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Log in information and the worship bulletin for worship can be found on our website on the “Worship online and in person” page

August Helpers

Clean—Gary and Michelle Otto

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Communion Assistant—Megan Patent-Nygren

Ushers—Gary Otto/George Nygren

Zion Lutheran Church
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GOOD THINGS FROM ZION

August 2022



Discernment Toolkit

Over the last four weeks, we’ve been looking at heresies – false teachings – in the history of the church. Through that, we have gathered some tools to help us decide if something is consistent with our faith – in particular, we’ve put together a Lutheran toolkit.

There are already rumblings about the next presidential election. Religion has played an increasingly prominent role in politics in our country and promises to again. If you missed the sermon from July 31, in which I addressed Christian Nationalism, please either watch or read it.

This article is just going to lay out the toolkit. I hope you’ll consider practicing using it to assess things you might read – particularly from someone who claims to speak for Christians. Here I’ve tried to pose them as questions to ask yourself as you use them.

The first tools come from the very early church. They are summed up in the historic creeds – apostle’s and Nicene.

The first heresies involved the person of Jesus. Some said he wasn’t really human, others said he was only human.

So, as you assess something, is there anything that would deny that Christ came to earth as a true, fully human person...and his incarnation was a real human birth, or that he was at the same time, fully God? Here’s a hint – most won’t overtly deny this. But Christ’s incarnation meant he came for all. When fiery divine judgment becomes his defining trait, we’ve lost some of his humanity

Slightly later heresies dealt with understanding the Trinity.

Does a particular viewpoint argue against the confession that God is a triune God with three distinct persons – creator, son, Holy Spirit – yet which also exist as one?

Does it deny that Christ died for our salvation, rose, and will come again?

The next set of tools come from the Reformation and the work of Martin Luther.

From where does authority come in the viewpoint you are evaluating? Luther said that authority comes from the Word alone which is also Christ alone, not any human-derived doctrine. Does the viewpoint fit with the teachings of Jesus?

According to Luther, the Word comes to us as law and gospel – it convicts us of our sin, but at the same time offers grace and new life. The law puts to death our sinful selves and grace raises us to new life. In the viewpoint you are evaluating, are both law and gospel visible? Does the viewpoint take seriously the sinfulness of all, including the one speaking or writing? Is humility present?

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How does the speaker use scripture? Our Lutheran faith uses four lenses to interpret scripture.

The first is the plain reading. We look at the meaning for the original hearers and try to translate to our time. This helps with tricky things like LGBTQ+ issues. Check out the sermon from July 24 if you missed it.

Next is the Bible as law and gospel – do they take this seriously, or just use verses that support their viewpoint?

Third, the Bible is a container which brings the gospel of Christ to us. Can you find the gospel of forgiveness and new life in the viewpoint?

Finally, scripture interprets scripture – how does a particular passage fit in the overarching story whose pinnacle is Jesus' death and resurrection? We will often speak of reading all of scripture through the lens of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. It's a way that puts more weight on the person, teachings, and work of Jesus than other parts of scripture, but it's also a way that looks for the gospel in all parts of scripture...and one that's willing to say some passages don't have much if any gospel.

Finally, we need to look at Luther's distinction between the Theology of the Cross and a Theology of Glory. A Theology of Glory says that God's glory is best shown in power and strength. In a Theology of Glory, human achievements and victories best reveal God at work. A Theology of the Cross says that the deepest revelation of God is in places of suffering and death, places that mirror Christ's crucifixion. The cross is foolishness to a humanity that is convinced that power and strength and victory are what matters. Is the particular viewpoint you are evaluating a Theology of Glory or Theology of the Cross?

Christianity has been badly used by people in power since the days of Emperor Constantine in the 4th Century. It still is. It is absolutely essential that we have a toolkit to help us evaluate some of the things people in power say about religion. This one comes straight out of our own Lutheran play-book. You could do worse.

Pastor Kris

This is the Al Shredi family from Syria. Four of the beds we donated went to this family. The others went to the second family Our Saviour's helped settle. I don't have a picture of them. We also sent the extra cash to Our Saviour's to help with other expenses. They were assigned two families in about two weeks and are busy helping them get settled, navigate schools, look for jobs, and so on.



Calendar

Worship services are livestreamed to the church YouTube channel. You can find the link to that and the bulletin on our website: <https://www.zionithaca.org/worship>

August 7 9:00 am—Worship—no communion. Megan leading and sharing message
I'm on vacation August 4—August 9. Pastor Glenda Ferguson will be covering for emergencies during those times. Her phone number is 402-443-5503. If she doesn't answer, leave a message so she knows it's not spam

August 14 9:00 am—Worship

August 16 6:30 pm—First Communion class

August 21 9:00 am—Worship

August 28 9:00 am—Worship with Holy Communion

Adult Education 2022—2023

Intellectual Salons began in the 1600's. They were gatherings of writers, artists, aristocrats, students... really anyone who wanted to learn and be challenged by conversation. They are a product of the Enlightenment. Typically, someone would start with a short talk on a topic, or a reading from a book they were working on or something like that. The presentation would be followed by conversation.

One of the most famous salons was hosted by Gertrude Stein in the early 1900's. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway were regulars.

Salons faded after about the 1920's, but they might be having a bit of a resurgence now. And they seem to me like a perfectly charming way to do Christian education for adults. This idea is still a bit in process, but over the course of the year we might have 4 to 6. During Lent I don't usually have any other education offerings. We could do them in either church basement, although I'd like to dress them up a bit. I'm open to other locations but they need to work for folks at both churches...and maybe even guests from outside the church!

We'd have drinks and snacks. I'd like to figure out more comfortable seating. Outside on lawn chairs might be an option when the weather is nice.

Each salon would cover a particular topic or book or book of the Bible. Someone (not necessarily me) would do a little 10–15-minute presentation. Then we'd have a conversation or Q and A session. I'm going to have some surveys at worship and online to look at potential topics/books and any other ideas you might have. There are a couple topics we will look at for sure, one being LGBTQ+ issues. I'd also like to cover a couple books from the Bible – either more in depth than we get with a sermon, or a book that's not too familiar.

Children's Education

As many of you know, we have struggled with Sunday school the last couple of years. Most churches are. Even in big congregations, Sunday school attendance has waned. A few of us met to talk about some options.

The first thing that came up is that weekends are too busy for many families with children, especially as they get older. Or they're so busy during the week that Sunday seems like the only day to catch a breath.

So, here's our new plan.

- ⇒ We're going to use a type of "flipped classroom" model. Each week, kids will have a short assignment – read a Bible story and watch a short video from Sparkhouse's "Whirl" curriculum. Sparkhouse is the children's education division of Augsburg Fortress, the ELCA's publishing company. We'll make sure they have Bibles that are readable for elementary aged kids. For the younger kids, reading the stories out of a children's Bible is a good start
- ⇒ Then, once a month, at least to start, the kids will gather on a Wednesday evening for class. Carol will continue to teach this with a focus on making connections and applying the lessons. We may consider going back up to twice a month if this seems to work.
- ⇒ For the youngest kids who haven't yet started Sunday school, when we do start it will likely still be on Sunday after worship.
- ⇒ Worship continues to be a part of practicing faith as a community, so I'm going to work on some ways to help kids be able to participate more easily. But you can help by finding the page in the hymnal, encouraging them to read along if they are readers, and join in on things like the Lord's prayer and Creed.

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