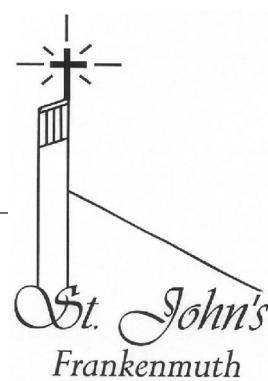


# THE VICTORY



St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church Newsletter

July 2021

## Pastor's Summer Book Picks ~ Part 2 of 2

*Hammer of God*, the book reviewed last month, became widely read among American Lutherans after most of the 1941 book was translated from Swedish into English in 1960, and the entire novel in 2005. This month's pick is new on the American scene. Written in the same style (historical novel) around the same time (1943) by the same Swedish Lutheran pastor (Bo Giertz), *Faith Alone: The Heart of Everything* came out in English for the first time just last year, translated by LCMS pastor Bror Erickson and published by 1517, a pan-Lutheran publishing and teaching organization. *Faith Alone* is even considered in some ways a prequel to *Hammer of God*.

While *Hammer of God* focuses on Swedish religious life in the 1700s–1900s, *Faith Alone* brings us back to Sweden in the 1500s, when the nation was experiencing upheaval in almost every area of life. For a couple hundred years (1397–1523), Sweden was ruled by the Danish monarch under the Union of Kalmar, an agreement that united Norway, Sweden, and Denmark under Danish control. In the early 1520s, Swedish nobility gave their support to a man named Gustav Eriksson Vasa to counter Danish power, which in 1520 had violently put down Swedish resistance to its rule. Gustav Vasa was successful in driving out the Danes, and in 1523 he was declared king of Sweden (Gustav I of Sweden). This shift in governance coincided with the introduction of Lutheranism to the Roman Catholic nation.

Even after Gustav Vasa's consolidation of power, all was not well. Because his throne was newly established, Vasa was challenged by nobles and peasants on various occasions. He had funded his expulsion of the Danes with money from German lenders, which crippled his government's fi-

nances. In order to escape from the debt, he raised taxes, and with the newfound freedom he had after declaring the Swedish church free from Roman Catholic control in 1524, required church silver and bells be given over to fund his treasury. Little of this went over well with the Swedish people. Gustav Vasa faced uprisings, which he successfully put down, and the Lutheran faith had great obstacles to overcome since it had now been tied to Gustav's heavy handed political and fiscal policies in the minds of many. Eventually, Lutheranism became part of the fabric of Swedish society, but as the historical introduction to this novel states, "This was a traumatic and chaotic period, and the lives of many Swedes were deeply disrupted by these religious changes" (xiii).

Giertz illustrates this trauma and chaos in the lives of two fictional brothers, Anders (also referred to as Andreas) and Martin Ragnvaldsson (also spelled Ragvaldi). The brothers grew up in Östergötland, an actual region in southern Sweden. Martin, after being caught reading a Lutheran book at school, fled to Stockholm and entered government service by becoming a scrivener. Scrivener was a profession that involved writing official documents and correspondence. Before the advent of typewriters and computers, virtually all governments, businesses, and other professional offices required scribes who could read, write, take dictation, and sometimes work in several languages. In Stockholm, Martin continues learning about the biblical teaching of salvation by grace through faith from pastors who had studied in Germany with Martin Luther and came back with his insights. Anders, on the other hand, continued in Latin school and became a Roman Catholic priest.

(continued on page 2)

### Worship Service

Sunday at 10 a.m.

### Service Broadcast

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

### Church Office Hours

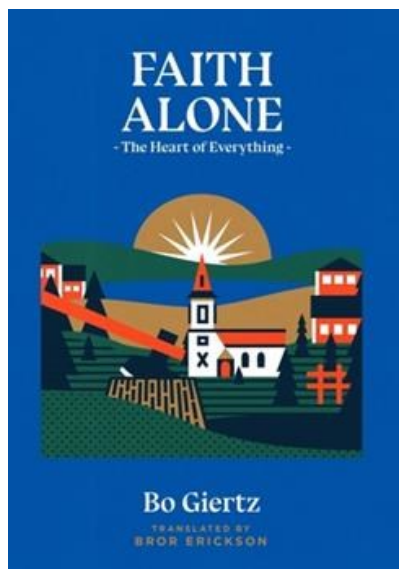
Monday—Friday  
10 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Office Phone:  
(989) 652-6201

Pastor Patrick Ernst  
(612) 845-9162

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

(continued from page 1)



The collision course of the two brothers becomes quickly apparent. Not only are they on opposite sides of the religious shift taking place (Roman Catholicism being displaced by Lutheranism), they hold different views of King Gustav's policies. Martin believes Gustav is sent from God to clear out foreign control as well as

Roman Catholic errors from Sweden. Anders, who is forced to account for his parish's treasures so they can be taken for the king, sees the king as a tyrant sent by the devil to pillage churches and destroy the old faith.

These paths of the brothers continue for much of the book, though they twist and turn along the way. Anders follows his convictions and supports a peasant rebellion against the king, which actually took place, begun in 1542 by Nils Dacke in the province of Småland. This rebellion had the same goals the character Anders had: resist the overbearing control of Gustav Vasa as well as the new Lutheran teaching and practice. Anders' zeal leads many in his parish to support and fight for Dacke, so he feels personally responsible when the rebellion is crushed and many of his people die. The final blow to Anders' sense of self, and self-righteousness, is when he himself kills a soldier. This killing bars him, according to Catholic church law, from serving as a priest any longer. Anders is eventually captured and condemned to death for his role in the rebellion.

Martin, as a court official, is present at the battle Anders' is involved in, but on the king's side. When many of those from his hometown are killed, Martin's disgust and sadness over the battle makes him grow unwilling to work for the king. He quits and gets involved with a group of more radical reformers, who place a high emphasis on total separation from the organized Swedish church and deep self-denial as they key to genuine spirituality.

The brothers are finally reconciled, largely through the influence of a mediating voice in the novel, Peder, another priest, but one who took up Lutheran teaching. He speaks as a pastoral voice of truth throughout the novel,

guiding Martin out of legalism to the truth of the gospel and then helping him share that truth with Anders.

Spiritually, Martin had made his new, morally improved life into something he felt entitled him to God's favor. He has to be shown even his best works need Christ's blood to be acceptable before God. Anders, who had found a sense of righteousness in his service and life as a priest, falls into despair when he is stripped of his office and indulges in all kinds of immorality. Both are lost in different ways, but just before Anders is executed for his role in the rebellion, Martin comes back to a true understanding of the gospel. Between him and Peder, they confront the despairing Anders with God's truth, and Anders' believes. The former priest dies neither trusting in his own worthiness before God nor despairing of his sins. He dies in the comfort of Jesus' atonement. The hour of death gives clear context for the closing line of the book: "This is the heart of everything: the atonement and the forgiveness of sins" (271).

Though the book contains a good deal of historical references, foreign words (which are defined and explained), and grammatical errors (they could have done a better job in the proofing before this first edition), it is still accessible for anyone who is willing to learn a little along the way. Be sure to take in, or even read twice, the historical introduction, written by church historian Mark Granquist. It covers much of the background I gave here and makes the novel easier to follow.

Finally, as a testament to Bo Giertz and his pastoral skill, the book illustrates and underscores so much of what we should understand as Lutherans. Being heirs of the Lutheran Reformation means we keep the old as the best of the best in teaching the faith. We recognize a distinction between the two kingdoms: the sphere of the world (governed by law) and the sphere of spiritual life (governed finally by the gospel). We recognize when people join Christianity that their personal lives are undergoing a shift not unlike that the Swedes underwent at the Reformation, and proceed in an appropriately sensitive, patient, and instructive manner. Finally, we recognize that Christ's life, death, and resurrection, resulting in the forgiveness of sins, received through faith, really is what we need in life and death. Amid all the noise of politics, power, and personalities, God clears a space with his word for the center of it all, the heart of everything: what the law could not do, God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

You can buy *Faith Alone* at [shop.1517.org](http://shop.1517.org), [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com), and Barnes & Noble.

## Small Catechism

You shall keep the day of rest holy.

*What does this mean?*

We should fear and love God, so that we do not curse, swear, practice witchcraft, lie or deceive by His name, but call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

## Large Catechism

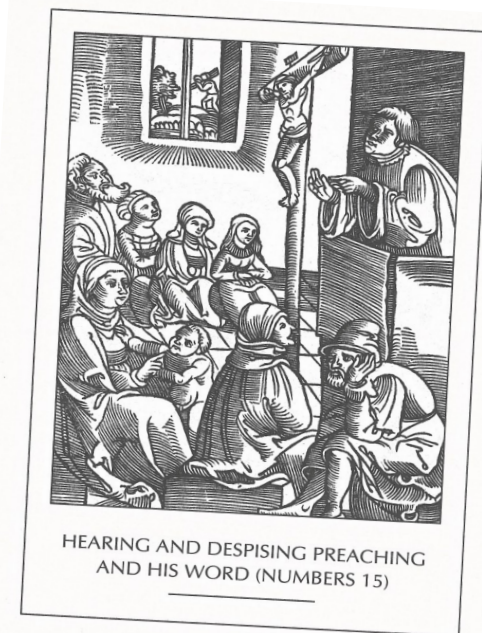
The word *holiday* [holy + day] is used for the Hebrew word *sabbath*, which properly means “to rest.” ... This commandment in its literal sense does not apply to us Christians. It is entirely an outward matter, like other ordinances of the Old Testament. The ordinances were attached to particular customs, persons, times, and places, but now they have been made matters of freedom through Christ [Colossians 2:16–17]. The resting should not be strictly understood to forbid any work that comes up, which cannot be avoided.

When someone asks you, “What is meant by keeping the day holy?” [Answer like this:] “Nothing else than to be occupied with holy words, works, and life.” For the day needs no sanctification in itself. It has been created holy in itself. But God desires the day to be holy to you. Therefore, it becomes holy or unholy because of you, whether you are occupied on that day with things that are holy or unholy.

As said above, since we do not always have free time, we must devote several hours a week for the sake of the young, or at least a day for the sake of the entire multitude, to being concerned about this alone. We must especially teach to use of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer, and so direct our whole life and being according to God’s Word. God’s Word is the true holy thing above all holy things. God’s Word is the treasure that sanctifies everything [1 Timothy 4:5].

It is not only the people who greatly misuse and desecrate the holy day who sin against this commandment (those who neglect to hear God’s Word because of their greed or frivolity or lie in taverns and are dead drunk like swine). But even that other crowd sins.

## Confessions Corner



They listen to God’s Word like it was any other trifle and only come to preaching because of custom. They go away again, and at the end of the year they know as little of God’s Word as at the beginning. Think that it is God’s commandment, who will require an account from you about how you have heard, learned, and honored God’s Word.

Likewise, those fussy spirits are to be rebuked who, after they have heard a sermon or two, find hearing more sermons to be tedious and dull. They think that they know all that well enough and need no more instruction. This is a malignant, dangerous plague with which the devil bewitches and deceives the hearts of many so that he may surprise us and secretly take God’s Word from us [Matthew 13:19].

On the other hand, the word is so effective that whenever it is seriously contemplated, heard, and used, it is bound never to be without fruit [Isaiah 55:11; Mark 4:20]. It always awakens new understanding, pleasure, and devoutness and produces a pure heart and pure thoughts [Philippians 4:8]. For these words are not lazy or dead, but are creative, living words [Hebrews 4:12]. Besides, this commandment is fulfilled and this exercise in the Word is more pleasing to God than any work of hypocrisy, however brilliant.





## The Good Shepherd Sends Shepherds

1 Peter 5:2



## A Reflection of the 2021 Synod Convention ~

The 2021 Evangelical Lutheran Synod Convention took place in Mankato, Minnesota June 20–24, 2021. Pastor Ernst and Tom Conzelmann represented St. John's at the convention. Here are a few highlights:

Rev. Tim Hartwig, who serves Peace Lutheran in North Mankato, Minnesota, was elected synod vice president. The synod president is currently Rev. Glenn Obenberger. An election for synod president will take place at next year's convention.

The synod is in contact with a church body in Kenya, the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of Kenya (ELDK), which desires to be in fellowship with the ELS. Progress in working toward official unity has been irregular since COVID-19 prevented in-person visits to the church body in the last year. Nevertheless, we pray for the ability to join in gospel ministry and fellowship with these Christians in the future.

Our synod's pastor-training school, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Contact Pastor Ernst if you would like to look at a history book about pastor training in the ELS and the church bodies that came before it. This book, *Sent by the Shepherd*, was published

for the anniversary, and Pastor Ernst was one of the proofreaders!

Pastor Ernst was officially accepted as a member of the ELS clergy roster (pictured above, Pastor Ernst introduces himself to the convention after being accepted as a synod pastor).

Discussions included an emphasis on the ELS "flavor," the distinctive feel or approach of our synod in American Lutheranism. Pastor Ernst will work to make St. John's more aware and appreciative of this ELS identity in the future (stay tuned!).

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod President Matthew Harrison attended and greeted the convention. It is the first time an LCMS president has attended the ELS convention since the synods were last in fellowship in the 1950s.

Special thanks to Tom Conzelmann for serving as our congregation's lay delegate to the convention, travelling to Mankato with his wife, Judie, and contributing to the work of the convention. Next year's convention will take place June 26–30, 2022. Voting members of our congregation, please consider attending. Each congregation is allowed to bring up to two lay delegates to each year's convention.



Check out the Evangelical Lutheran Synod website at [www.els.org](http://www.els.org) for a daily devotion. You can also like them on Facebook and get the daily devotion delivered to you!

## July's book recommendation: by Jeremy Aiello

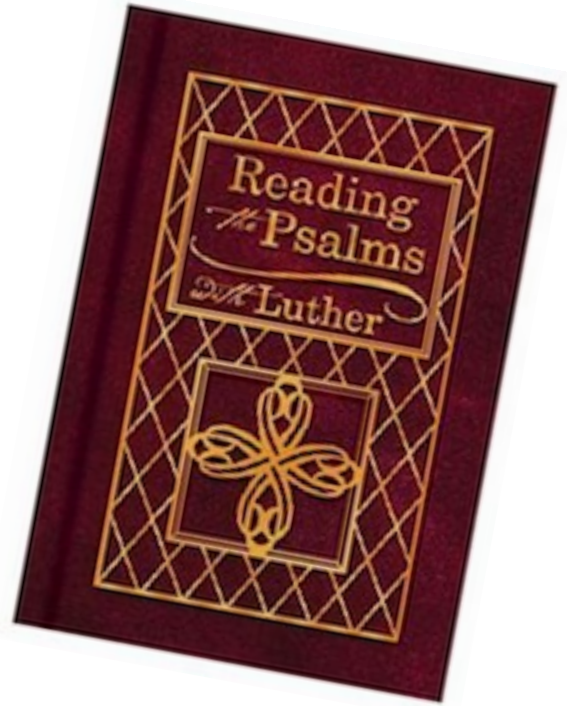
### Reading the Psalms with Luther

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This is an English translation of *Luther's Summaries of the Psalms, 1531* which was originally done in 1993.

This latest edition includes the ESV translation of the Psalms, Luther's introductions to each of the 150 psalms and a suggested schedule for reading the Psalter.

The introductions demonstrate how Luther understood the Psalter as a Christ-centered book and how he used the psalms as the model for Christian prayer. Luther classifies each psalm as a psalm of prophecy, instruction, comfort, prayer, or thanksgiving and applies the message of the text to the life lived out under the cross. Luther also connects the psalms to the Ten Commandments and the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. For Luther, all aspects of the Christian's life, including the Psalms, relate to Christ and His Gospel of forgiveness, life, and salvation.



You can purchase this book at Concordia Publishing House's website ([cph.org](http://cph.org)) or by contacting Jeremy Aiello.

## Save the Date!

**August 1st after the 10AM service—a celebration for St. John's Evangelical Church and it's 140th anniversary! Please RSVP at the kiosk.**

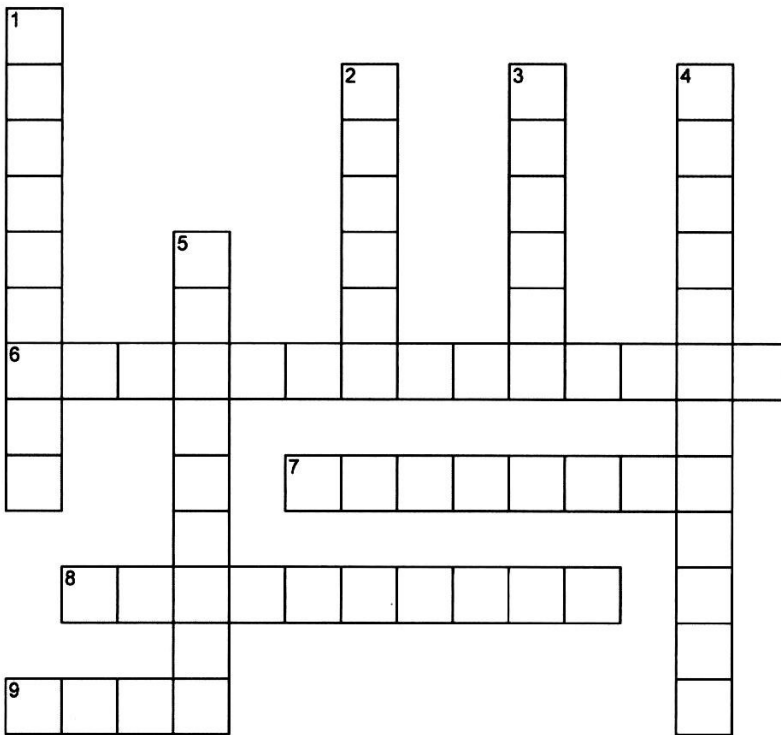
# Bible Word Search: Attributes of a Pastor



Abilities	Loyal
Accepting	Mature
Bible	Meetings
Caring	Mission
Committed	New members
Confidential	Participate
Counselor	Plans
Development	Powerful
Effective	Reaches out
Encourages	Skilled
Enthusiastic	Stewardship
Family	Supportive
Fellowship	Teacher
Gifts	Understands
	Worship

## Christian Church Calendar

Liturgical Year



### ACROSS

- 6 Thursday before Easter; remembers the Last Supper
- 7 Celebrates the magi's visit to see the newborn Christ
- 8 Remembers the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus
- 9 Forty day period of fasting and prayer before Easter

### DOWN

- 1 Celebrates the birth of Jesus
- 2 Four weeks before Christmas; time of preparing for the birth of Christ
- 3 Celebrates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead
- 4 The time between holidays
- 5 Remembers the coming of the Holy Spirit; Fifty days after Easter

www.churchhousepuzzles.com © 2011

*It is useless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night,  
Anxiously working for food to eat; for God gives rest to his loved ones.*

*Psalms 127:20*