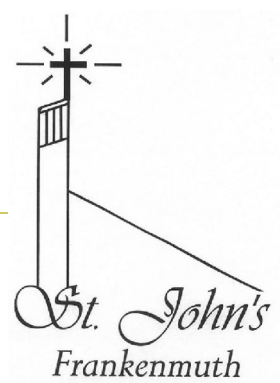


THE VICTORY



St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church Newsletter

June 2021

Pastor's Summer Book Picks ~ Part 1 of 2

If you're looking for some reading material this summer that's not too heavy but interesting enough to keep you engaged, I'd like to recommend a pair of books to you. They are *Hammer of God* and *Faith Alone: The Heart of Everything*. Both were written by Swedish Lutheran pastor Bo Giertz as historical novels. They follow fictional characters in the life of the church in Sweden through pivotal points in history. Though they wade deep in history and religious themes, Giertz crafts such lively characters and dialogue that the historical events and Lutheran spirituality breathe with the book. Too often, religious books or movies seem contrived, poorly done, and not very compelling. Nothing could be further from the truth in Giertz' novels.

The first, *Hammer of God*, first published in Swedish in 1941, traces three generations of a Lutheran parish in Sweden, first during the early 1800s, then in the late 1800s, and finally in the mid-1900s.

Each era, like our own, has its own challenges to biblical Christianity.

The early 1800s saw a movement called Rationalism sweep across Europe. It was brought on by the Enlightenment, a time when many thought religion was a primitive way of seeing the world. Instead, many held up reason as the way to

answer life's most important questions. In the church, this brought the virgin birth of Christ, Jesus' atoning death, the resurrection, and even the existence of a personal God into question. A young, rationalist pastor comes to the parish of Ödesjö, Henrik Savonius. His preaching and work reveal the ugly root of rationalism, which is a denial of the good news of forgiveness in favor of burdensome law: if people would just do the right, rational things, the world would get better. His overseeing pastor, Dean Faltin, continually promotes orthodox, confessional Lutheranism that clings to the biblical truth.

Eventually, Savonius realizes reason can do many good things in the world but cannot save sinners. Only the truth of God's word about Christ, the Son of God, can.

The late 1800s finds the same parish swept up in a movement called Revivalism. America experienced Revivalism, too, and we still fight its influence today. Revivalism was opposed to the drunkenness and immorality so many people, even church members, in, which was a laudable cause. However, it emphasized personal experience of faith and holy living so strongly that it became legalistic and made people doubt their salvation. Instead of looking to Christ for comfort and power to live new lives, people

Worship Service

Sunday at 10 a.m.

Service Broadcast

- ♦ Sunday 8 a.m.
Radio WKCQ 98.1 FM
- ♦ Monday 7 p.m.
Charter Cable TV channel 191

Church Office Hours

Monday—Friday
10 a.m.—4:30p.m.

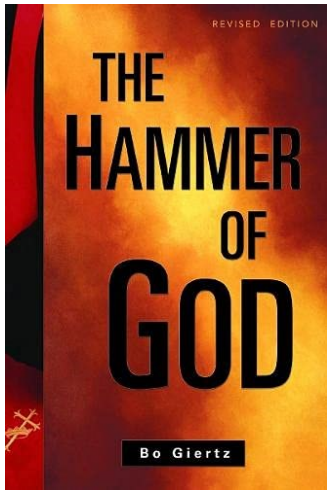
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Pastor's Summer Book Picks ~ Part 1 of 2 (continued)



were told to look inside themselves or at how well they had lived a Christian life. They found what we all find: weak, sinful hearts that cannot live according to God's law by our own strength. Again, a young, revivalist pastor is shown the emptiness and burden of revivalism. His elder pastor teaches him to find true revival in the historic faith, where Christ on the cross and present in

word and sacraments is the beginning and end of salvation and Christian living.

The mid-1900s saw an array of challenges to biblical faith. Modernism built on rationalism and saw the miraculous and supernatural of the Bible as silly superstition. Liberal theology took its lead not from the Bible but from the currents of modern society. Pentecostal Christians built on revivalism and burdened people by turning them to their own feelings and lives for proof they were Christians instead of directing them to the promises and work of God in Christ. Into this fray comes Pastor Torvik to the Ödesjö parish. Again, his

early inclination to accept some ideas of the modernist theology turn into a steadfast return to the Bible and the Lutheran tradition for clear truth, certain salvation, and comfort in uncertainty and tragedy.

The Swedish title of the Book, Stengrunden, literally translates as "the stone ground." It's a reference to the foundation of our faith, life, and the church, Jesus himself. Christ says, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock" (Matthew 7:24, 25). However, there's a second side to this title. "Stone ground" can refer to the hardness of the sinful human heart. The English title, Hammer of God, plays on this theme, referencing Jeremiah 23:29, "Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" God's word smashes our futile attempts to be good enough (through rationalism, revivalism, or [post]modernism), and creates a real foundation in the life and death of Jesus, who has forged forgiveness, eternal life, and freedom for us. The gospel takes root in crushed hearts, making them whole with the undeserved love of God. This is more than the basis for a good story. This is Christianity.

You can find Hammer of God sold on Amazon or at bookstore.blc.edu, cph.org, or augsburgfortress.org.

Save The Date

On August 1, 2021, St. John's will celebrate its 140th anniversary of founding. There will be a 10:00 AM festival service, followed by a catered lunch and program in the gymnasium. Please RSVP on the sheet at the kiosk in the gathering space so the Planning Committee can make arrangements for food and seating space. Freewill donations will be accepted for the lunch, but it will be provided at no cost.



Confessions Corner

Second Commandment

Small Catechism

You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.

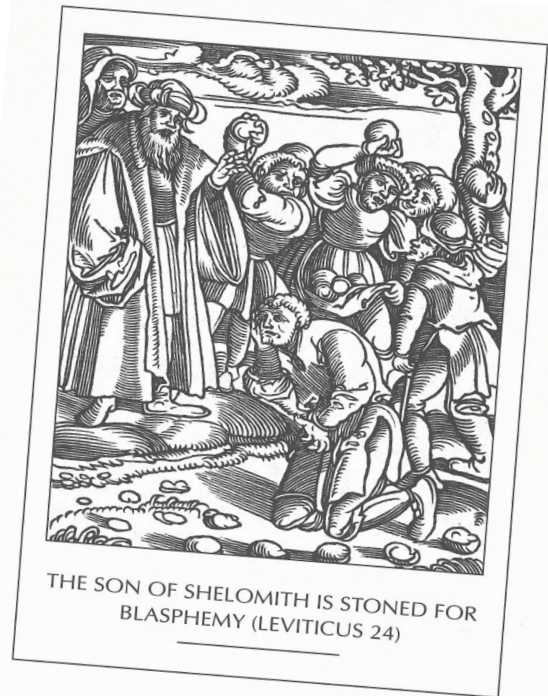
What does this mean?

We should fear and love God so that we may not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie, or deceive by his name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

Large Catechism

Let us learn and take to heart the great importance of this commandment. Then, with all diligence, we may guard against and dread every misuse of the holy name as the greatest sins that can be committed outwardly. For to lie and to deceive is in itself a great sin. But such a sin gets even worse when we try to justify our lie and seek to confirm it by calling on God's name and using his name as a cloak for shame [1 Peter 2:16, "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God"], so that from a single lie a double lie results—no, many lies. For this reason, too, God has added a solemn threat to this commandment, "For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain" [Exodus 20:7].

Besides this you must also know how to use God's name rightly. We are commanded to use his name for truth and for all good, like when someone takes an oath truthfully when it is needed and it is demanded [Numbers 30:2]. This commandment also applies to right teaching and to calling on his name in trouble



or praising and thanking him in prosperity, and so on. All of this is summed up and commanded in Psalm 50:15, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." For all this is bringing God's name into the service of truth and using it in a blessed way. In this was his name is hallowed [kept holy], as we pray in the Lord's Prayer [Matthew 6:9].

Children should continue to cross themselves when anything monstrous or terrible is seen or heard. They can shout, "Lord God, protect us!" "Help, dear Lord Jesus!" and such. Also, if anyone meets with unexpected good fortune, however trivial, he says, "God be praised and thanked!" or "God has bestowed this on me!" and so on, just as the children used to learn to fast and pray to St. Nicholas and other saints before. This would be more pleasing and acceptable to God than all monasticism.

The Beauty of Our Church Series

St. John's glorious stained glass window



Located above the exterior doors on each side of the pews, these small, yet powerful, stained glass pieces remind us of the sacrifice Jesus made for the forgiveness of our sins.

Finally as the “Beauty of Our Church Series” concludes this month, let all of us not forget the real beauty of our church. Take a look around and see the familiar faces of our members, the visitors who chose to come to our church, the many Committee, Elders and Usher members who dedicate their time. We all are part of the special beauty of St. John’s.

As this series comes to an in the newsletter, the final “beauty” of our church is our congregation and members.



*Our thoughts
and prayers
Are with you*

I urge that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone~ for kings and all those in authority.

1 Timothy 2:1-2

May God’s comfort surround the family and friends of those who have fallen asleep in Jesus and give them peace in knowing that their loved ones have found eternal peace.

The following Memorials were made in honor of Mary Grasel, Frank Lake, Rose List and Helen Koch:

General Fund: \$75.00

Altar Guild: \$20.00

Handbell Fund: \$20.00

Congratulations to our 2021 graduates.

Conner Aiello, son of Jeremy and Karen Aiello, is a graduate from New Lothrop High School. Connor began college courses in his sophomore year of high school and has earned 28 credits towards his college degree. He plans to attend Lansing Community College in the fall to study Business/Finance.

Madison Jammer, daughter of Todd and Kelly Jammer, is a graduate of Siena Heights College, Lansing campus. Madison graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelors of Applied Science with a Major in Professional Communication and Sign Language. She plans to work in education as an interpreter.

Please contact Jean if we missed other graduates.



Junes's book recommendation:

The Transgender Agenda A scientific and compassionate response



Transgender ideology is sweeping the West, redefining political policies, economic priorities, free speech, and religious freedom, while irreversibly damaging the lives of many who buy into it. What is the truthful and compassionate response?

Ten Ph.D researchers and medical experts from the UK put their reputations on the line. Together, they present a compassionate expose' of the emotionally and physically destructive ideology commonly known as transgenderism. These respect-

ed professionals reveal that gender dysphoria is based on an identity that exists in the mind. It should be carefully treated with patience and concern for the individual.

Biological sex is a completely binary system, determined by the presence or absence of the SRY gene. We must safeguard children from transgender teaching that is promoted through social media. Male and female biology is fixed from the moment of conception. Children cannot become any gender they choose to be.

VIDEO LENGTH: 30 minutes, plus 60-minutes of bonus interviews.

Musical Instruments



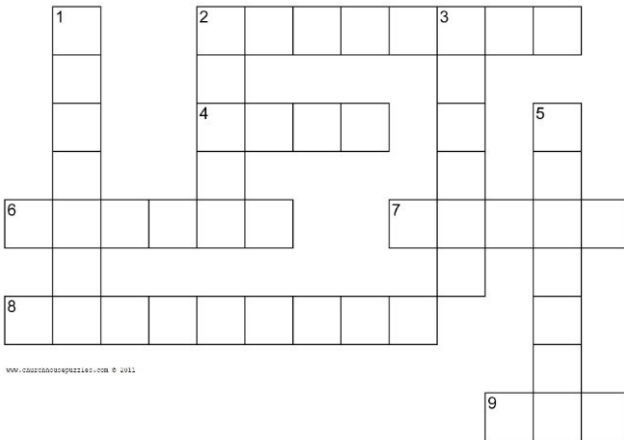
CLARINET
 ACCORDION
 BAGPIPE
 FLUTE
 BONGO DRUMS
 SNARE
 BAZOOKA
 CORNET
 HARMONICA
 OBOE
 OCARINA
 PAN PIPE
 PICCOLO
 RECORDER
 TROMBONE
 TRUMPET
 FIDDLE
 GUITAR
 VIOLA

Next to the
 Word of God,
 the noble art of
 music is the
 greatest
 treasure in the
 world.

~ Martin Luther

People in the Bible

1 Samuel



ACROSS

- 2 David's best friend
- 4 First king of Israel
- 6 Last judge of Israel
- 7 A man after God's own heart
- 8 Gave David the showbread to eat
- 9 Fell off his seat backwards and broke his neck

DOWN

- 1 Stood over nine feet tall
- 2 Shepherd from Bethlehem; his youngest son became king of Israel
- 3 Mother of the prophet Samuel
- 5 Brought food and supplies to David in the wilderness

