

# Mission Connection

MISSION CONNECTION

JANUARY 2021

**All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**  
**2 Timothy 3:16-17**

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## Pastor's Message

Over the past few months we have been considering evangelism from the perspective of advertising and sales. We turn finally to the question, What is our brand? In other words, what is the *Lutheran* approach to Christianity? And immediately we're in trouble! There are currently over 36 active branches of

Lutheranism within North America alone! While the common denominator among them might be their constitutional claims to embrace and/or endorse the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, the devil is always in the details! In addition to that, what an institution claims to be fundamental statements of faith for its membership and what those members actually claim for themselves might be as different as night and day! For example, I might make the statement that Mission in Christ believes \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank). No matter what statement I might make, immediately there will be members declaring, "No, no! I'm a member and I don't believe that!"

Consequently, individual congregations within larger denominational bodies are encouraged to adopt some basic statement of faith upon which all within the congregation in particular and within the larger denomination in general *ought* to be able to agree.

Here is that statement from Mission in Christ's constitution:  
 "We believe and confess:

1. The Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.
  - a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.
  - b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.



## Pastor's Message

(cont.)

- c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by the Holy Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them the Holy Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.
3. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith and life.
  4. The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds.
  5. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession.
  6. The other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord.
  7. The Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings,
  8. The Common Confession of 2005."

Ok, then! We're now faced with the question of what to do with all those documents that we named and stated that we believe them! What if we don't know what they are? What if we don't know what they say? And what about some of those phrases? What do they mean?

The answer to that is profoundly simple: find them, read them, and learn them! Study them on your own. Get a small group together and discuss them. Ask your pastor to teach classes about them! Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you!

## Over the Coffee



Being held accountable may feel like an attack if one is not ready to acknowledge how one's poor decisions impact others.



## Ask Pastor Gary

**Q** Pastor Gary, currently we have no requirements for being a member of Mission in Christ. Is this wise? What if someone just signs one of the “covenant” forms, and then fails to give anything, or never attends worship, or take Communion? Should such a person be allowed to vote at our annual meeting?

**A** You’ve raised really good questions for which there are no simple answers! But let’s take things one at a time and unpack it a bit.  
 First, let’s consider your statement that “we have no requirements for being a member of Mission in Christ”. One would first need to ask if you meant *voting* member, or a *member* in the general sense of association and affiliation with the church. According to our constitution, while there a number of things that we would *like* to have pertain to anyone professing membership, there are several very clear requirements for a person to be a *voting member* (and thus be able to serve on the council, etc.). The criteria are:  
 Must be baptized  
 Must be 18 years of age  
 Must have signed a Mission in Christ Membership Covenant

At the heart of your concern seems to be issues with attendance, financial support, and receiving the Sacrament. Let’s first review what signing the Membership Covenant involves. It is a solemn promise, a pledge, to not only support the mission and ministry of the congregation, but also a pledge to fulfill exactly the same promises we made at our Confirmation, or Affirmation of Baptism. We promised we would continue to live among God’s faithful people, hear his Word and share in His Supper, proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serve all people following the example of our Lord Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

The Membership Covenant at Mission in Christ is intended to be like a marriage vow. If one were to take any of the promises made in that situation and quantify them, the whole point would be lost. The couple would forever be scrutinizing themselves and each other to see if they had satisfied the requirements, how they had measured up! How petty! How un-loving and untrusting!

In the same way, the promises made in the Membership Covenant will never be accomplished by quantifying them, regardless of where we might set the bar. They will only be fulfilled in and through faith, which the Scriptures and our Confessions declare is created by the Holy Spirit in those who hear the Gospel. Hearts are not change by setting down rules, regulations, and requirements, but by God’s Word.

As far as financially supporting the church and receiving the Sacrament are concerned, 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, “*Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*” In a very similar fashion, our Confessions are clear that “*no one should by any means be coerced or compelled*” to partake in the Sacrament of the Altar (Large Catechism, ¶42).



## Ask Pastor Gary

*(Cont.)*

The Membership Covenant trusts the Holy Spirit to do that which he promises to do: create faith, and “create in us a clean heart” (Psalm 51: 10), and that from within that faith and that new heart people will indeed attend, give, and receive.

In contrast, setting specific parameters on giving, attending, or receiving the Sacrament turns everything upside down and makes our life in the Body of Christ all about what we’re claiming to be doing for Christ rather than confessing what Christ is doing in and for us.



## Cloud of Witnesses

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.*

*(Hebrews 12:1-2)*

We believe that even those saints who have died are still alive in Christ Jesus. Among them are those giants of the faith upon whose shoulders we stand, and they, too, comprise this “great cloud” that surrounds us. Here is a list of “Cloud Members” who are remembered during the month of January:

January 2: Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe, renewer of the church – died 1872

January 9: Darlene Morris, Mission in Christ partner in ministry—died 2018

January 15: Martin Luther King Jr., renewer of society – died 1968

January 17: Antony of Egypt, renewer of the church – died ~356; Pachomius, renewer of the church – died 346

January 19: Henry, Bishop of Uppsala, martyr – died 1156

January 21: Agnes, martyr – died ~304

January 26: Timothy, Titus, and Silas, missionaries

## Council Meeting Minutes

*Are available upon request from  
Pastor or Council Member*





## Stanza of the Month

### Once Again My Heart Rejoices (LBW #46, v.2)

*Hear! A voice from yonder manger,  
Soft and sweet, does entreat,  
"Flee from woe and danger;  
Come and see; from all that grieves you  
You are freed; all you need  
I will surely give you."*

While this Christmas hymn is not one with which many are familiar, it clearly reflects some of Martin Luther's sentiments expressed in one of his Christmas sermons:

*Let us, then, meditate upon the Nativity as we see it happening in our own babies. Behold Christ lying in the lap of his young mother. What can be sweeter than the Babe, what more lovely than the mother! What fairer than your youth! What more gracious than her virginity! Luke at the Child, knowing nothing. Yet all that is belongs to him, that our conscience should not fear but take comfort in him. Doubt nothing. To me there is no greater consolation given to mankind than this, that Christ became man, a child, a babe, playing in the lap and at the breasts of his most gracious mother. Who is there whom this sight would not comfort? Now is overcome the power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt, if you come to this gurgling Babe and believe that he is come, not to judge you but to save.*

## January Worship Leaders\*\*\*

\*\*\* If serving in this capacity is not something you are comfortable with, please let the church know.

January 3	January 10	January 17	January 24	January 31
<b>Lector:</b> Pete Wood	<b>Lector:</b> Annie Puffett	<b>Lector:</b> Connie Puffett	<b>Lector:</b> Chris Schlee	<b>Lector:</b> Pete Wood
<b>Cleaning:</b> Connie & Annie Puffett	<b>Cleaning:</b> Connie & Annie Puffett	<b>Cleaning:</b> Connie & Annie Puffett	<b>Cleaning:</b> Connie & Annie Puffett	<b>Cleaning:</b> Connie & Annie Puffett



**Mission in Christ Lutheran Church**  
A ministry of the NALC

312 East Mission St.  
Strawberry Point, IA 52076

Office Phone: 563-933-6525  
Emergencies: 815-394-9309

Email:  
secretary@missioninchristluth.onmicrosoft.com



**We're on  
Facebook!**

*Join us for Worship  
9 AM Sundays and  
online through our  
Facebook page or  
Mission in Christ Website.*

**NALC Core Values**

**Christ-Centered**

*We confess the apostolic faith in Jesus Christ according to the Holy Scriptures. We affirm the authority of the Scriptures as the authoritative source and norm, "according to which all doctrines should and must be judged" (Formula of Concord). We accept the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions as true witnesses to the Word of God.*

**Mission Driven**

*We believe that the mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel and to make disciples for Christ. We believe that making disciples—in our congregations, in our communities and nations, and around the world—must be a priority of the Church in the present age.*

**Traditionally-Grounded**

*We affirm the ecumenical creeds and the faithful witness of the Church across time and space. We endorse the form and practices of the universal Church that are consistent with Scripture, particularly the office of the ministry and the tradition of worship under Word and Sacrament. We seek dialogue and fellowship with other Lutheran churches and with faithful Christians of other confessions.*

**Congregationally-Focused**

*We strive to be a church body that is organized to facilitate the ministries of local congregations in a posture of servanthood and a spirit of partnership, through the provision of resources, connections and information.*

