

FORGIVEN 2021

Conference Book









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Why Higher Things® Conferences?

Higher Things® offers an incredible, multi-day experience to registrants who attend one of the many events each summer. These conferences are typically held on college or university campuses around the country, giving registrants a taste and feel for what going off to school will be like. Hey, group leaders and pastors. . . remember dorm beds and cafeteria food? We've been doing this since 2000. In fact, Higher Things has hosted between one and five Lutheran youth conferences each summer! Conferences during any given summer are planned around the same basic structure, but each has its own distinctive "personality" and dynamics, making for a singular, unique experience.

Rather than treating youth as an adolescent subculture and confusing them with once-in-a-lifetime "mountaintop" experiences that cannot be replicated outside of the conference events, Higher Things believes in challenging youth to learn the pure doctrine of the Christian faith. By teaching them the same message that they are already hearing at home and at church, youth grow in the fullness of the Christian faith as they come to appreciate historic liturgical practice and its unique focus on God's gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation for us, delivered in Word and Sacrament. We're so glad you're joining us!



What does the conference theme mean?

“If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven.” (John 20:23)

“I forgive you.” The three most powerful words in the universe. They don’t just change the universe for someone. They change someone’s eternity. They change your eternity!

From His Cross, Jesus said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). His once-for-all death is yours, made yours, delivered into your ears, your heart, soul, mind, and strength with those three words: “I forgive you.” His resurrection from the dead is also yours. Not just yours in your Baptism—once is never enough for Jesus—the forgiveness (justification, innocent verdict) of His resurrection is also made yours through those words: “I forgive you.” Jesus delivers through those Spirit-filled words all the benefits of His death and resurrection to all who hear them; “He who by grace the Word believes The purchase of His blood receives” (“As Surely as I Live,’ God Said” LSB 614, st.6).

Forgiveness of sins in His Name is everything to Jesus. He sends out pastors to deliver those three eternity-changing words all over the world. He sent your pastor to deliver them to you. If you have sins, even a specific sin, your pastor’s there to deliver Jesus’ forgiveness for it. It’s not just your pastor, either. You, too—yes, you! You were baptized and gifted all the people in your life so that “if your brother sins against you seven times a day and returns to you seven times saying, ‘I repent,’ you will forgive him” (Luke 17:4).

“I forgive you.” Powerful words. Jesus words. His words for you through “The minister whom Christ has sent.” (LSB 614, st.5) Also His words for others through you. These words won’t just change your summer or transform your daily life as a baptized child of God. With these three words, Jesus changes your eternity.

What should I expect at a Higher Things® conference?

You should expect to spend four days immersed in the Gospel. You’ll hear about Jesus and what He’s done for you. A lot. You’ll do this by participating in the many worship services during which we join our voices with those of the historic Christian Church through liturgy and hymns, and hear the Gospel preached in its purity. You’ll learn, in much greater depth, about our faith: not just what we believe, but why we believe it and why it’s important. All this will equip you to talk about your faith to others. And you’ll do plenty of that as you get to know hundreds of other Lutheran youth just like you throughout the worship and catechesis sessions, especially during the free time activities each evening. Higher Things conferences are held every summer, so you’ll really have an opportunity to build life-long friendships, as you worship, learn, and have fun together if you’re able to attend year after year!

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Higher What? | When you think of Higher Things conferences, what do you think of? Worship, teaching sessions, insane fun? Something that is... high on the shelf? Do you even know? Whatever it is, know that this week is going to be crazy in the best possible way. You will have four days jam-packed with Lutheran goodness.

We'll worship using the historic liturgies directly from our church's hymnal. Just wait until you sing those hymns with hundreds of other Lutherans like yourself! We'll learn how God delivers His gifts to us through His Word and Sacraments. We'll have a ton of fun with the many entertainment options each night of the conference. You probably won't sleep as much as you should, but you'll make it! One way or another, you'll meet wonderful new friends, deepen your relationships with your old friends, and maybe learn a thing or two along the way. Be Lutheran, and have a blast while you're doing it!

Information Table | The home base for all things Higher Things can be found at the Information Table (watch announcements for location). You'll find a lost and found, someone who can answer just about any question you have, and alternative means of entering your breakout session surveys if you don't have a smartphone. The Information Table is open from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm daily, except during chapel services. You can also call 1-888-482-6630 to reach someone from Higher Things at any time.

Leaders' Meetings | There will be a brief meeting each morning at 8:00 am (and Tuesday at 1:00 pm) for one leader from each group to attend. There will be information about the upcoming day's events and opportunities to ask questions or give feedback. The location of this meeting for each conference is provided in the conference schedule and at the Information Table.

HT Staff and Volunteers | Have a question? Look for someone in a green Forgiven shirt! Our Staff and College Conference Volunteers (CCVs) are well-trained to help you out with whatever you may need!

Conference Choir | There will be rehearsals for the conference choir each morning at 8:00 am in the chapel, unless otherwise noted. You're invited to join, even if you didn't sign up in advance! You may purchase a packet of music for \$10 at the Information Table, or look on with someone else. Make a joyful noise to the Lord!

Pictures & Social Media | Take some great pictures this week? Have an awesome HT related status or tweet? Did you make your pastor do a TikTok challenge? Catch something awesome at Entertainment that you just had to Snapchat? Share them with us using the hashtags #higherthings and #HT21. Your post could end up shared by us on our socials, on our website, or even during announcements!

Make sure to wear your lanyard as you travel around campus this week. That way everyone (including campus security) will know that you're one of us! You can also stash your key, key cards, or meal cards in them. Plan to wear your conference T-shirt on the designated day this week (announced on Day 1 of the conference).

Who are you?

We know. This week may be the only one you'll ever have to stay up until dawn playing Spoons or Mafia with your new best friends. But, if you do that, you'll be dragging by the middle of Matins! We have so much going on this week that the best way to get the most out of it is to make sure you're getting enough rest to do it all.

Sleep

It's summer. It's hot. You're walking around a LOT. Please be sure to drink more water than you normally would. We don't want to scrape anyone off the ground because they've passed out from heatstroke or dehydration.

Water

Please use common sense as you walk around campus this week. Good rules are always to make sure you travel with someone, tell your group leader where you are at all times, and watch for Higher Things identification (lanyards or T-shirts). Neither Higher Things®, North Dakota State University, Colorado State University, Calvin University, or Concordia University Texas is responsible for the theft or loss of any money or personal belongings.

Safety and Emergencies

In case of emergency, call 9-1-1 and notify your Group Leader as soon as possible. Group Leaders, make sure you're carrying your group's medical history and release forms with you if you need to seek medical attention. Please also call 1-888-482-6630 to notify Higher Things staff of the situation. We will do everything we can do to be of assistance.



Tetramorphs!

Vir, Leo, Bos, Aquila. Or...Man, Lion, Bull, Eagle. Or . . . Matthew, Mark, Luke, John. Throughout church history, the four evangelists of the Gospel have often been symbolized using these winged creatures. There are various points of symbolism for each (ask your pastor!), but this week we'll be using them as team names! You can even buy a team shirt at the Higher Things store. Get ready for some friendly competition! Read more about the Tetramorphs on page 14.

Higher Things® Store

Love Higher Things? You'll love it even more when you're cozy in one of our HT sweatshirts, drinking your hot chocolate from an HT mug, or cooling off using one of our water bottles! Support your team with a Vir, Leo, Bos, or Aquila shirt, and don't forget to grab your limited edition 20th anniversary gear to help celebrate! Check out the Higher Things Store for all of the HT merchandise you could ever want!

HT Retreats

Higher Things® will help your church host a youth retreat in your area! HT Retreats give junior youth a chance for worship, work, and fun during the rest of the year, too! Retreats can be held over long weekends, an overnight, or even just as a single-day event. For more information about planning a Higher Things® Retreat, email: retreats@higherthings.org

HT VBS Curriculum

Our VBS materials feature an entire program written especially to teach elementary age children the *Small Catechism*. The materials include worship and music sheets, Bible and catechism lessons, and game, craft, and snack ideas. All the materials are available for congregations to use for just \$75. Check out this wonderful resource on the Higher Things webstore.

HT Content

The mission of Higher Things is to make the gifts of Christ Jesus known to youth and young adults. Twenty years ago that began with a week-long conference. Today, Higher Things doesn't have to end on Friday. The same great teaching is available to you 365 days a year online! We offer Christ-centered content that points to the Gospel and lets you know where to find it. Check out daily *Reflections*, videos, articles, podcasts and more.

Follow us on Instagram (@higherthings), TikTok (@higherthings), and YouTube (HigherThingsDTBL), Higher Things 365.

Go to higherthings.org/myHT to find out more about myHT Gold and how much more great content is available for you as youth, parents, and pastors.

Higher Things® has launched our own social media platform—a place to connect and stay in touch with new friends—all in a safe, Lutheran environment. Be sure to head to myHT.higherthings.org and register for an account today. It's super easy, and you can even register with your Facebook account! Don't forget to post your photos on your timeline and connect with new and old friends.

Higher Things®
App and myHT

Higher Things® has gone digital! We have a new app for you! Search for Higher Things in your app store and download the free app. Once downloaded, go ahead and opt in to notifications. (We promise not to spam your mobile!) You'll be able to view our content, jump to our website, connect to the myHT site, donate to our organization, and more.

This year we've supplemented our printed materials with a digital portal for all attendees. Head over to myht.higherthings.org and click on Forgiven 2021 in the top menu, or the chalice in the left side menu bar. Once there, you'll find the daily conference announcements, the most up-to-date schedule and breakaway session details, as well as campus maps, speaker bios, and more.



Android



iOS

Conference Evaluation

We are only able to put on the conferences we do because of you and your support. Part of that support is the feedback that you give us after each conference! What did you think about the site? How about the programming and teachers? We need your feedback so that we can plan the conferences that YOU want!



Conference

Doctrine & Practice Evaluation

Do you drink or smoke? What is your living situation? What are your thoughts on abortion and homosexuality? Your thoughts will help us plan future conference themes and will give us information on how we should approach certain topics. Please take a minute and answer this anonymous survey so that we can get a good feel for what you, the young people in our church, think! (Pastors and adults, while we need your feedback at our conferences, this evaluation really helps us to determine what our youth are thinking at this point in time. Please leave this one to them!)



Doctrine



Higher Things is blessed to celebrate our 20th anniversary. Since our first conference we have taught what it means to be *Dying to Live*, and we've been *Making Waves* ever since. Higher Things exists to make the gifts of Christ known to youth and young adults, reminding them that they are always *In His Face*. We've traveled throughout North America to the *Cities of God*, *Daring to be Lutheran*. Our content has reached all across the world. We've stood at the altar with thousands of youth for *The Feast*, and we've always kept Christ crucified *For You* on the lips of every speaker. We strive to remind them of their Baptisms, and point them to the Cross. We don't water down our content — we challenge youth. We know they will rise to the task. We have said *Amen* in churches, chapels, ballrooms, theaters, and field houses. We seek to assist their parents, pastors, and congregations in the formation of their faith, teaching the next generation the Gospel of Jesus Christ: that they are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, as revealed in Scripture alone — the *Solas*. We work when we work, we worship when we worship, and we play when we play. We have been *Given* a great task: to remind youth and young people that they will always be *Coram Deo*, before God, and that they are disciples just like the *Twelve* who traveled with Christ from Galilee to Jerusalem. We only wish to teach them of the one, true God who came *From Above*, and was *Crucified* for our sins. Singing out in multitudes *Te Deum* laudamus, God, we praise you. Twenty years is just the beginning for Higher Things. We will continue to do more, create more, produce more and teach more. We will persevere in our commitment to youth and young adults so that those attending today will remain firmly planted in their faith and teach the next generation. We will continue to dare youth to be Lutheran and have a blast while doing it! We have given the true *Bread of Life* to thousands of youth, adults, parents, and pastors — proclaiming just like Luther at Worms: *Here I Stand*. Reminding — teaching — that all are *Sanctified* in Christ. In *Concordia* we sing, in concordia we remember that we are *Watermarked* at the font, and *Forgiven* all our sins, all on account of Christ. That's what it's all about... Christ crucified *FOR YOU*.





LUTHER
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TO CHRIST.

CHRIST
POINTS
US TO THE
WORLD.



CSP

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- Director Of Christian Education
- Director Of Christian Outreach
- Director Of Parish Music



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What's in Your Future?

Explore the Possibilities at CTSFW



Prayerfully Consider Visit

Dates: October 14–16, 2021
March 17–19, 2022
October 13–15, 2022

Register: www.ctsfw.edu/PCV
or scan QR Code for more information



Christ Academy: Timothy School

For High-School-Age Men

Dates: June 20–July 3, 2021
June 19–July 2, 2022

Register: www.ctsfw.edu/TimothySchool
or scan QR Code for more information



Christ Academy: College

Dates: October 29–31, 2021
October 28–30, 2022

Register: www.ctsfw.edu/College
(for men or women)
or scan QR Code for more information



Christ Academy: Phoebe School

For High-School-Age Women

Dates: June 20–July 3, 2021
June 19–July 2, 2022

Register: www.ctsfw.edu/PhoebeSchool
or scan QR Code for more information



**CTSFW is here to support you through your discernment process,
as you prayerfully consider possible service in the Church.**



Contact Information

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Admission@ctsfw.edu
www.ctsfw.edu/Admission

Prayer Offices

Every day at a Higher Things conference is punctuated by times set aside for hearing God's Word, for prayer, and for praise. The purpose of these services is not to entertain you, but to refresh your soul through faithful preaching and devotion. The Office of Matins will be prayed first thing in the morning, Vespers is in the afternoon, and Evening Prayer will follow dinner. Our nights conclude with Compline in or around the residence halls. This end-of-the-day devotion may be led by chaperones and many groups often combine to pray and sing together.

While at Higher Things, you may see some practices that are new or different from what your own pastor and church may do. We have provided a brief "Introduction to the Liturgy" in the front of your Worship Booklet to explain many of the things that might be unfamiliar. Also, the conference Chaplains at each conference will be leading a breakout session to teach about liturgical traditions. And . . . we're certain your pastor will be happy to answer your questions, too!

Behavior in the Services

Conference participants are asked to please remove hats and mute cell phones upon entering the chapel for worship. Please refrain from conversation and be seated before the service begins. Prayers to help you prepare for the services are included in the front of the Worship Booklet.

Holy Communion

The Sacrament of the Altar is administered at Higher Things conferences in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Our Conference Chaplains' churches gladly serve as the host congregations for the Divine Services at the Higher Things conferences. The Lord's Supper is celebrated in the joyous confidence that we receive, under the bread and wine, Christ's true Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

Besides receiving Christ's Body and Blood in this Sacrament, all those who commune at the altar of the host congregations of the Divine Services also make a confession of the faith that is confessed in the congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, bearing witness to our doctrinal unity in the Christian faith. Therefore, those who have not been catechized in the Lutheran faith or who hold membership in another church fellowship are asked to refrain from receiving communion during the conference and should speak with their own pastors. Those who wish to receive a blessing may simply cross their arms when approaching the altar.

Holy Absolution

The *Small Catechism* teaches that before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even of those which we do not know, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But before the confessor we should confess those sins alone which we know and feel in our hearts. For those burdened by sins they know and feel in their hearts, Individual Confession and Absolution is available following Evening Prayer,

as noted in the conference schedules and, if necessary, by appointment with the Conference Chaplains.

If your own pastor is attending the conference, we strongly encourage you to ask him to hear your confession. Semi-private space in the chapel will be made available for this purpose. A simple form for Individual Confession and Absolution is included on the inside back cover of your Worship Booklet. As a courtesy to others, those not participating in Individual Confession and Absolution should leave the chapel quickly and quietly immediately following Evening Prayer.

Catechesis is a special theological term that means “religious instruction.” After worship, catechesis is the next major component of Higher Things conferences, and is one of the things that makes these events truly unique. If you have already been confirmed (some more recently than others), there’s a good chance you still remember some of the things you learned in confirmation class.

Cate-what’sis?

Well, that was just the beginning. The *Small Catechism* was designed to teach the very basics of the Christian faith to children. It was never meant to be the end of your learning about the faith into which you were baptized.

At Higher Things conferences, you have ample opportunity to learn more about the ways this faith you have been given influences many areas of your life. From laser-focused Bible studies on Old Testament people to topics such as creation and finding out what the Bible has to say on different scientific subjects, you definitely have the opportunity to dive into learning more about Scripture. There are also sectionals on the life of the Church—the Church year, the liturgy, history. Those of you planning to venture out on your own in college or the rest of the world can find out how to prepare for the attacks of faith that inevitably await you in your future vocations. And then there are the “hot” topics that bring our Lutheran confession to bear on issues such as stem cell research, suicide, homosexuality, dating, feminism, social media . . . the list goes on.

How it works

This year, all sectionals will be single sessions that each last 45 minutes. Most sessions will be repeated once during the week—hopefully minimizing those agonizing decisions between two really incredible-sounding sectionals being held at the same time. In addition to the descriptions listed in the conference book for each Breakaway Session, there is a chart that shows you, at a glance, when and where a particular class will be held.

You will also get to attend plenary (everyone all together) sessions, once each day of the conference. In these sessions, you’ll hear more about the conference theme, Forgiven, and all that means for us.



What is a Tetramorph?

Tetramorph is a symbolic arrangement of four differing elements, or the combination of four disparate elements in one unit. The term is from the Greek tetra, meaning “four,” and morph, for “shape.”

The prophet Ezekiel first reveals to us the vision of the four angelic beings. In a vision, Ezekiel describes their coming from amidst the flames, saying, “As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle” (Ezekiel 1:10 KJV). This image of the Tetramorph is also seen by John in the book of Revelation, where the four creatures surround the throne of Christ: “And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle” (Revelation 4:7).

The Christian Church has historically identified these four creatures with symbols for the four evangelists and has used the images in Christian art throughout the ages. Different designations of the creatures have been used, but St. Jerome’s is the most commonly accepted.

VIR | man Matthew

The first face of the man signifies Matthew, who began to write as of a man, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Matthew is represented as the winged man, because his Gospel begins with the human genealogy of Jesus.



The second is Mark, who is represented as the winged lion, as his Gospel begins with John the Baptist and his "voice crying out in the wilderness." The lion is an animal of the Middle East's wilderness.

LEO | lion
Mark



The third is that of the ox, prefiguring the evangelist Luke, whose Gospel begins in the temple with Zacharias—the father of John the Baptist. The ox is a sacrificial animal.

BOS | ox
Luke



The fourth is the evangelist John, who is represented as an eagle, because John's Gospel begins with a soaring overview of the Incarnation: "In the beginning was the Word. . ." John takes the wings of an eagle, and hastens to higher matters—the Word of God.

AQUILA | eagle
John



Today's Reading:
Matthew 9:1–8

The crowds
glorified God
because He
had given such
authority to men.
(Matthew 9:8)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Maybe you've heard it before. If you haven't, then this'll be news to you: Many Christians say, "Only God can forgive sins." I should also let you know that those words are actually in the Bible! They are! They're in Mark 2 and Luke 5, where they record the same event from our reading in Matthew 9. There you see those words, "Who can forgive sins except God alone?" So said the scribes and Pharisees.

They said that because they didn't like what Jesus said to the paralytic: "Your sins are forgiven." The scribes and Pharisees didn't like sinners, either. They were upset when Jesus hung out with sinners, ate with them, drank with them, and they certainly didn't like His forgiving them! How dare He forgive THOSE people! Doesn't He know they've done THAT?!

The Lord knows. He's God, after all. He knows what the scribes and Pharisees were thinking. (Something only God can do...) He knew their sins. He knew the paralytic's sins, too. He knew Matthew's sins. He knows your sins. Not just the ones you do. He even knows the ones you think! But what does He want to do for sinners? Not judge them. Not expect them to fix themselves. He's no scribe, no Pharisee.

Jesus is the eternal Son of God, and the Son of Man, born of the Virgin Mary. He does the harder thing—He goes to Calvary, "making peace by the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20). In Jesus "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). Forgiveness flows from His wounds, flows out on Calvary—there He is the propitiation not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world! (1 John 2)

Jesus delivers His Cross-won forgiveness ahead of time. Sort of an IOU! "Thus securing eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). But the Lord didn't just deliver it then. He delivers it now. Not in some abstract way, off somewhere else, and you have to remember it, think about it, feel it. Some mental exercise. No, He wants it put into your ears just like He did for the paralytic.

"I forgive you." Jesus' words to you, through your pastor. Jesus deputized Him. Yes, God forgives sins, but through whom does He deliver it? Matthew couldn't be any clearer: "The crowds glorified God because He had given such authority to men" (Matthew 9:8). Which authority? The authority to forgive your sins. And you are forgiven! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Almighty and merciful God, of Your bountiful goodness keep from us all things that may hurt us that we, being ready in both body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish whatever You would have us do; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (Collect for the 19th Sunday after Trinity)

Wednesday

Today's Reading:
John 20:19–31

"If you forgive
anyone his sins,
they are forgiven."
(John 20:22)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. You have sins. Daily and much you do. You don't even know them all! "Who can discern," recognize, understand, or count, "his errors?" (Psalm 19) We shrug this off. "Yeah, so what? No one's perfect. I'm only human."

You deserve death and hell from God. Not just for your sins—that would be justifiable enough—but also for your sinfulness that drives those sins and makes you not care. We deserve hell on top of hell, death upon death, "temporal and eternal punishment"!

"The LORD laid on [Jesus] the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). All your evil, all your sin, all your sinful thoughts, words, actions, and desires—they were heaped up on Jesus. Paid for. Forgiven. Not one left because of His blood and death.

Now the resurrected Jesus deputized His ministers to deliver that forgiveness to you, to open heaven's doors, to lock hell's gates by speaking the Word of complete, total, eternal forgiveness for all sins, delivered to you each time you've got a single sin that bothers you.

You're that forgiven! Not just because Jesus died and rose, not just because Jesus said so, but because your pastor says so! Jesus deputized him to say so: "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven." And you are! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner! Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light upon my path. It has laid bare my sin, for which I deserve nothing but punishment; yet, it has also declared to me Your grace and mercy and forgiveness. As You have taught my heart to believe and trust in You, so shall I also confess with my mouth. Grant me the honesty to examine my life according to Your holy Ten Commandments, especially as they address my vocations in life. Enable me to recognize my sin, to know and feel it in my heart, and rightly to bemoan and lament my iniquity and offenses. Give me both humility and courage to confess my sins and to receive from my pastor Your Holy Absolution, according to Your good and gracious will. Invigorate my faith, through this same word of forgiveness, to have no doubt, but firmly to believe, that by it all my sins are forgiven before God in heaven. You have called and sent my pastor, in Your name and stead, to hear my confession with Your ears of mercy, and to forgive me with Your own voice. Since You have chosen to deal with me in this way, allow me not to neglect Your gift but to lay hold of it with eager confidence. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and restore to me the joy of Your salvation; for Your name's sake. Amen. (Lutheran Book of Prayer, alt.)



Today's Reading:
Small Catechism:

Confession

Second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness, from the pastor as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven. (: Confession)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. We focus on the wrong thing when it comes to confession. Confession has two parts, but we don't even make it to the second piece of the puzzle. We get hung up on first part.

We get hung up on the confessing. So many competing ideas! "Do I have to confess?" "How much?" "How little?" "How many?" "How few?" "What if I forget something?" "What if I say it wrong or sound stupid?" "How much do I have to feel it or mean it?"

But as Lutherans we really get hung up on the pastor's participation. "Why him?" "I don't HAVE to confess to him, do I?" "It's not like he's really forgiving me, right?" (See the last Reflection) "What will he think?" "What will he say?" "What will he do?" "Will he tell someone?" "Will he tell my parents?!"

With all these thoughts and worries and fears, we end up saying, "I'd rather not . . ." But the confession part isn't even the point of it all! It's not some torture test for Christians, but rather something we keep around for tortured Christians! Those who are tormented by their sins and what they've done. How they've failed themselves, failed those around them, failed their friends, their family, their God. We keep confession and Absolution for one reason and one reason alone: so that you would hear these words for each single sin that bothers you: "I forgive you all your sins."

Those are your pastor's words. Those are Jesus' words through your pastors. Those faithful words spoken by your pastor in his Office are Jesus' words. "The words which absolution give Are His who died that we might live; The minister whom Christ has sent Is but His humble instrument" (LSB 614: st.5).

Use your pastor. He's Jesus' tool, Jesus' instrument. He's not only there for Jesus to make use of him. Jesus put him there for YOU to make use of him! Your pastor is there for one reason, and it's not to judge you, think less of you, let you have it because of your sins. No, he's there to say what Jesus deputized him to say: "I forgive you." Jesus wants to use your pastor that way. He wants your pastor to say it. He died and rose for it. He also wants you to hear. He wants you to believe. Jesus wants to use your pastor this way to save you, to forgive you. So you are forgiven. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

When ministers lay on their hands, Absolved by Christ the sinner stands; He who by grace the Word believes, The purchase of His blood receives. ("As Surely as I Live, 'God Said'" LSB 614, st.6)

Friday

Today's Reading:
Matthew 7:1-6

First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (Matthew 7:5)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. What Jesus says here in Matthew 7 isn't about your being able to judge those around you, to condemn them, to be able to give them a piece of your mind over how they've failed, messed up, or sinned. This isn't our excuse to prove we're better than others. We can't use Jesus' words as license to have a "holier than thou" attitude.

Specks and logs are clearly sins, and God's Law doesn't remove sins. Your berating the people in your life doesn't get them on the right path. It makes you feel better about yourself—that you are right and they are wrong. That you've been in the right the whole time! "You hypocrite!"

No, Jesus here is actually talking about forgiveness. That's the real "judgment," if you even want to call it that, which removes sins. The Lord's own mercy and forgiveness, Cross-won, holy-blood paid for, empty-tomb certain, is what removes each sin, every sin, all sins—yours, your neighbor's, even the whole world's!

There may be those sinners who would live in their sins rather than in the freedom of the forgiveness of those sins, those sins being taken away from them. They're like "dogs who return to their own vomit" (Proverbs 26:11).

We see it. But we have our eyes focused on the forgiveness of sins. That's what we want to say and deliver. In fact, Jesus is telling you here that just like he's deputized your pastor to forgive sins, so also, by Holy Baptism, the Lord Jesus deputizes you to forgive those around you, those who've wronged you. And the school of experience will teach you all about the joys of that, and the dangers, too.

God sent His Son to earn forgiveness FOR YOU. He died and rose for you. The resurrected Jesus deputized His pastor, your pastor, to speak that forgiveness to you, to remove the planks and specks. But, through Holy Baptism, you've been called to be a child of God, and part of that means you've been deputized, too. "I forgive you." And they are forgiven! You, too. In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

Forgive we now each other's faults As we our faults confess, And let us love each other well In Christian holiness. ("Where Charity and Love Prevail" LSB 845, st.3)



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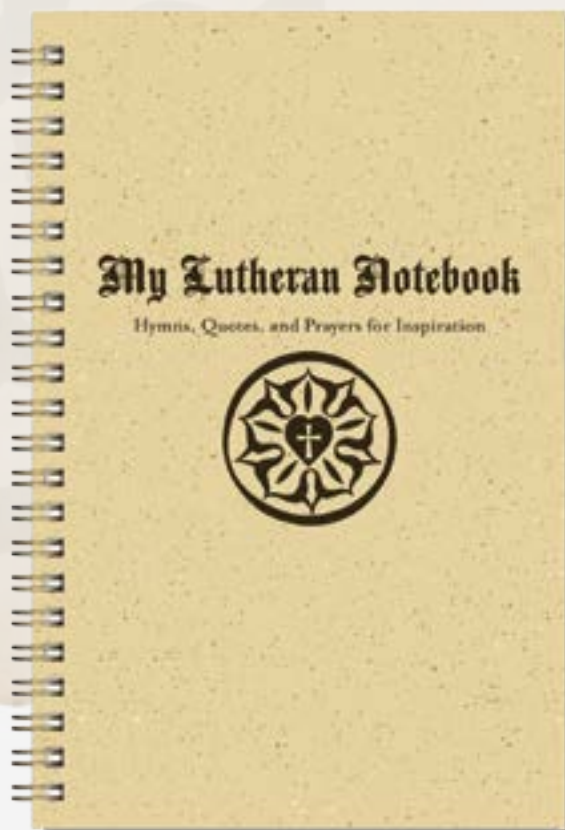


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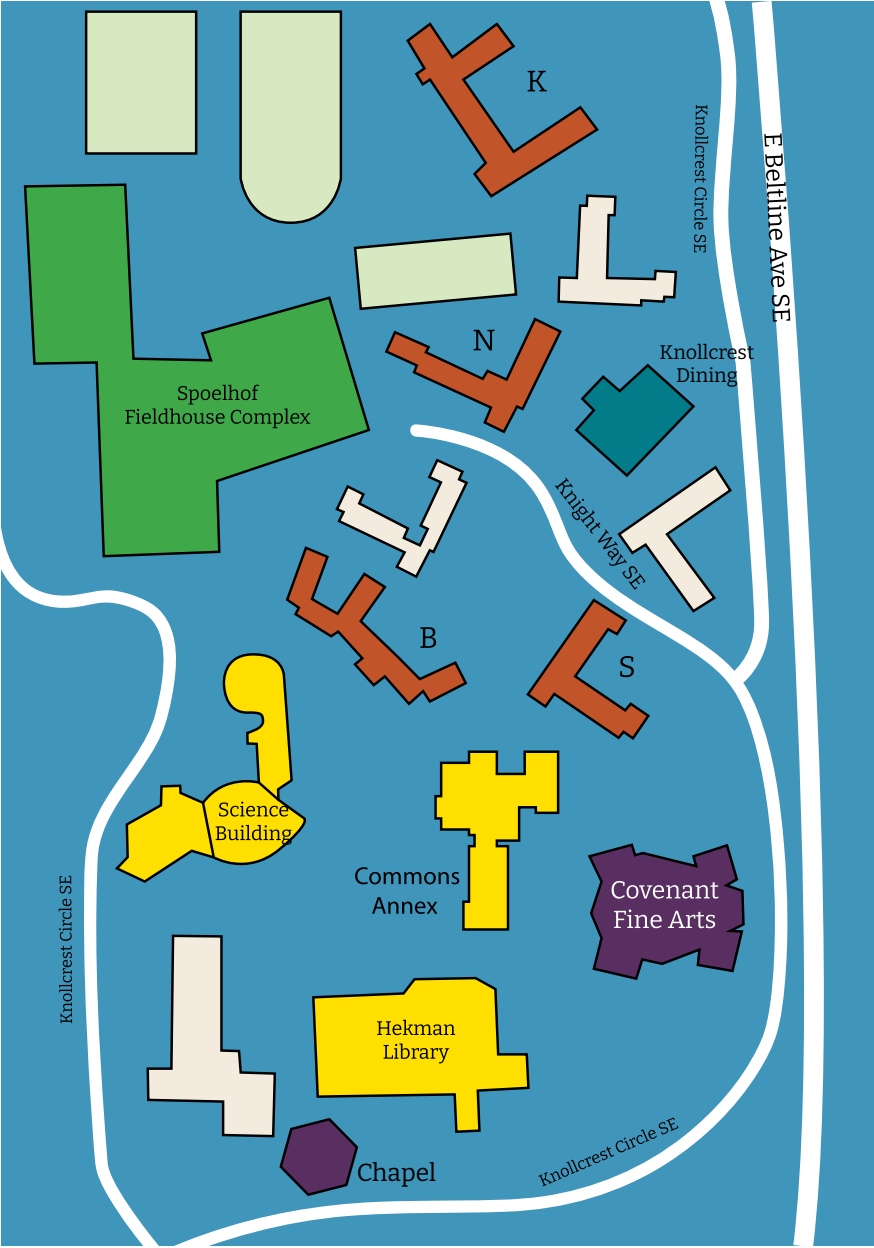


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**Events**

Covenant Fine Arts
Chapel

Dining

Knollcrest Dining Hall

Recreation

Spoelhof Fieldhouse
Complex

Classrooms

Commons Building
Spoelhof Fieldhouse Complex
Hekman Library
Commons Annex
Science Building

Residence Halls

Building N: Noordewier -VanderWerp
Building B: Bolt - Heyns - Timmer
Building K: Kalsbeek Huizenga van Reken
Building S: Schultze - Eldersveld

TUESDAY
JULY 20, 2021

9:00 AM	Registration/Check-In	Covenant Fine Arts Center (CFAC)
1:00 PM	Leaders' Meeting	CFAC 135
1:30 PM	Opening Divine Service	University Chapel
3:45 PM	Announcements	CFAC Auditorium
4:15 PM	Plenary Session	CFAC Auditorium
5:00 PM	Dinner	Commons Dining Hall
7:00 PM	Evening Prayer	University Chapel
7:30 PM	Individual Confession & Absolution	University Chapel
8:00 PM	Breakaway Session A	
9:00 PM	Free Time	
11:00 PM	Prayer at the Close of the Day	Dorms
12:00 AM	Lights Out	Dorms

WEDNESDAY
JULY 21, 2021

7:00 AM	Breakfast	Commons Dining Hall
8:00 AM	Leaders' Meeting	CFAC 135
8:00 AM	Choir Rehearsal	University Chapel
9:00 AM	Matins	University Chapel
9:45 AM	Announcements	CFAC Auditorium
10:15 AM	Plenary Session	CFAC Auditorium
11:00 AM	Lunch	Commons Dining Hall
1:00 PM	Vespers	University Chapel
1:45 PM	Breakaway Session B	
2:30 PM	Afternoon	Free Time
2:30 PM	Adult Thank You Reception	CFAC East Lobby
4:00 PM	Breakaway Session C	
5:00 PM	Dinner	Commons Dining Hall
7:00 PM	Evening Prayer	University Chapel
7:30 PM	Individual Confession & Absolution	University Chapel
8:00 PM	Breakaway Session D	
9:00 PM	Free Time	
11:00 PM	Prayer at the Close of the Day	Dorms
12:00 AM	Lights Out	Dorms

THURSDAY
JULY 22, 2021

7:00 AM	Breakfast	Commons Dining Hall
8:00 AM	Leaders' Meeting	CFAC 135
8:00 AM	Choir Rehearsal	University Chapel
9:00 AM	Matins	University Chapel
9:45 AM	Announcements	CFAC Auditorium
10:15 AM	Plenary Session	CFAC Auditorium
11:00 AM	Lunch	Commons Dining Hall
1:00 PM	Vespers	University Chapel
1:45 PM	Breakaway Session E	
2:30 PM	Panel Discussion	CFAC Auditorium
4:00 PM	Breakaway Session F	
5:00 PM	Dinner	Commons Dining Hall
7:00 PM	Evening Prayer	University Chapel
7:30 PM	Individual Confession & Absolution	University Chapel
8:00 PM	Free Time	
9:00 PM	Fireside Chats	Campus
11:00 PM	Prayer at the Close of the Day	Dorms
12:00 AM	Lights Out	Dorms

FRIDAY
JULY 23, 2021

7:00 AM	Breakfast	Commons Dining Hall
8:00 AM	Leaders' Meeting	CFAC 135
8:00 AM	Choir Rehearsal	University Chapel
9:00 AM	Matins	University Chapel
9:45 AM	Announcements	CFAC Auditorium
10:15 AM	Plenary Session	CFAC Auditorium
11:00 AM	Lunch	Commons Dining Hall
1:00 PM	Closing Divine Service	University Chapel
2:30 PM	Check-Out	



Entertainment | Each evening of the conference, you'll have a number of fun things to do around campus. Entertainment will include friendly contests between the Tetramorph houses. Group leaders will hear details about each day's opportunities in their morning meetings, and information will also be provided during the day's announcements. Don't forget to check the app!

Thank You Reception | There will be a reception to thank the adult leaders from each group on Wednesday afternoon at 2:30 pm in the Covenant Fine Arts Center East Lobby. Come eat some delicious food, drink some refreshing drinks, and let us thank you for the work that you've done to bring your groups to the conference!

Lost Keys | There is a \$25.00 charge for a broken or lost key card, a \$50.00 charge for a broken or lost key, and a \$50.00 charge for a broken fan. Keep those keys on you in a safe place! Any charges will be passed on to the group for payment directly following the conference.

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Rev. Bradley Drew

Pastor, Mt. Olive Lutheran Church,
Metairie, LA

Pastor Drew is a native of Michigan and attended Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, and Concordia College, Ann Arbor, MI, receiving his Bachelor of Arts in 1985. He then went to Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN. In May of 1989, he received his Master of Divinity and Diploma of Vocation.

In November of 1998, he accepted the call to be pastor of Mount Olive Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Metairie, LA, and was installed there on December 20, 1998. To this day Pastor Drew continues to serve the watermarked at Mt. Olive.

On July 5, 1989, Pastor Drew was united in marriage to Lynne. The Lord has blessed their union with three children: Jordan, Jared, and Jasmine; and three grandchildren: Ember, George, and Liliana.



Rev. Harrison Goodman

Pastor, Mount Calvary Evangelical
Lutheran Church, San Antonio, TX

Content Executive, Higher Things, Inc.

Pastor Goodman graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary and now serves the saints of Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in San Antonio, TX. His wife Lisa loves him so much that she watches their 8-year-old son Ezekiel and 4-year-old daughter Zoey while he goes to conferences each summer. He's very blessed to have her. Also, she's smart and pretty. He is the content executive for Higher Things, and wonders if anybody actually reads these blurbs.

Last Name	Title	Session A	Session B	Session C	Session D	Session E	Session F
Bauman	From Invisible to Indispensable 4 LIFE			Undercroft 201			
Benson	Get Out of the Cave!	CF*115			CF*115		
Douthwaite	Explaining Lutheran to Your Non-Lutheran Friends	CF*125			CF*125		
Drew	Who Invited James?			Commons LH14			Commons LH 14
Fritsche	Rice, Beans, Plantains and Jesus	Alumni BR 206	Alumni BR 206				
Goodman	Who Am I?		Undercroft201			Undercroft201	
Heinz	ABSOLUTE-ly Forgiven			CF*115			CF*115
Hopfensperger	If Your Friend Told You to Jump Off a Cliff ...						
Jacoby	Generation Z Survival Guide: Spoiler alert — It's All About the Gospel!		CF*125		Commons LH 14	CF*125	Commons LH 14
Jacoby	Are Public School Kids Going To Hell?	Commons LH 14	Commons LH 14				
Kober	Keeping the Faith After High School and Beyond			CF*125			CF*125
Krieg	What Are You Worth? The Value of Life in a Culture of Death	Undercroft 201			Undercroft 201		
Loemker	Hymnody and Music in the Divine Service						Meeter Cntr LH 280
Loemker	Me? Play the Organ? (Organist Boot Camp, Part 1)		Chapel				
Loemker	I Got the Organ to Turn On. Now What? (Organist Boot Camp, Part 2)			Chapel			

Loemker	Music is for Sissies (Organist Boot Camp, Part 3)								Chapel	
Measel	Sin Is No joke: Unmasking This World's True Dark Knight		Meeter Cntr LH 280			Meeter Cntr LH 280				
Minton	Unforgettable Forgiveness		CF*115			CF*115			CF*115	
Mullet	"How Come, God?"					SB*110				SB*110
Paul	"GOD! I HATE THEM!"	Hoogenboom 280							Hoogenboom 280	
Pool	An Invisible Tattoo: Rethinking the Second Commandment		SB*110						SB*110	
Riojas	Artwork AT the Church									Our Savior Sanctuary
Riojas	Artwork In the Church								Meeter Cntr LH 280	
Sanchez	Youth Ministry 101								Alumni BR 206	Alumni BR 206
Schulz	Communing with the Betrayer?	Hoogenboom 280						Hoogenboom 280		
Simek	The One About Gender and Homosexuality	SB*010				SB*010				
Simek	The One About Dating and Marriage							SB*010		SB*010
Smith	Jesus Christ Is Lutheran					Alumni BR 206		Alumni BR 206		
Steinbrenner	End-of-Life Decisions		SB*010						SB*010	
Stolarczyk	Forgiveness: the Voice Breaking Through the Voices	SB*110						SB*110		
Sutton	Lutheran Hymns: Confession and Absolution	Meeter Cntr LH 280				Meeter Cntr LH 280				



Session A | // Get Out of the Cave!

Jocelyn Benson

Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness? Yes. Let it be done for you as you believe." God's forgiveness is true, good, and beautiful—and it is real! Using Plato's cave metaphor, we will discuss ways the world tries to convince us not only that the world's shadows are real, but also that God's reality is too overwhelming to experience. God created us to experience His truth, goodness, and beauty, and through Baptism gives us weapons to walk away from the world's shadows. In this session, we will explore how the sanctity of life, biblical manhood and womanhood, and marriage are true, good, and beautiful gifts God has given us, but that the world seeks to shadow.

Mrs. Benson is with Wittenberg Academy and can be reached at mrsbenson@wittenbergacademy.org.

// Explaining Lutheran to Your Non-Lutheran Friends

Rev. James Douthwaite

How do you simply explain what makes Lutherans different? Sometimes other Christians use the same words as we do but with different meanings. How can you get past that without getting too complicated? And what about non-Christians? Is there a simple way to explain the Good News to them and help them think about the truth of God in a new way? This breakaway will offer some ideas for you to present theology in a simple, Lutheran way, and grow in the confidence of the salvation that is yours in Jesus.

Rev. Douthwaite is the pastor at Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church in Vienna, VA. He can be reached at revjdoc@gmail.com.

// Rice, Beans, Plantains, and Jesus: God's Mission in the Dominican Republic

Rev. Joel Fritsche

Have you ever wondered what it's like to be a missionary in another country? What does a missionary do? How does our Lutheran theology intersect with how we do missions? What is the LCMS doing around the world and specifically in the Dominican Republic and Latin America? How can you get involved? How many Dominicans can fit on a motorcycle? How does our liturgy sound in Spanish? ¡Vamos a ver!

Rev. Fritsche is an LCMS Missionary to the Dominican Republic. He also serves on the Higher Things Board of Directors as Secretary. He can be reached at joelfritsche@me.com.

// Are Public School Kids Going To Hell?

Erica Jacoby

It's time to talk about your education in this breakaway, even if you don't attend a public school. What are they teaching teachers to teach these days and are students really learning how to learn? Are you being taught how to think or are you being taught what

to think? Let's take a look at why your school and teachers are the way they are. The Bible and Luther, the chief teacher of our church, have lots to say about getting a good education, even—gasp!—in a public school.

Erica Jacoby is the Executive Director of Higher Things and a member at Summit of Peace Lutheran Church in Thornton, CO. She can be reached at erica@higherthings.org.

// What Are You Worth? The Value of Life in a Culture of Death

Rev. Kelly Krieg

What are you worth? What gives your life value? The answer to these questions can vary depending on one's worldview. In this session we will take a closer look at what gives life meaning and value. We live in a world which celebrates death and denigrates life, whether by abortion or euthanasia. Our society says life has no value. Come hear how to respond to those who would deny God's image in humanity. Learn what it means to be created in the image of God and the value this truth gives to your life and all human life.

Rev. Krieg is the pastor at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Houston, TX, and can be reached at kkrieg@osl.cc.

// Communing with the Betrayer?

Rev. Dr. Charles Schulz

Did Jesus offer the Lord's Supper to Judas? Although all four Gospels narrate the meal in the Upper Room, that question is a hard one to answer. We'll look at the Bible passages and then listen to how the early Church fathers (2nd-5th century) answered that question first with a no and then with a yes. Why did the Church's position change? What truths did the fathers want to teach? What can we learn about holiness, grace, and forgiveness from Judas' presence at or absence from this most holy meal? Come and find out!

Rev. Dr. Schulz is with Concordia University, Ann Arbor and can be reached at charles.schulz@cuaa.edu.

// The One About Gender and Homosexuality

Rev. Brett Simek

What does the Bible say about gender? What about sexuality? What does the world say about these things? Is "gender" the same thing as "sex?" Does God even address these issues we are having today in a book written thousands of years ago? What if I am struggling with my gender? What about if my friend is? What do I say to them about it? Is there a place in the church for me or for them? Can we "hate the sin but love the sinner?" Come and talk about these questions and more as we hear about God's gifts of creation, order, Christ, and salvation.

Session A (continued)

Rev. Simek is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church Rantoul in Hilbert, WI. He serves as the Catechesis Coordinator for Higher Things and is also the Catechist for this conference. He can be reached at brettsimek@higherthings.org.

// Forgiveness: The Voice Breaking Through the Voices

Rev. Steve Stolarczyk

More than a few of us have found ourselves crushed under the heavy burden of the countless voices trying to convince us what we should and shouldn't be. We'll use God's Word to cut through those voices to hear what God demands of you, what He has made you, and what He has promised you. His voice of Law accuses but, ultimately, His voice of Gospel comforts. You'll discover how His voice breaks through all of the others. And you'll begin to develop the discipline of saying "Amen" to Him.

Rev. Stolarczyk is the pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Unionville, MI, and can be reached at stolarczyk73@gmail.com.

// Lutheran Hymns: Confession and Absolution

Rev. Jacob Sutton

Profound and rich Lutheran hymns are found in the section of the hymnal labeled "Confession and Absolution." These hymns deal with our deep need for the forgiveness won for us by our crucified and risen Savior, and how that forgiveness is conveyed to the penitent sinner. We will sing the truth about God's forgiveness of sins into our hearts, and learn all about these beautiful and timeless core hymns of our Lutheran faith.

Rev. Sutton is the pastor at Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Terre Haute, IN and can be reached at pastor@ielcth.org.

Session B

// Rice, Beans, Plantains, and Jesus: God's Mission in the Dominican Republic

Rev. Joel Fritsche

Have you ever wondered what it's like to be a missionary in another country? What does a missionary do? How does our Lutheran theology intersect with how we do missions? What is the LCMS doing around the world and specifically in the Dominican Republic and Latin America? How can you get involved? How many Dominicans can fit on a motorcycle? How does our liturgy sound in Spanish? ¡Vamos a ver!

Rev. Fritsche is an LCMS Missionary to the Dominican Republic. He also serves on the Higher Things Board of Directors as Secretary. He can be reached at joelfritsche@me.com.

// Who Am I?

Rev. Harrison Goodman

When people look at you, what do they see? When what's expected of us crashes into what we actually do, the mess left behind very rarely matches up with the person we wish we were. It leaves us feeling lost, worthless, and without a place. When

we carry all that baggage around, expecting someone to actually love us becomes an exercise in schizophrenia or a lifetime spent in fear of people finding out the truth. Your identity runs deeper than what you can do. In a world where identity is everything, God calls you His child.

Rev. Goodman is the pastor at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in San Antonio, TX. He's also the Content Executive for Higher Things and one of the Plenary speakers for this conference. He can be reached at hgoodman01@gmail.com.

// If Your Friend Told You to Jump Off a Cliff . . .

Rev. Bryan Hopfensperger

All throughout the Bible God's people are called sheep. How much do you know about sheep though? Sure enough, sometimes they're cute and fluffy and cuddly. Sometimes, though, they're awfully foolish and filthy. We're going to learn about sheep and why they need shepherds to take care of them. When we understand sheep and shepherds, then we'll know why we need a shepherd so badly! Best of all, we'll discover how Jesus is our Good Shepherd and what He does to care for us, His little lambs.

Rev. Hopfensperger is the pastor at Peace Lutheran Church in Sandusky, MI. He can be reached at revhopfensperger@gmail.com.

// Are Public School Kids Going To Hell?

Erica Jacoby

It's time to talk about your education in this breakaway, even if you don't attend a public school. What are they teaching teachers to teach these days and are students really learning how to learn? Are you being taught how to think or are you being taught what to think? Let's take a look at why your school and teachers are the way they are. The Bible and Luther, the chief teacher of our church, have lots to say about getting a good education, even—gasp!—in a public school.

Erica Jacoby is the Executive Director of Higher Things and a member at Summit of Peace Lutheran Church in Thornton, CO. She can be reached at erica@higherthings.org.

// Me? Play the Organ? (Organist Boot Camp, Part 1)

Chris Loemker

Join our conference organist to learn the basics about the organ, from how to find the “on” switch to fundamentals about manual and pedal keyboards. You'll also learn how the instrument makes its noise. This sectional is for anyone interested in learning more about the organ.

Chris Loemker is the Kantor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. He also serves as the Higher Things Kantor and is the organist for this conference. He can be reached at chris@loemker.org.



Session B
(continued)

// Sin Is No Joke: Unmasking This World's True Dark Knight

Rev. Martin Measel

Our society today denies the seriousness of sin. Sin is thought to be merely an opinion of what's right or wrong for a given individual, and therefore sin is simply an inconvenience to be ignored or excused. Using video clips of the Joker from *The Dark Knight*, we will explore the depth and corruption of evil and the true nature of sin, and learn how sin is forgiven by Christ.

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"Pastor, I know I have forgiven them, but I can't forget what they've done!" "Pastor, I know I'm forgiven, but I can't forget what I've done!" Are we called to "forgive and forget"? Jesus daily and richly forgives all your sins, but what about those that you can't get out of your head? Did He forgive those, too? Yes, He forgave those sins. Sometimes we can't forget the sins we've committed or that have been committed against us. But that's our fallen nature. Jesus forgives them all. That's truly unforgettable!

Rev. Minton is the pastor at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Milford, IL and can be reached at wrestlingwiththeology@gmail.com.

// "GOD I HATE THEM"

Rev. Preston Paul

Be angry and do not sin... "GOD I HATE THEM!" "I wish she would just die!" ... What are we to do with our anger and the hurt that is often its source? Jesus makes it sound so easy: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." On the other hand, He does threaten to punish all who hate Him and break His commandments, which includes those who hurt us by their sin. Vengeance belongs to God. Being hurt and angry is no small matter. Jesus teaches us through the psalms HOW to pray with HIM when we are hurt and angry.

Rev. Paul is the pastor at St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran in Almena, WI and can be reached at Prestonpaul@icloud.com.

// An Invisible Tattoo: Rethinking the Second Commandment

Rev. Daniel Pool

"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God." Many of us grew up thinking that violating the Second Commandment was simply using "Jesus" or "God" as a swear word. Good enough. But there is so much more to this commandment. Maybe the old King James Version was a little better here: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." What does it mean to "take" God's Name? Do you think of yourself as one who is stamped or tattooed with God's Name? Let's explore these ideas together!

Rev. Pool is the pastor at St. John Lutheran Church in Clinton, IA, and can be reached at dpool@stjohn-clinton-ia.org.

// End-of-Life Decisions

Rev. Adam Steinbrenner

Should we remove the feeding tube? Should we increase the morphine? How do I care for my loved one who is no longer able to make medical decisions for him/herself? Pending the return of our Lord, we will all die someday. As human creatures, we are to confess the faith all the way to our death through caring for other human creatures as they approach their death. Have you or your family ever been faced with end-of-life medical decisions for a loved one? How are we as Christians supposed to live faithfully in such challenging situations? As we navigate these questions and more, the hope of the resurrected Lord Jesus will be the center of all our discussion.

Rev. Steinbrenner is the pastor at St. John Lutheran Church in Dublin, OH. He can be reached at adam.steinbrenner@stjohnsdublin.org.

Session B
(continued)

// From Invisible to Indispensable 4 LIFE

Michelle Bauman

Invisibility would be an awesome superpower, wouldn't it? The ability to disappear, especially during embarrassing moments, sounds ideal. But what about the times we don't want to be invisible? What about the times the world averts its eyes from us because of our confession, abilities, or circumstances? Society cancels those who refuse to conform, but God declares every life indispensable because of Christ's redeeming work! How can we be certain of this? And how do we share this message with others? Join this session to find out how you can be a Gospel-motivated voice 4 LIFE!

Michelle Bauman is with Lutherans for life, Y4Life, and can be reached at michelle@y4life.org.

Session C

// Who Invited James?

Rev. Bradley Drew

James 2:24 says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." Seriously? Who invited James to this party? Certainly not Jesus, right? No, Jesus invited him, too. Why? Because James, along with every other writer in Holy Scripture, ties God's love and forgiveness NOT to our works, but to Jesus and His works. It's the message that is heard in Baptism, in every Absolution and sermon your pastor speaks, and in the Holy Supper. But, that message can also be seen. How? Come and hear James teach us how.

Rev. Drew is the pastor at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Metairie, LA. He is also one of the plenary speakers for this conference.



// ABSOLUTE-ly Forgiven

Rev. Rich Heinz

When you gather with the Church around God's Word and Sacrament in the Divine Service, you are forgiven—more than once! But God knows that you need His forgiving Word often and directly. Explore both the liturgy of Individual Confession & Absolution and the Divine Service, to hear His ABSOLUTE forgiveness.

Rev. Heinz is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lowell, IN. He also serves as the Worship Coordinator for Higher Things and is the Chaplain for this conference. He can be reached at revfrhein@gmail.com.

// Keeping the Faith After High School and Beyond

Carrie Kober

What is the most important gift given to you? You should always be prepared to guard this gift with the full armor of God! As young people, the attack will come from all directions to steal this gift from you. What can these attacks look like? What can you do to be prepared? What happens if you mess up and let your guard down? Hear about both God's Law and Gospel in the Christian's faith walk after high school and beyond.

Carrie Kober is with Concordia University, NE, and is a member at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. She can be reached at carrie.kober@cune.edu.

// I Got the Organ to Turn On. Now What? (Organist Boot Camp, Part 2)

Chris Loemker

Our conference organist will discuss the primary function of the organist: leading congregational song. Learn how to register the instrument for hymn singing and hear tips to help you highlight the rich texts that we sing. Organists and those interested in playing will especially enjoy this sectional.

Chris Loemker is the Kantor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. He also serves as the Higher Things Kantor and is the organist for this conference. He can be reached at chris@loemker.org.

// How Come, God?

Rev. Roger Mullet

Why do bad things happen? Does God allow evil and suffering to come upon us? Does God actually cause those things? How do we as Christians respond in the face of such realities in our fallen world? We'll begin by taking a look at some less-than-satisfactory and perhaps less-than-helpful answers to these questions. Then we'll explore the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments alike, to form our "theology of suffering" and offer some practical advice.

Rev. Mullet is the pastor at Faith Evangelical Lutheran church in Churobusco, IN, and can be reached at rev.mullet@gmail.com.

// The One About Gender and Homosexuality

Rev. Brett Simek

What does the Bible say about gender? What about sexuality? What does the world say about these things? Is “gender” the same thing as “sex?” Does God even address these issues we are having today in a book written thousands of years ago? What if I am struggling with my gender? What about if my friend is? What do I say to them about it? Is there a place in the church for me or for them? Can we “hate the sin but love the sinner?” Come and talk about these questions and more as we hear about God’s gifts of creation, order, Christ, and salvation.

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// Jesus Christ Is Lutheran

Samuel Smith

“Have you made Jesus Lord of your life?” “Hey dude, you’re a Christian, what’s the rapture?” “Lutherans and Catholics are basically the same right?” Come hang out with the Vicar, and learn how who Jesus is answers the above questions. Come and see why the Lutheran confessions put forward the faith of the Bible. Come see how we are saved, and learn how these beautiful little words, “for you,” make Jesus a Lutheran, church something awesome, life worth living now, and the Bible something worth reading.

Samuel Smith is a member at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Broadlands, IL, and can be reached at samuel.smith@ctsfw.edu. He is also the Higher Things Summer Vicar.

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Rev. Sutton is the pastor at Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Terre Haute, IN, and can be reached at pastor@ielcth.org.

// Get Out of the Cave!

Jocelyn Benson

“Do you believe that my forgiveness is God’s forgiveness? Yes. Let it be done for you as you believe.” God’s forgiveness is true, good, and beautiful—and it is real! Using Plato’s cave metaphor, we will discuss ways the world tries to convince us not only that the world’s shadows are real, but also that God’s reality is too

Session C
(continued)

Session D



Session D (continued)

overwhelming to experience. God created us to experience His truth, goodness, and beauty, and through Baptism gives us weapons to walk away from the world's shadows. In this session, we will explore how the sanctity of life, biblical manhood and womanhood, and marriage are true, good, and beautiful gifts God has given us, but that the world seeks to shadow.

Mrs. Benson is with Wittenberg Academy and can be reached at mrsbenson@wittenbergacademy.org.

// Explaining Lutheran to Your Non-Lutheran Friends

Rev. James Douthwaite

How do you simply explain what makes Lutherans different? Sometimes other Christians use the same words as we do but with different meanings. How can you get past that without getting too complicated? And what about non-Christians? Is there a simple way to explain the Good News to them and help them think about the truth of God in a new way? This breakaway will offer some ideas for you to present theology in a simple, Lutheran way, and grow in the confidence of the salvation that is yours in Jesus.

Rev. Douthwaite is the pastor at Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church in Vienna, VA. He can be reached at revjdoc@gmail.com.

// Generation Z Survival Guide: Spoiler alert — It's All About the Gospel!

Erica Jacoby

One out of five Americans belongs to Gen Z and yours is the first generation in American history whose the majority doesn't identify as Christian. In fact, most of you believe that there is no one true "religion." What does the Church need to do to keep the youth we have in the Church, and what more do we need to do to reach those outside of it? Let's talk about this generation's unique challenges and opportunities and why the Gospel just might flourish in spite of us!

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Session D (continued)

// Sin Is No Joke: Unmasking This World's True Dark Knight

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Our society today denies the seriousness of sin. Sin is thought to be merely an opinion of what's right or wrong for a given individual, and therefore sin is simply an inconvenience to be ignored or excused. Using video clips of the Joker from *The Dark Knight*, we will explore the depth and corruption of evil and the true nature of sin, and learn how sin is forgiven by Christ.

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// Communing with the Betrayer?

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Did Jesus offer the Lord's Supper to Judas? Although all four Gospels narrate the meal in the Upper Room, that question is a hard one to answer. We'll look at the Bible passages and then listen to how the early Church fathers (2nd-5th century) answered that question first with a no and then with a yes. Why did the Church's position change? What truths did the fathers want to teach? What can we learn about holiness, grace, and forgiveness from Judas' presence at or absence from this most holy meal? Come and find out!

Rev. Dr. Schulz is with Concordia University, Ann Arbor, and can be reached at charles.schulz@cuaa.edu.

// The One About Dating and Marriage

Rev. Brett Simek

When should I start dating? Who should I date? What about marriage? Do I have to consider more things than just whether or not I think they are hot? Could who I date or marry say something about my faith? What does it take to be a good husband or wife? Does God say anything about all this? The Bible is full of the imagery of marriage, of husband and wife, and even wedding receptions (feasts) and it's not all good. What happens when things go wrong and life isn't "happily ever after" and where does Jesus fit into all of this? Come and hear about the perfect Groom and His Bride and what happens when things aren't perfect.

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Session D (continued)

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Session E

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Erica Jacoby is the Executive Director of Higher Things and a member at Summit of Peace Lutheran Church in Thornton, CO. She can be reached at erica@higherthings.org.

// Music Is for Sissies (Organist Boot Camp, Part 3)

Chris Loemker

Okay, so music isn't for sissies. In this sectional, taught by our conference organist, we'll begin to look at ways that organists can improvise and depart from what's written on the page. Useful strategies will be provided for re-harmonizing hymns, as well as presenting you with the building blocks needed to start improvising your own service music. This sectional is for organists, those who would like to be organists, and those who would like to understand organists.

Chris Loemker is the Kantor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. He also serves as the Higher Things Kantor and is the organist for this conference. He can be reached at chris@loemker.org.

// Unforgettable Forgiveness

Rev. Doug Minton

"Pastor, I know I have forgiven them, but I can't forget what they've done!" "Pastor, I know I'm forgiven, but I can't forget what I've done!" Are we called to "forgive and forget"? Jesus daily and richly forgives all your sins, but what about those that you can't get out of your head? Did He forgive those, too? Yes, He forgave those sins. Sometimes we can't forget the sins we've committed or that have been committed against us. But that's our fallen nature. Jesus forgives them all. That's truly unforgettable!

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Session E (continued)

// "GOD! I HATE THEM!"

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Rev. Pool is the pastor at St. John Lutheran Church in Clinton, IA and can be reached at dpool@stjohn-clinton-ia.org.

// Artwork in the Church

Edward Riojas

What is "sacred artwork," and what place does it even have in the Church? How does the Lutheran church view sacred artwork compared to other church bodies? Artwork is slowly making its way back into Lutheran sanctuaries, but beauty is often much deeper than what lies on the surface. The confessional nature of sacred art, and its place as a teaching tool will be explored in this brief overview. Christian symbols—many of them familiar and a few of them not so much—will also be examined, and you will be challenged to visually explore your own church sanctuaries, striving to underscore what we believe, teach, and confess.

Edward Riojas is a member at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, MI. He is a prolific Lutheran artist and created the logo for many HT Conferences, including Forgiven 2021 and For You 2022. He can be reached at edriojasartist@gmail.com.

// Youth Ministry 101

Crysten Sanchez

Thinking about putting together a youth program can seem daunting. Let's be honest, if you were asked to build something from scratch with immediate success, it WOULD be daunting!

There are a lot of building blocks that go into a healthy, sustainable, safe youth program. Crysten Sanchez, formerly youth coordinator at a church in Iowa, will walk you through the many pieces of the puzzle to do just that!

Session E
(continued)

Crysten Sanchez is the Events Executive for Higher Things and a member at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mount Vernon, IA. She can be reached at csanchez@higherthings.org.

// End-of-Life Decisions

Rev. Adam Steinbrenner

Should we remove the feeding tube? Should we increase the morphine? How do I care for my loved one who is no longer able to make medical decisions for him/herself? Pending the return of our Lord, we will all die someday. As human creatures, we are to confess the faith all the way to our death through caring for other human creatures as they approach their death. Have you or your family ever been faced with end-of-life medical decisions for a loved one? How are we as Christians supposed to live faithfully in such challenging situations? As we navigate these questions and more, the hope of the resurrected Lord Jesus will be the center of all our discussion.

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Michelle Bauman

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Session F

Michelle Bauman is with Lutherans for life, Y4Life, and can be reached at michelle@y4life.org.

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// Keeping the Faith after High School and Beyond

Carrie Kober

What is the most important gift given to you? You should always be prepared to guard this gift with the full armor of God! As young people, the attack will come from all directions to steal this gift from you. What can these attacks look like? What can you do to be prepared? What happens if you mess up and let your guard down? Hear about both God's Law and Gospel in the Christian's faith walk after high school and beyond.

Carrie Kober is with Concordia University, NE, and is a member at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. She can be reached at carrie.kober@cune.edu.

// Hymnody and Music in the Divine Service

Chris Loemker

Music is all around us. From the music that's used to help sell us stuff in advertising, to music we listen to in the car, we consume a lot of music. Sometimes, we even make music ourselves: in our school's band, at home playing piano, or singing in the shower. How is that different from the music we make together on Sunday in church—or at home—when we sing "...psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs"? Why do we sing some of the same things every week at church? What constitutes a "good" hymn? Why even sing hymns in the first place? Come learn the "whys" and "hows" of the music of the Divine Service in this breakaway.

Chris Loemker is the Kantor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. He also serves as the Higher Things Kantor and is the organist for this conference. He can be reached at chris@loemker.org.

// How Come, God?

Rev. Roger Mullet

Why do bad things happen? Does God allow evil and suffering to come upon us? Does God actually cause those things? How do we as Christians respond in the face of such realities in our fallen world? We'll begin by taking a look at some less-than-satisfactory and perhaps less-than-helpful answers to these

questions. Then we'll explore the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments alike, to form our "theology of suffering" and offer some practical advice.

Session F (continued)

Rev. Mullet is the pastor at Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church in Churubusco, IN, and can be reached at rev.mullet@gmail.com.

// Artwork AT the Church

Edward Riojas

What is "sacred artwork," and what place does it even have in the Church? How does the Lutheran church view sacred artwork compared to other church bodies? Artwork is slowly making its way back into Lutheran sanctuaries, but beauty is often much deeper than what lies on the surface. In this breakaway we discover some sacred Christian art in action as we go on a field trip to Our Savior Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids, to take a look at the art which decorates their sanctuary as it confesses the Church's great Te Deum.

Edward Riojas is a member at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, MI. He is a prolific Lutheran artist and created the logo for many HT Conferences, including Forgiven 2021 and For You 2022. He can be reached at edriojasartist@gmail.com.

// Youth Ministry 101

Crysten Sanchez

Thinking about putting together a youth program can seem daunting. Let's be honest, if you were asked to build something from scratch with immediate success, it WOULD be daunting! There are a lot of building blocks that go into a healthy, sustainable, safe youth program. Crysten Sanchez, former youth coordinator at a church in Iowa, will walk you through the many pieces of the puzzle to do just that!

Crysten Sanchez is the Events Executive for Higher Things and a member at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mount Vernon, IA. She can be reached at csanchez@higherthings.org.

// The One About Dating and Marriage

Rev. Brett Simek

When should I start dating? Who should I date? What about marriage? Do I have to consider more things than just whether or not I think they are hot? Could who I date or marry say something about my faith? What does it take to be a good husband or wife? Does God say anything about all this? The Bible is full of the imagery of marriage, of husband and wife, and even wedding receptions (feasts) and it's not all good. What happens when things go wrong and life isn't "happily ever after" and where does Jesus fit into all of this? Come and hear about the perfect Groom and His Bride and what happens when things aren't perfect.

Rev. Simek is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church Rantoul in Hilbert, WI. He serves as the Catechesis Coordinator for Higher Things and is also the Catechist for this conference. He can be reached at brettsimek@higherthings.org.









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