricht Maria im Magnificat: „Von nun an werden mich seligpreisen alle Kindeskinder“ (Lk 1,48).



**E-MAIL LIST:** If you are not on our e-mail list yet, I recommend you to contact me (pastor) and give me your email address, so you can receive **the Agape** every month and other notifications or announcements that are important for members or friends of our congregation. You will also receive the invitation to participate on Sunday worship on zoom in case you are not able to make it to church, or forward it to someone you think would like to worship with us.

May God's amazing and unconditional love (*agape*) reach you and your family during this new season.

In His service,  
**Rev. Markus Zeuch**  
Calgary, on August 29, 2024

