



October–December 2017
NEWSLETTER



U.S. ARMY/CP/L. RACHEL DIEHM

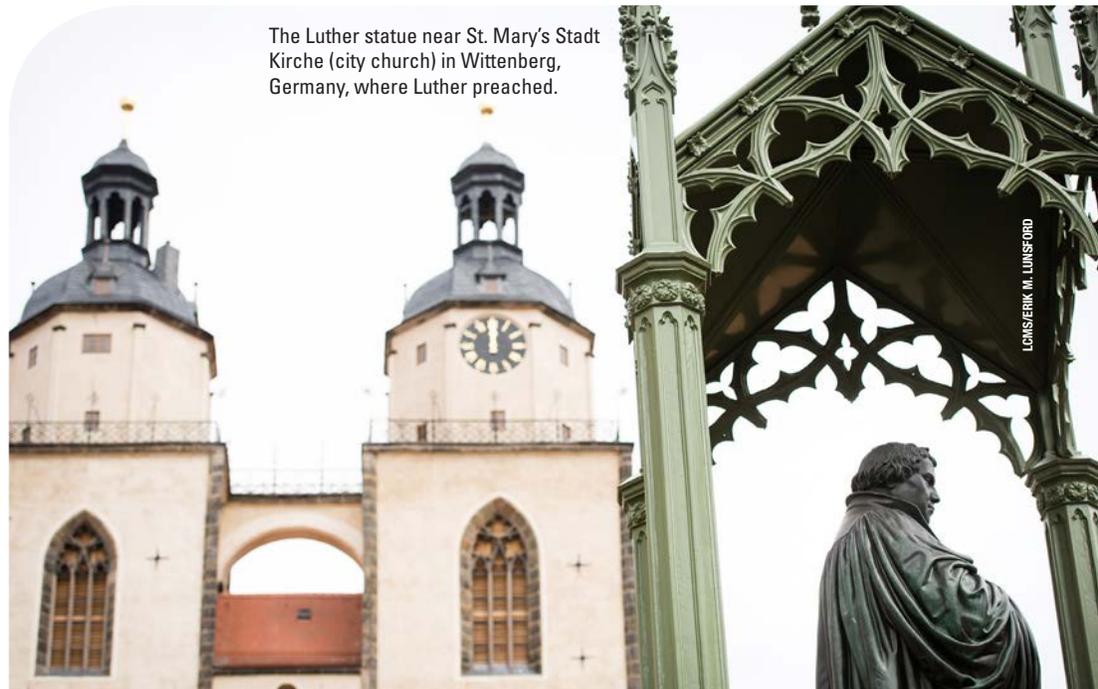
SO HELP ME GOD

THIS ISSUE

One voice — CHRIST'S2
'Intended by God'3
Check It Out!4



U.S. NAVY/IST CLASS
DARREN M. MOORE



The Luther statue near St. Mary's Stadt Kirche (city church) in Wittenberg, Germany, where Luther preached.

LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

LUTHER and the MILITARY



by Ch (LTC) Steven Hokana
USA (Ret.)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

— Rom. 1:16

This issue of *So Help Me God* is devoted to telling the story of Luther, the Lutheran Reformation and its impact on you, the person serving God and country in the military. It is during this quarter of 2017 that we celebrate Luther's birth, the nailing of the 95 Theses on the Castle Church Door in Wittenberg, and generally all things Luther.

To be a Lutheran is a good thing. We have a history that extends from the local church back to the 16th century. But it goes much further ... it connects us with Jesus. Our identity extends back to St. Paul, who through the Holy Spirit wrote the words of Rom. 1:16.

My Lutheran identity defines who I am more than you would think. Yes, my family is Lutheran. Yes, I grew up in very active Lutheran churches. Yes, my wife and friends are pretty much all Lutherans. (They say they know you by the friends you keep.) But my Lutheran faith is not about my background, my friends or even my family. **Being Lutheran points me to the cross.** If Luther was standing with you aboard ship, in your barracks or in a fighting position, he would argue that Luther is nothing and Christ is everything.

See LUTHER, page 4



LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD

One voice – CHRIST'S

by Rev. Randall L. Golter

The author of Hebrews writes of the purpose of his sermon: “I appeal to you, brothers, bear with my word of exhortation” (HEB. 13:22). Is this not what the church is always about, especially as the church is tossed to and fro “by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes” (EPH. 4:14)?

Luther knew something about being tossed about, attacked first by those who decried his new evangelical interpretation of Holy Scripture as they were adding to Christ’s work through the purchase of indulgences, which lessened time in purgatory. The first

IF IT’S NOT FOUND IN HOLY SCRIPTURE, AND EITHER COMMANDED OR FORBIDDEN, THEN WHATEVER IT IS MUST NOT BE PUSHED UPON THE CHURCH THE BAPTIZED AS IF IT IS GOD’S COMMAND.

Lutherans were called Evangelicals. Then he was attacked by those who denied the baptismal regeneration and the Real Presence in the Supper.

On the very day that Luther posted the 95 Theses, he wrote Cardinal Albert of Mainz words which revealed the core and essential truth of Holy Scripture: “The first and only duty of the bishops, however, is to see that the people learn the gospel and the love of Christ. For on no occasion has Christ ordered that indulgences should be preached, but He forcefully commanded the gospel to be preached” (AE 43:47).

What Luther wrote Oct. 31, 1517, finds its maturation of thinking in his writing of the Smalcald Articles in 1537. Within the first several articles, Luther details two principles of interpretation that the Church must follow if she is to be faithful to her Lord.

1. Christology

“Here is the first and chief article: That Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, ‘was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised again for our justification’ (ROM. 4:25); and ‘the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all’ (1S. 53:6); furthermore, ‘All have sinned,’ and ‘they are now justified



without merit by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ... by his blood’ (ROM. 3:23-25)” (Kolb/Wengert, 1-3).

Any teaching must not deny, downgrade, omit or muffle in any sense this first and chief article, whether it’s in your preaching and teaching, or whether in the Divine Service in the desert or on ship. Nothing must add or subtract from it and must be the standard to which everything is judged. Even if the one before you doubts their salvation or is heading into battle full of anxiety, salvation and their eternal destiny and

present care by the Savior all is based on the Father’s work in and through Jesus Christ. God’s tender care is not in any way dependent upon their performance, contribution or behavior. It’s all dependent upon the performance of Christ, His life, death and resurrection for sinners. That’s the final word.

2. Holy Scripture as the norming norm



In speaking of relics, Luther writes “they lack God’s Word, being neither commanded nor advised, and are a completely unnecessary and useless thing. The worst part is that relics, like the Mass, etc., were also to have produced an indulgence and the forgiveness of sin as a good work and act of worship” (SA II 23-24).

If it’s not found in Holy Scripture, and either commanded or forbidden, then whatever it is must not be pushed upon the Church — the baptized — as if it is God’s command. Christ’s Church must keep her virginity in hearing only the voice of her Groom in salvation, and that His voice remains the only voice to be heard (First Commandment). All other voices undermine His saving work, attempting to be a more authoritative standard of truth. Letting His voice alone speak brings certainty to the soul.

The word “conscience” is used more than 330 times in the *Book of Concord*. Luther and our forefathers understood the Reformation as pastoral care, the comforting of terrified consciences with the holy blood of God’s Son. The all-authoritative Word is all about the actual bestowal of salvation to all sinners and every sinner; God is about the work of distributing maximum comfort.

Let Luther’s experience — as he wrestled with the sacred text as his only source and norm of truth and salvation — be an exhortation to you. By so doing, it is as St. Paul writes: “You will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 TIM. 4:16).

The Rev. Randall L. Golter recently accepted a call to serve as senior pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Davenport, Iowa. He previously served as special assistant to LCMS President Matthew C. Harrison.

'Intended by God'

For Luther, military service is **legitimate, divine** vocation

by Ch (LTC) Steven Hokana
USA (Ret.)

"This is why God honors the sword so highly that he says that he himself has instituted it (ROM. 13:1) and does not want men to say or think that they have invented it or instituted it. For the hand that wields this sword and kills with it is not man's hand, but God's."

Did you know Luther wrote about you? More specifically, he wrote about military service. *Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved* (translated by Charles M. Jacobs, revised by Robert C. Schultz) can be read in its entirety at thelc.ms/soldiers-saved.

This is a 21-page response to questions posed by a military commander concerning war. It is a groundbreaking essay. Luther takes on the philosophy of war based on Holy Scripture and sound pastoral advice. In many ways, Luther is a chaplain to this military commander. The officer, von Kram, is troubled by war — the horror, devastation, justice and injustice. He wants to know from his spiritual advisor, Dr. Luther, what our Savior has to say on the subject of war.

The reformer is one to never shy from any topic. Luther affirms the legitimacy of the military profession. He identifies it as established by God (called a divine

LUTHER ON SERVING IN THE MILITARY:

- ▶ Serving in the military is God-created and intended to punish evil.
- ▶ Serving in the military is intended by God to protect the good.
- ▶ Serving in the military is intended by God to preserve peace.



institution). God intends the military to punish evil, protect the good and preserve peace. Luther candidly admits that the military calling can be abused, but misuse by no means invalidates its legitimacy and function. In developing this basic thesis, Luther discusses how a soldier must execute his God-given office.

This is a bold and innovative document addressing the concerns of those who serve and fight in war. In addition, Luther, one of the greatest minds perhaps in history, does not see those who serve in the military as dullards, idiots, automatons or those without consciences. Luther treats Christians in the military as redeemed children of God with a mind, heart and will. He also emphasizes the vital truth that when a soldier goes to war, he does so for the sake of peace, not because he loves the violence and death that war entails.

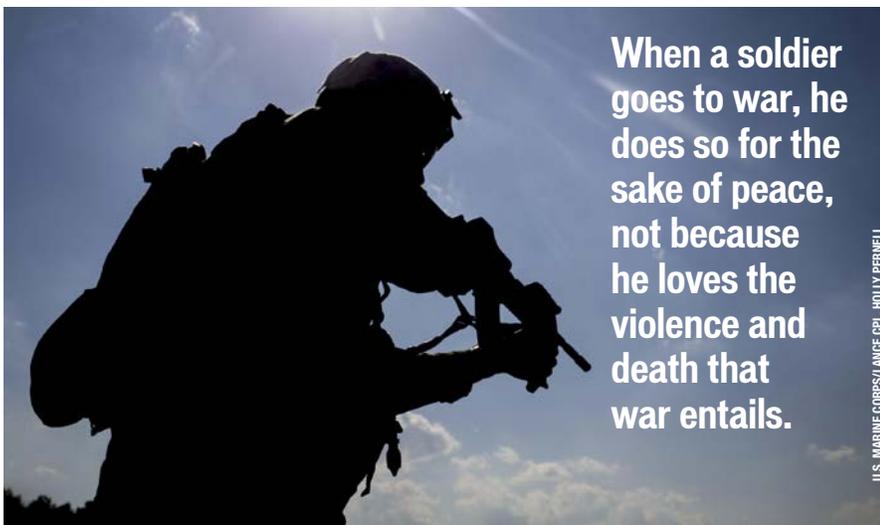
He addresses war from three modern perspectives: Strategic (governments and rulers), Operational (officers leading their forces) and Tactical (use of one's primary weapon as an instrument of God). This is a first of its kind.

You can see clearly words such as "service" and "God-intended." Luther knows that the depth of sin corrupts institutions created by God. We see this in relationships with one another, especially in marriage. Luther is the first to tell you the military calling can be abused. But like marriage, misuse does not make it invalid. Luther discusses how a person serving in the military must execute his God-given office.

Luther covers three areas of war:

1. If one's own government is evil and wicked, do we who serve in the military have a responsibility to rebel? Luther says no.
2. Do nations have a right to self-defense? Luther says yes. However, Luther goes on to warn against putting hope and confidence in their cause, in this case self-defense. Luther always wants us to put our hope and confidence in God and in His Son, Jesus.
3. What about suppressing a rebellion against one's own nation? The answer is

See *VOCATION*, page 4



When a soldier goes to war, he does so for the sake of peace, not because he loves the violence and death that war entails.

U.S. MARINE CORPS/LANCE CPL. HOLLY PERNELL



Navy veteran Donald Stratton salutes fellow service members honoring him and other survivors of the battleship USS Arizona during an event at the Pentagon, July 21. Stratton is one of five known living survivors of the Arizona, which was sunk during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941.

U.S. NAVY/KEITH J. HERSOM

Luther

Continued from page 1

He never intended to name a church after himself. Luther wants you to know of the terrible predicament humanity is in. This sin in the Garden of Eden brought death in the world. No one can shake themselves from this horrible indictment. We cannot on our own fight free from the ball and chain of sin. Our rebellious nature manifests itself in the breaking of every commandment by thought, word and action.

Yes, Luther wants you to know that. He wants you to know that without Jesus, you are a lost cause forever. But Luther at the same time wants you to know about Jesus, the promised deliverer. He was first mentioned in the very same Garden of Eden. It is this Jesus who came to take the burden of sins off your broken and bruised shoulders and place it at the foot of the cross.

“**Luther never intended to name a church after himself. ... But he wants to know about Jesus.**

My identity is not tied to the man Luther, but to the second Adam, Jesus, who loved me so much that He died for me on a windswept hill outside of Jerusalem, abandoned by His disciples.

He took the full brunt of my sinful condition. It is this Christ who Luther wants you to embrace. Think of it, embrace Christ! Know Jesus and know life eternal.

May God bless you as you read through this issue of *So Help Me God*.

Vocation

Continued from page 3

a cautious yes. Luther believes rulers are instituted by God, but they, too, are answerable to God for their behavior and actions.

During 2017, as we reflect on Luther, consider taking time to download this wonderful, thought-provoking essay.

CHECK IT OUT!

More resources on Martin Luther and the Reformation

This is a video that was made with college students for the 500th anniversary:
thelc.ms/share-the-truth-video

A great site about all things Reformation:
lutheranreformation.org

Luther's Small Catechism from Concordia Publishing House. A great deal! Free from the app store (available for Android at Google Play or for iPhone and iPad at iTunes).

Other resources

The Lutheran Hour broadcast every week on AFN. Check for the listing in your area:
lutheranhour.org/af

2019 LCMS Youth Gathering in Minneapolis: lcmsgathering.com

The youthESource provides Jesus-centered resources for those at work with youth in the Lutheran congregation and beyond: youthesource.com



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