



**CROWN OF LIFE** | LUTHERAN  
CHURCH

**July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025**  
*5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost*

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*A Service of Worship and Praise*

**-We Gather as God's People to Worship Him-**

**OPENING HYMN**

**African-American Heritage Hymnal 320**  
*Spirit of the Living God*

*PLEASE STAND*

**Minister says:** We begin our worship in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**-We Lift Up Our Hands and Voices to God-**

**We sing:**

*In Moments Like These*

In moments like these I sing out a song,  
I sing out a love song to Jesus.  
In moments like these I lift up my hands,  
I lift up my hands to the Lord.

Singing, "I love you Lord," singing, "I love you Lord;"  
Singing, "I love you Lord. I love you."

**-We Prepare Our Hearts-**

**M:** We stand here today before our Lord and Maker. He has created us to love Him and serve one another. But we have separated ourselves from Him with our sins. Let us be honest and confess to Him our sins.

**C:** Merciful Father, I confess that I am a sinner. I make no excuses. I have sinned against you by things I have done and the things I have not done. But I know that Jesus died for me. I stand before you in need of, and trusting in, your forgiveness.

**We sing:**

*I Need Thee Every Hour*

I need Thee ev'ry hour, Most gracious Lord;  
No tender voice like Thine Can peace afford.

I need Thee, O I need Thee; Ev'ry hour I need Thee;  
O bless me now, my Savior, I come to Thee.

I need Thee ev'ry hour, Teach me Thy will;  
And Thy rich promises In me fulfill.

I need Thee, O I need Thee; Ev'ry hour I need Thee;  
O bless me now, my Savior, I come to Thee.

**M:** It is my duty and privilege as a called servant of God to announce to you that you are forgiven. You have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ and stand before Him forgiven of all your sins, His child, and an heir of eternal life. Let's thank Him for His amazing grace.

**We sing:**

*He Looked Beyond My Fault*

Amazing grace shall always be my song of praise,  
For it was grace that bought my liberty.

I do not know just why Christ came to love me so,  
He looked beyond my fault and saw my need.

I shall forever lift mine eyes to Calvary,  
To view the cross where Jesus died for me;

How marvelous the grace that caught my falling soul,  
He looked beyond my fault and saw my need.

*BE SEATED*

## **-We Listen to God's Word-**

### **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON**

*Ruth 1:1-19a*

**1** In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. **2** The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

**3** Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. **4** They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, **5** both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

**6** When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. **7** With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

**8** Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. **9** May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."

Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud **10** and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

**11** But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? **12** Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— **13** would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has turned against me!"

<sup>14</sup> At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

<sup>15</sup> "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

<sup>16</sup> But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. <sup>17</sup> Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." <sup>18</sup> When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

<sup>19</sup> So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem

**We sing:**

*Order My Steps (v1)*

Order my steps in Your Word dear Lord,  
Lead me, guide me, every day,  
Send Your anointing, Father, I pray.  
Order my steps in Your word.  
Please, order my steps in Your word.

I want to walk worthy, My calling to fulfill.  
Please order my steps, Lord, And I'll do Your blessed will,  
The world is ever changing, but You are still the same.  
If You order my steps, I'll praise Your name.

**EPISTLE LESSON**

*Galatians 5:13-25*

<sup>13</sup> You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. <sup>14</sup> For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup> If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

<sup>16</sup> So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that

you are not to do whatever you want. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

<sup>19</sup> The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

**We sing:**

*Order My Steps (v3)*

Bridle my tongue, let my words edify;  
Let the words of my mouth be acceptable in Thy sight.  
Take charge of my thoughts, both day and night.  
Order my steps in Your word.  
Please, order my steps in Your word.

I want to walk worthy, My calling to fulfill.  
Please order my steps, Lord, And I'll do Your blessed will,  
The world is ever changing, but You are still the same.  
If You order my steps, I'll praise Your name.

*PLEASE STAND*

**GOSPEL LESSON**

*Luke 10:25-37*

<sup>25</sup> On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

<sup>27</sup> He answered, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

<sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

<sup>29</sup> But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

<sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

<sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

<sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

<sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

*BE SEATED*

## **CHILDREN'S MESSAGE**

### **HYMN OF THE DAY**

**African-American Heritage Hymnal 271**

*Amazing Grace*

### **SERMON**

***Let's Live by the Spirit!***

*Galatians 5:13-25*

*PLEASE STAND*

**CONFESSION OF FAITH**

*Apostle's Creed*

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell. The third day, He rose again from the dead. He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there, He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

AMEN.

*BE SEATED*

**OFFERING**

*Instrumental*

*PLEASE STAND*

**PRAYERS**

*The Lord's Prayer*

**M:** Brother and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another. Serve the Lord with gladness.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. AMEN.

*BE SEATED*

**CLOSING HYMN**

**African-American Heritage Hymnal 299**

*Blessed Be the Name*



## **Leaders from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, WELS, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod regularly meet informally to discuss church life and doctrine.**

Once a year since 2012, leaders from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) have been meeting, with the latest meeting taking place Dec. 9–10, 2024, in Jacksonville, Fla.

People familiar with the history of these synods know that such meetings are unprecedented. The ELS suspended fellowship with the LCMS in 1955, and WELS did likewise in 1961. Both completely severed relations with the LCMS in 1963 by withdrawing from the Synodical Conference. From 1963 until 2012, only a handful of official meetings took place between LCMS leaders and ELS/WELS leaders (these two synods remained in fellowship with each other), and none had the size and duration of the current meetings. At the 2024 meeting—the 13th annual meeting—the ELS had 4 representatives, the LCMS had 11, and WELS 8.

### **Why the meetings?**

The current meetings are not understood to be formal doctrinal discussions to see if church fellowship can be restored. The reestablishment of church fellowship—a splendid goal that everyone can pray for—does not seem attainable in the immediate future. Rather, the meetings are understood as informal meetings, designed to help the estranged synods learn about one another through face-to-face interaction and to discuss topics of mutual interest.

One reason why the meetings are happening at the present time is because the LCMS is not at the same place that it was 60 years ago, when it was tending in a more liberal direction, entering into fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. The LCMS has solidly reestablished its commitment to the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions and has ended all official discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Perhaps now is the time for former partners from the Synodical Conference to become reacquainted. The LCMS, WELS, and the ELS enjoyed fellowship in the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America from 1872 to 1961, and when fellowship was severed, it was severed with the hope that someday it might be restored.

### **Much in common**

The recent meetings have been conducted without joint prayer and worship, since church fellowship is not recognized among all the synods. However,

meeting participants have found that they enjoy one another's company, and they have come to understand that the three synods have much in common.

All three synods face similar challenges. The United States membership of each synod has been declining, and many small congregations no longer are able to support a pastor. Church workers are in short supply at the same time that the number of young people is historically low. And the cultural forces that oppose Christianity confront each synod mightily on every side.

The synods are also blessed in similar ways. Colleges and seminaries spread throughout the synods are functioning well. The finances of each synod are stable, and there are leaders who oversee doctrine and strive to maintain doctrinal integrity. Each synod enjoys a vibrant international church association: the LCMS is a member of the International Lutheran Council with 55 member churches, and WELS and the ELS are members of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference with 34 member churches. The opportunities for confessional Lutheran outreach around the world are exploding to such an extent that it is difficult for mission personnel to keep up with the inquiries and opportunities.

Most important, among the leaders of the three synods at the present time, there is a common commitment to the Bible as the inerrant Word of God and to the Lutheran Confessions as a correct presentation of the doctrines of the Bible. Though doctrinal challenges remain, a common foundation has been apparent in the meetings.

## **Doctrinal topics**

Quite a bit of time in these meetings has been spent on the discussion of doctrine, and the leaders of the three synods seem to be on the same page with many teachings. Topics that have been discussed with agreement include the doctrines of creation and justification. Agreement has also been presumed on many other doctrines, including the Trinity, the person and work of Christ, the sacraments, conversion, election, the two kingdoms, and the end times. When reviews were made of one another's catechisms, a high degree of similarity was noted among them. The same was the case when one another's hymnals were reviewed. Of course, one doesn't know how uniformly these teachings are confessed and practiced throughout each synod.

The main doctrinal challenges are found in three areas—long identified as disputed. One is church fellowship. Though we all agree on the general principles and on the practice of closed communion, we differ on prayer fellowship, with the LCMS allowing for joint prayer outside the parameters of pulpit and altar fellowship.

The second involves the roles of men and women. Though all agree that there is an “order of creation” with male headship, we differ on how that is best expressed and implemented. The LCMS, for example, allows women to vote in all congregational and synodical meetings.

The third deals with the public ministry. Though we all have pastors and a variety of other church workers, we talk in different ways about what is divinely instituted. The LCMS says that Christ instituted the Office of the Public Ministry (preaching office), while WELS and the ELS present the divinely instituted public ministry more broadly.

In the discussions on these topics, it has been useful to hear directly what the other synods teach and to understand better why they teach as they do. In some cases, caricatures have been removed, and the differences have been shown to be less than had been imagined. Still, genuine differences do exist, and the ramifications of these differences need to be part of any future discussions among the synods.

### **Future interaction**

Meeting participants are hoping to open up intersynodical discussion more broadly in the coming years. Plans are being made for one or more free conferences in 2026, designed for people from all three synods—clergy and laypeople alike. In this free conference setting, a fuller report on the annual meetings will be given. Just as the leaders from the three synods have benefited by becoming acquainted, so also local church leaders may benefit by similar interaction with their intersynodical neighbors.

Another leadership meeting is planned for December 2025, in keeping with the will of the synods. Since 2012, all three synods have passed convention resolutions that have encouraged continued discussions. Where the conversations will go, under God’s guidance, is unknown. But by God’s grace, there has been a noteworthy rapprochement among leaders from the LCMS, WELS, and the ELS in the past decade.

*Author: Thomas Nass*

*Thomas Nass, who recently retired as a professor at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minn., has attended these joint informal meetings since they began in 2012. He served for many years on the WELS Commission on Inter-Church Relations, a commission under the Conference of Presidents that represents the synod in doctrinal discussions with other church bodies. He currently is president of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference, an international fellowship of 34 confessional Lutheran church bodies including WELS and the ELS.*

<b><u>Serving at Col.:</u></b>	<b><u>Today</u></b>	<b><u>Next Sunday</u></b>
Music	Katherine, Elijah	Karis, Elijah
Ushers	Seth, Mike	
Reader	Mike	Edward, Jr.
Altar		
Streaming	Noah	Noah
Refreshments		
Cleaning		
Mowing		

## **CALENDAR**

Today	Church Council; Ladies Guild
Thursday	1:00 PM Bible Basics Course
Sunday	10:00 AM Bible Class, Sunday School
Sunday	11:00 AM Worship
Jul 20	2025 Q2 Congregational Meeting
Jul 21-25	Camp South, Covington, GA
Jul 26	9:00 AM Outreach, VBS flyers at Joe Brown Park
Jul 27	Mission Festival, Rev. Jon Kehl
Jul 28-Aug 2	VBS: Wonder Junction
Aug 3	Kids Kount
Sep 7	Grandparents Day



*"...give what you have decided in your heart  
to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion,  
for God loves a cheerful giver."  
II Corinthians 9:7*

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**CROWN OF LIFE**