

# The Lutheran Connector

An Official Publication of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations

August 2020 Edition

Faith  
over  
Fear

CALC is a Community of Independent  
Congregations Living Together  
The Word of God Created Us  
The Word of God Sustains Us  
The Word of God Redeems Us  
We are servants of one another  
We share one another's burdens  
As Jesus served us and bore our burdens  
As one we proclaim Jesus to the world

## What's Inside This Edition

News Item	Page
President's Message	2
CALC'S SHEPHERDS – Ordinations in 2019	3
Kevin Nelson – Bethel Lutheran, Lea Park, AB	3
Roland Weisbrot – Victory, Medicine Hat, AB	4
John Lofstedt, Resurrection, Pembroke, ON	6
Convention 2019 – Friday Learning Event	7
Sermon for the Opening of the Convention	9
Highlights of the Business Meeting	11
Elders' Report	11
Trustees' Report	12
President's Report	12
CALC Finances and Budget	14
Saturday Keynote Speaker	14
Thanks & Godspeed to Departing Members of NC	15
Welcome on Board to Our New NC Member	16
ILT's Report to the 2019 Convention	16
ILT Offers a PH.D Program	17
First CALC-ILTCS Joint Pastors' Study Retreat	17
Sermon For Closing of Pastors' Retreat	18
Succession Planning – Office of the President	20
CALC's Contribution to CLBI	21

The Lutheran Connector is published two or more times each year. CALC's National Council publishes official statements through the Lutheran Connector. If you wish to comment on an issue of the Connector and/or submit an article or make CALC's membership aware of special events, including, congregation anniversaries, ordinations, installations and other important events, please contact our editor at the email address below.

### THE LUTHERAN CONNECTOR

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## President's Message

### Faith over Fear



I remember the afternoon of Sunday March 15, 2020. My wife and I were out walking in the neighborhood. The shutdown of churches, community centers and most businesses was imminent. Fear was in the air. Everyone wondered what the future held. It was the topic of our conversation. What would happen to the ministry at Grace Lutheran and CALC? How would my wife deliver speech therapy to her clients aged 0 to 5 years?

We walked by our neighbor Loren's place. He came out of the garage to greet us. After some neighborly small talk, he asked the question he came out to ask me. "So, Ed...What's your good word in all of this?"

"My Good word?" I replied.

I explained that I had seen the "good words" in the grocery store that very afternoon. The words were written in big white letters on the front of a black hoodie worn by a young woman who had bright blue colored hair. She and her mother stood right in front of us in the check-out line of our favorite Save-On store. Just two words. One word on top of the other. Faith was on top and fear on the bottom. They looked like a fraction. Faith over fear. In this equation faith overcomes fear.

To get through this situation we are going to have to have faith, I explained. Faith is always in something or someone. Faith is an active word. To have faith is to trust in something or someone. When we have trust in something or someone, we act, we step out and take a risk. We do what those we trust tell us to do.

I told him that I have faith in and trust those in authority over me, and that I will obey, to the best of my ability, their orders when it came to this emerging health crisis.

I told him that I have faith in science and medicine. I believe that treatments and vaccines for this novel corona virus would be available in due time. I told him that I get a flu shot every year and would take a shot for COVID-19.

I told him that we must have faith and trust in one another. Faith and trust that we will work and act together to get through this pandemic.

Most importantly, I confessed my faith in God. I confessed my foundational belief that God is in control of this world. It may not seem that God is in control at this moment, but, I assured him that God was in control and would get us through this.

I told him that I have faith and trust that God has control over me, and that God can give me the grace, strength and patience to overcome my fears and move forward with my life in a way that may help others through this time of pandemic.

I have experienced God's leading and guiding in these times of pandemic. I have seen his leading and guiding in the lives of CALC's pastors and congregations.

When we could not meet in person, we were inspired to meet in other ways. Some of our congregations began meeting virtually through ZOOM, GOOGLE Connect and video conferencing providers. Some went live or posted on Facebook. Some Livestreamed their services and then archived a video recording for playback later. Some recorded services and uploaded them on Youtube or Vimeo. New Life Chinese Lutheran Church, in Vancouver, BC, had a weekly ZOOM Sunday School. I logged in one Sunday morning. It was a tremendous experience! Some used teleconference technology for worship, Bible study and prayer time. Some served those who could not connect to the internet by recording services on Blu-ray discs and CDs and hand delivered them.

You can see the array of services offered on CALC's website. Go to website [www.calc.ca](http://www.calc.ca), click on the radial button that's labeled "Click Here For Online Worship & News." You will see a list of links that will navigate you to online worship services for 21 of our congregations. Click on a congregation's name and you will be directed to their website and you can experience their worship life.

Our people have embraced online worship. I have heard the story of an extended family living who live next door to one another who assemble every Sunday at a stated time and watch an online service. Within their bubble they can worship and sing. Others love the convenience of online worship and worship on different days and different times. Congregants have made offerings to their congregations by dropping their envelopes off at the church, putting the cheque in the mail, by e-transfers and online credit card payments.

Congregational councils have continued to meet. Some have met in person. Maximum group sizes and social distancing were observed in these meetings. Others met by ZOOM or GOOGLE Connect. CALC's National Council has met and will continue to meet by ZOOM.

CALC's Pastors are meeting by ZOOM every Friday at 8:00 AM for 1¼ hour. One Friday 27 pastors joined the

meeting. Attendance hovers between 11 to 18 pastors per week. We had our first meeting on Friday May 8<sup>th</sup> and have continued every Friday thereafter. These meetings have truly been community building. We have had some lively discussions on very pertinent topics. A recent spirited discussion on the "Black Lives Matter" movement proved fortuitous to one of the pastors involved in the discussion. See the articles after "Black Lives Matter". These articles are followed by a devotion given by one of our seminary students. He will be starting studies at the Institute of Lutheran Theology at the end of this month.

In person worship is returning slowly and surely. More and more are coming out. They are coming back slowly and that is good. God is in control! Faith in Him is driving out and overcoming fear. We are getting through this. When we come out the other end we will be changed and we will praise God!

In Christ

Pastor Ed Skutshek

CALC's 2020  
ANNUAL GENERAL CONVENTION  
GOES ONLINE

ZOOM Business Meeting  
Saturday October 17<sup>th</sup> @ 9:00 AM  
Pacific Daylight Time.

The delegates to CALC's 2019 Annual General Convention passed a resolution to hold CALC's 2020 AGC on Friday October 16 and Saturday October 17 at a hotel chosen by the National Council (NC). Consistent with CALC's normal practices, the Annual CALC-ILTCS Pastors' Study Conference (pastors' conference) was scheduled for Wednesday October 14 and Thursday October 15.

National Council has been working diligently to plan for the 2020 convention and pastors' retreat. The Best Western Port O'Call Hotel, Calgary, the site of our 2019 convention, has offered to host our 2020 convention on the same terms and for the same rates as the 2019 convention. We would have access to the same two rooms for the duration of the 2020 convention and pastors' conference. We have secured speakers for the pastors' conference and the convention. Our keynote speaker for the pastors' conference resides in Calgary.

Our President is scheduled to present CALC's position paper entitled: "The Sanctity of Life - Response to Canada's Medical Assistance in Dying Act" at the Friday Learning Event (Oct 16).

Registrations for last year's convention totaled 80, which included voting delegates, non-voting delegates, presenters, and visitors. Delegates, presenters and visitors came from all over Canada and the US. We could anticipate a similar number for 2020 under normal circumstances. Like all other in-person events in Canada, our plans for the convention and the pastors' conference have been seriously impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The province of Alberta allows indoor gatherings of up to 100 for spectator events where people remain seated, provided social distancing can be maintained. This would include a convention such as ours. However, provincial authorities universally discourage gatherings where people are gathered together for long periods of time. The 2020 in-person AGC requires delegates to sit in indoor spaces for eight or more hours each day and to eat meals together. CALC's 2020 in-person AGC requires delegates and National Council members from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario to travel to Alberta.

Governmental authorities of provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario do not currently require inter-provincial travelers to self isolate for 14 days upon entry to another province or when they return to their home province, this could change. These same authorities have urged their citizens not to travel inter-provincially for non-essential purposes. While an in-person national convention is important, it is not properly deemed an "essential purpose," as that term is used by provincial authorities, inasmuch as it can be held virtually. Many other organizations have chosen to hold their conventions virtually for this reason. These organizations include, without limitation, the World Mission Prayer League – Canada (WMPL), and Canadian Ministers Association (CMA). Many of our pastors are members of the CMA for licensure under a provincial marriage act.

On May 2, 2020 CALC's National Council sent out a document asking our congregations for the option hold our annual convention as an internet meeting.

**The National Council's Proposal:** If on August 15, 2020, National Council determines that it is either impossible, impractical or unsafe to hold an in-person Annual General Convention on October 16-17, in Calgary, Alberta; the National Council may vote, by a duly called internet meeting, to: (a) cancel said in-person annual general convention and (b) conduct the business meeting of the 2020 Annual General

Convention on Saturday October 17, 2020, beginning at 9:00 AM (Pacific Daylight Time) as an internet meeting using CALC's ZOOM account or similar provider with a capacity to accommodate up to 100 computers or similar devices.

Congregations were asked to vote on this proposal through a vote of their congregational council. Twelve (12) congregations returned ballots. Eleven represented votes by congregational councils. One council sent out a ballot to parishioners and a majority of them voted in favor of National Council's proposal. All the ballots received voted to give the National Council the authority to hold a virtual convention. The congregations returning ballots were: Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Toronto, ON; Victory Lutheran Church, Medicine Hat, AB; St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Kamloops, BC; Resurrection Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON; Grace Lutheran Church, West Kelowna, BC; St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Cornwall, ON; Immanuel Lutheran Church, Parkside, SK; Trinity Lutheran Church, Leader, SK; Bardo Lutheran Church, Tofield, AB; St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Sullivan, ON; Goodwood Uxbridge Lutheran Church, Goodwood, ON; Golden Valley Lutheran Church, Viking, AB.

CALC's Constitution - Article 4, Subsection 4.1 states: The National Council shall function as the legislative agency of this Association in the interim between General Conventions in order to deal with situations which necessitate action before the next General Convention. Legislative acts by the National Council shall require a majority vote of all its members and must be presented to the next General Convention for review. The impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has seriously impacted plans for our convention and it is a situation which necessitates legislative action by the National Council.

On Saturday August 15, the National Council voted unanimously to hold our 2020 convention as a virtual meeting on the morning of October 7, 2020. This decision was motivated by a concern for the health, safety and wellbeing of the delegates to our convention. It took into consideration the requests of our provinces to limit inter-provincial travel together with the risks of exposure to the virus while traveling, especially by air. It was also motivated by the risks associated with transmission posed by prolonged exposure to one another. National Council decision also relied on the congregational vote together with National Council's authority to legislate on matters of great importance which arise between conventions.

Congregational delegates will register for the convention on CALC's website.

**Registration.** Registration shall be limited to: (a) elected and appointed delegates of Member

Congregations; (b) elected and appointed delegates of Associate Member congregations; (c) Individual Associate Members; and (d) members of CALC's National Council. All registrants shall have voice at the convention.

**Vote.** Only the elected and appointed delegates of Member Congregations may vote at convention, plus the President who may vote only to break a tie.

**Internet Meeting.** The meeting shall be conducted as an internet meeting via ZOOM. Prior to the meeting, each registered delegate will receive an invitation to a ZOOM meeting to be held 9:00 AM, Pacific Daylight Time, on Saturday October 17, 2020. CALC's President will host the meeting. It will be recorded.

**ZOOM Meeting Participation.** For the purpose of establishing and validating the identity of participants, delegates must initially join the ZOOM meeting with a device which permits an audio and visual connection. Acceptable devices include, a tower computer equipped with a camera, laptop computer equipped with a camera, a Tablet/I-Pad, or cell phone which permits an audio and video connection. If during the meeting a delegate loses an audio/video connection to the meeting the delegate may thereafter reconnect with an audio only connection by using the designated telephone number.

**Clusters.** In order to keep the number of computers connected to the ZOOM meeting to a minimum we ask that the following guidelines be followed:

1. If possible, all the delegates elected or appointed to represent a congregation use one computer to participate in the meeting.
2. If possible, all the elected and appointed delegates of congregations within a reasonable distance from one another choose one location for all to meet and all use one computer.
3. To enhance the participation of multiple delegates in one location it is recommended that a computer is used which permits what is displayed on the computer's screen to be displayed on an external monitor, including a television or projector.

National Council is in the process of developing rules of order for the meeting including, how motions are made, seconded and amended; how those who wish to speak on a motion or ask a question are identified and then speak to the motion; and how votes are tabulated.

Every registrant will receive an electronic Bulletin of Reports, PDF and a hard copy of the Bulletin of Reports will be mailed out two weeks before the meeting date.

Please hold our National Council and the delegates up in prayer as we move forward with a virtual meeting.

CALC's National Council.



## HUNGER RELIEF - COVID-19 FOOD DISTRIBUTED IN RWANDA

The Covid-19 virus does not respect national borders. Like Canada, Rwanda also has instituted restrictions. The result has been hunger for many of our brothers and sisters in the Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda (RLCR). They are unable to work and there are no government programs to tide them over.

Victory Lutheran Church of Medicine Hat, Alberta, has forged a relationship with the RLCR. They entered into a formal agency agreement with RLCR.

By June 19 they raised about \$8,820.00. \$3,820.00 has been transferred to RLCR. When pledges for an additional \$5,000.00 are received these funds will be sent to the RLCR. The first transfer of funds were spent as follows:

The following foods were purchased and distributed.

Item	Amount
Rice	667 Kilograms
Maize Flour	1,230 Kilograms
Cooking oil	123 Liters
Soap	123 Units
Grocery bags	1 kilogram

The costs associated with the purchase and distribution of the food were as follows:

Item	Cost
Rice,	676,000 RWF
Maize Flour	1,230,000 RWF
Cooking oil	246,000 RWF
Soap	73,800.00 RWF
Grocery bags	2,000 RWF
Delivery – Automobile	200,000 RWF
Delivery – Motorcycle	36,000 RWF
Delivery Luncheon	34,000 RWF
Total	2,497,800 RWF

A surplus of 2,200 RWF was left. All costs are in Rwandan Francs. As of August 14, 2020 a Rwandan Franc is worth \$0.001360 Canadian Dollars. One million Rwandan Francs equals \$1,360.00 Canadian Dollars.



Pictures of Food Distribution in Rwanda.



Reverend Jean Claude Maniragaba wrote Pastor Jim Bredeson of Victory Lutheran Church this email of thanks.

Dear Reverend Jim Bredeson.

Praise the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Man of God, we are very happy and very interesting for all what the Lord has done for His people in Rwanda. Believers who received your donation of food are very happy and very much thankful to God.

On behalf of the Reformed Lutheran Church of Rwanda (RLCR), we appreciate the Victory Lutheran Church,

Medicine, Hat and we also thank Rev. Edward Skutshek, the President of CALC and thanks to all Pastors and their congregations who gave their support so that God's people in Rwanda could receive these food.

Today, our hearts are full of joy and happiness and thankful to God, because He has used you brothers and sisters from CALC. You did great for us and we too are giving thanks to God and praying for you and we have hope well that our Lord Jesus Christ will give to you more rewards into His Kingdom.

God bless you and God bless VLC.

## Conservative Evangelical Pastor Charged by Bremen Prosecutor with "Sedition"



Pastor Olaf Latzel (pictured above) was the keynote speaker at CALC's 2016 annual general convention which was held All Saints Lutheran Church in Ottawa, Ontario. He unabashedly describes himself as a conservative and orthodox Lutheran Christian. During his presentation he recounted a previous encounter with Bremen's prosecutor's office. In a sermon he declared that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and the only way to God, quoting John 14:6. He refused to accept the popularly held view that Christianity is just one of many world religions and that all world religions are equal. The bishop of his church body called his sermon "hate speech" thereby triggering an

investigation by Bremen's public prosecutor's office. Charges were dropped following the investigation.

Pastor Latzel was recently charged by the Bremen prosecutor with Volksverhetzung, in English "incitement of the masses", "instigation of the people" or sedition. (The official English translation of the German Criminal Code uses "incitement to hatred".) Volksverhetzung is a concept in German criminal law that refers to incitement to hatred against segments of the population and refers to calls for violent or arbitrary measures against them, including assaults against the human dignity of others by insulting, maliciously maligning, or defaming segments of the population. The prosecutor alleges that statements he made during a marriage seminar were critical of LGBTQI people and amounted to sedition.

A petition was started in Germany which demanded that the charges be dropped as his speech is protected under Germany's constitution. The petition has been signed by just under 20,000 people, which number includes CALC pastors.

He is set to go to trial. He will be represented by lawyers. His congregation is behind him. The signatories to his petition are behind him. The signatories to the petition are tip of the proverbial iceberg. There are thousands across Europe who support Pastor Olaf who did not sign the petition. In the end, Pastor Olaf will stand in the courtroom alone. He must face the charges. His lawyers will fight for him, but they will get to go home after final judgment in the case and will most likely have been paid for fighting for him. Pastor Olaf's freedom and his freedom to preach hang in the balance.

Pastor Olaf is being attacked. The German state is taking the sword of state and pointing it at Pastor Olaf. When I thought of him and his plight, these words from Psalm 94 came to mind.

<sup>16</sup> *Who will rise up for me against the wicked?*

*Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?*

<sup>17</sup> *Unless the Lord had given me help,*

*I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death.*

<sup>18</sup> *When I said, "My foot is slipping,"*

*your unfailing love, Lord, supported me.*

<sup>19</sup> *When anxiety was great within me,*

*your consolation brought me joy.*

<sup>20</sup> *Can a corrupt throne be allied with you—*

*a throne that brings on misery by its decrees?*

<sup>21</sup> *The wicked band together against the righteous and condemn the innocent to death.*

<sup>22</sup> *But the Lord has become my fortress,*

*and my God the rock in whom I take refuge.*

Psalm 94 declares that it is God who will rise up and defend Pastor Olaf. It is God who will give him consolation and support when his anxiety is great and

he feels his courage and patience slipping away. Pastor Olaf's fears and anxieties will be driven out by faith in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

His case is being prosecuted by a corrupt throne which is simultaneously captivated by and in bondage to an unsavory group composed of unbelievers who live in ways which are not supported and encouraged by God.

Pastor Olaf's lawyers have to take a page from the *Apostle Paul who wrote.*

*<sup>9</sup>Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men<sup>10</sup> nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).*

Pastor Olaf's lawyers have to argue that the Holy Scriptures clearly and unequivocally support and declare that marriage between one man and one woman or as long as they live is God's divine mandate and that all other relationships are abhorrent to God for that reason. Pastor Olaf's lawyers have to show that God's word is full of instances when harsh words are used to call out sin. God calls out sin and accuses the sinner so that the sinner can repent and that repentance leads to salvation. Paul was speaking to homosexuals, prostitutes, adulterers, drunks and common criminals that were slain by the Law and brought back to life and saved by the and through the proclamation of the Gospel.

Pastor Olaf's legal team has to show how those who have judged and convicted Pastor Olaf rail against the Church and the Word of God. They call down curse on God and his people with impunity. They want to dismantle marriage and the family. They call Christians haters. They rise up and damage church property. They are not judged and punished for their vile words. They are defended and encouraged.

We must hold up Pastor Olaf and his legal team in prayer, that God give them wisdom, patience, courage and grace. I pray that God will inspire them to trust these words from Jesus' lips: "*But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*" (Matthew 10:19-20). Pray for the souls of those opposed to Pastor Olaf, for God can save them through this tribulation.

In Christ,

Pastor Ed Skutshek, President



Pastor Harry Huff suggested the pastors attending our August 7, 2020 Pastor's ZOOM meeting read an article published in the "Decision" magazine entitled, *The Stated Goals of Black Lives Matter Are Anti-Christian* by Meeke Addison. The author is a Christian and is herself a black woman. The article can be accessed by following this link.

<https://decisionmagazine.com/the-stated-goals-of-black-lives-matter-are-anti-christian/>.

A link to the "Beliefs" page on the Black Lives Matter website was also provided to participants. Please follow this link to read the movement's stated beliefs.

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/what-we-believe/>

The discussion between and among the pastors was great. Many great points were made. The discussion sparked Pastor Peeter Vanker, a member of CALC's National Council, to write a piece on it. That very day he was questioned by a relative about the Black Lives Matter movement. He was able to respond with his piece entitled "Black Lives Matter" – A Brief Critique."

While all present agreed that Black Lives Matter's goal are anti-Christian. Christians are called by God to seek justice and to be merciful. Declaring the "Black Lives Matter" movement anti-Christian does not absolve Christians from confronting racism within and outside the church. Pastor Alan Gilman, All Saints Lutheran, Ottawa, ON. Offers good advice to Christians who want to pursue justice and mercy in his article below entitled "Formula for change."

## "Black lives matter" - A Brief Critique

By Pastor Peeter Vanker  
August 7, 2020.

The Manifesto of the "Black lives matter" contains important reminders about today's society. It speaks about the unequal burden carried by women. It acknowledges the breakdown of traditional family life. Even though it focuses almost solely on the experience of "blacks", and particularly women, it reminds us of the discrimination and oppression that "blacks" have

faced and continue to face up to the present day. I, too, agree that major changes in societal attitudes and behaviour need to be made.

The Manifesto clearly reflects the life experiences and attitudes of its three founders, three black women, two of whom are lesbian/queer. The expressed overall stated goal is to further justice and opportunity for "blacks", but it seems that just as important a goal is to promote the normalization of homosexual behaviour, especially in the case of "queers". I am fundamentally opposed to the pro-gay agenda.

However, in this brief critique I would focus rather on what I perceive to be the main danger of the "Black lives matter" agenda.

The "Black lives matter" Manifesto reminds me of the various Manifestos by radical blacks during the 1960's as well and Karl Marx's Communist "Manifesto" much earlier. The three Manifestos are similar. However, there is one underlying assumption in the Manifestos, in particular, that differs dramatically from the traditional Judeo-Christian understanding.

A basic assumption of each of the three Manifestos above is that people are themselves intrinsically "good". Within that world view such concepts as "sin" and "sinfulness" are considered merely artificial and false human constructs. They, therefore, need to be eradicated from public awareness and conversation. These movements maintain that injustice and oppression are caused primarily by external structures. The Manifestos maintain that these structures need to be overthrown, peacefully if possible, but if not, then by violent means. The end goal is utopia, first for "blacks", and then for "all".

And as history attests, that's an illusionary and very dangerous dream. The tyranny by "whites" may well in the end simply be replaced by the tyranny by "blacks". And as some observe, the "Black lives matter" movement therefore appears to be just Marxism in another guise.

The unwillingness to acknowledge and address the reality of sin and sinfulness within each human being is a fundamental and dangerous flaw within each of these movements. And as we know, because of the imposition of Marxism, in particular, millions of people were to suffer terrible consequences.

The traditional Judeo-Christian understanding begins with the affirmation that all people were created by God and are loved by God. God's love excludes no one, including those as yet unborn. Each person has potential for great good but also for terrible evil. The external structures we fashion reflect both our desire for good as well as our desire for power and domination. The injustice and oppression people of every colour and culture have faced and continue to



face across the globe may indeed be the result of external structures, but the root cause is what lies in our hearts, including our unwillingness to acknowledge and try to alleviate the suffering of others.

If anything is ever to change in the world we have to face the reality and range of sin in all our hearts and lives. We need to acknowledge and repent of specific sins and confess them to a God who is ever ready to forgive. We ourselves need to grow in our capacity to forgive others, instead of resorting to blame and revenge. We need to critically evaluate the way we organize society, that our structures will indeed equitably serve and enable us all.



**About the Author:**

Pastor Peeter Vanker is a member of our National Council (NC). He serves on the NC's Board of Elders. He is retired from the Pastoral Ministry. However, he is on CALC's roster as a *Pastor Emeritus* and provides occasional pulpit supply at Faith

Lutheran, Toronto and Goodwood Mission in Uxbridge. He served as a Pastor in the ELCIC for many years. Pastor Peeter and his wife Carol love to travel. They have led tours to the Holy Land, Greece, Turkey, and Germany. They live in Markham, Ontario. They have two adult children and four grandchildren.

## Formula for Change

Pastor Alan Gilman  
June 29, 2020.

*He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8)*

This statement by the Hebrew prophet Micah is one of the most concise and balanced prescriptions for life and living. It is most instructive in times like these when we are faced with concerns over large-scale societal and systemic issues. When held in balance, these three directives equip us to effect positive change. Conversely, the neglect of any one of the three is potentially destructive. Neglect, not overemphasis, because keeping each in mind even to a small extent mitigates against the extremes that emerge when neglecting any one of the others.

The Hebrew word for justice is *mishpat*. It refers to the bringing about of what is right. The world is full of what needs to be righted. The Hebrew, *asah mishpat*, instructs us that this is the activity aspect of the triad. Making things right is something we need to purposely work at. To do justice demands being aware of injustice, devising practical strategies to confront it, and finding ways to make it last. That's a heavy task, especially since the forces of injustice are not passive, nor do they play fair.

Once the concern for justice captures our hearts, it can blind us, however, to the other essentials of life. Thus, connecting it with the other two is brilliant. Too often the purveyors of justice leave much damage in their wake, forgetting that while Scripture instructs us to do justice, it is not to overwhelm our affections. Therefore, at the very same time, we must also love kindness. The word for kindness here is *hesed*, which is far more than simply being nice. The biblical concept of *hesed* is steeped in committed relationship to God and to others. Depending on the context, *hesed* can mean "covenant love" or "loyal love." It's the type of kindness often shown to a relative or long-time friend, a generous heart toward someone because of the bonds of committed relationship. But God through Micah is not reminding us to simply show loyal love to family and friends. It's that the love normally reserved for those we hold dear is the love we are to extend to those we perceive as unjust.

When adjoined to doing justice, *hesed* allows for needed change, while at the same time avoiding hurting people in the process. Making things right can be painful, but true committed love greatly reduces potential harm to individuals and communities. When focusing on what we think is right, it is far too easy to forget that on every side of every issue is a fellow human being. It is loyal love for God and others that helps us keep everyone's best interest in mind even when they wrong us.

We might think that these first two are sufficient to balance each other. Too much justice and we unnecessarily hurt people. Too much kindness allows injustice to flourish. What more do we need? What we still need is the third directive: *v'hatznei-a lekhet im eloheikha*, "and to walk humbly with your God," which is a way to express a life that continually and personally relies on him. Without that, what we have is what is termed principle-based living. Principle-based living can be appealing but is deceptively misguided. Tragically, the Bible is often abused by treating it as an instruction manual. Passages are read in order to reduce them to moral lessons that we try to apply to contemporary situations. Because God is continually referenced, we don't realize when we disregard him. God didn't inspire the Bible and then remove himself from human affairs while he watches history unfold from afar. God doesn't expect us to figure out life on our own. How do we know whether or not our sense of urgency and allocation of resources match those of God's? The Bible provides us with life's foundations and general priorities, but not the specifics. Wisdom, the ability to implement scriptural truth, is not drawn from study and intelligence alone, no matter how well informed we may be. Rather it stems from a life that keeps in close step with *avinu malkeinu*, our Father and our King.

Doing justice and loving kindness, without the intimate God-dynamic, however noble and well-intentioned, remains self-focused. The greatest of virtues driven by our own agendas eventually become idols, gods of our own making. No wonder so many endeavors done in God's name have defamed him. But if we allow him to initiate what we give ourselves to and correct our course as needed; if we look to him to fill us with genuine love for others as we remember his faithful love for us; then we will become the embodiment of his intentions, accomplishing his purposes in his time and in his way.

*Scriptures taken from the English Standard Version*



**About the Author**

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**A Devotion for Pentecost.**

By Connor Longaphie

*<sup>6</sup> Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?" <sup>7</sup> If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it." Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.<sup>9</sup> Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"<sup>10</sup> The Lord said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. <sup>11</sup> Now you are under a curse*

Now you are under a curse. Okay, what else is new? Haven't we been under a curse since humanity fell in our first father Adam? Like a constant refrain this declaration of our condemnation rings out as if it's the antithesis of a final doxology – as it was and is and ever shall be world, without end – you are under a curse.

We've lived our whole lives under this curse, and tasted its bitter fruits in abundance. Sin, sickness, famine, poverty, violence, death. You are under a curse. You are living in the reign of the coronavirus, SARS COV-2. It brings isolation, a loss of income, it brings suffocation, organ failure, it brings death.

Just a quick cursory look at the news from the last few months and the declaration is unmistakably still in place. Hordes of locust plague East Africa, India, the Middle East, and it is the worst seen in decades. And I'm sure the news of the unnecessary death of George Floyd in Minnesota has not escaped you. The world is just as broken as it has ever been. As it was, and is, and ever shall be, world without end. Until this eternal curse was met by the eternal God.

When God became man, your curse met its end. In the finitude of the infinite God, Christ bore the worlds cross up to His throne on the holy hill of Zion, Golgotha, where He, robed in his kingly garment of naked flesh and crowned with the ornament of the fall, became sin for us. Cursed is He who hangs on a tree. That condemnation that seemed so eternal, so ever-present, and so inescapable, it died with Christ 2000 years ago. And we, Christians, we died with Him upon that cross. And by faith, we rose with Him in new life.

For the liar, the cheater, the adulterer, and even the murderer that declaration of life under a curse is exchanged for a promise of eternal life in union with God in Christ. In Christ, our consignment to the curse is exchanged for a future hope that we look forward to in faith.

The suffering we now endure serves no longer to declare the ever-present curse of sin, but now in Christ, it is a slow and gradual bludgeoning to death of our old Adam. In Adam, all die, but in Christ, our old Adam died.

My brothers, death is dead, famine is starved, poverty is penniless, and the reign of sickness has been pronounced terminal. The endless reign of the curse of sin has met its end in the reign of Christ. In our anger, we killed the one man who had done right. But Christ was His killer's keeper. In His death, you have been made alive.

As the world cries for vengeance upon those who will not be their brother's keeper, there remains only one answer to the question of sin and suffering, and it is the cross. As the world cries for vengeance we must cry for forgiveness.

As we approach the day of Pentecost, we must remember the words of Christ in *John 20*, "And with that, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven." Healing and hope for a lost and disheartened people will not be found in the execution of justice upon the Cains of this world, of such are we, nor will it be found in vaccines, or ventilators, not in employment, nor in plenteous harvests. The breath of new life that Christ breathed into His church, the new creation, is the breath of forgiveness. Rise daily, forgive daily, and await death's final end. This Pentecost, let us remember that there was only one true Abel who did right in the sight of the Lord, whom we killed. But Christ was and is and ever shall be, His killer's keeper, world without end, Amen.

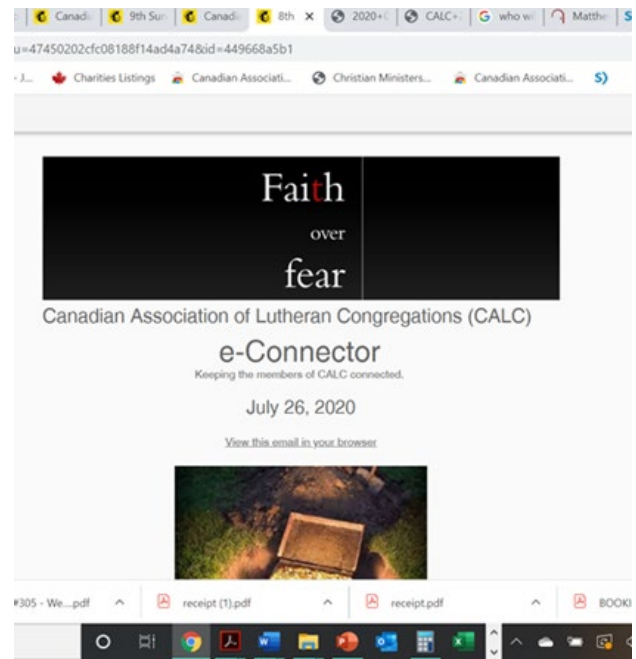


**About the Author.**

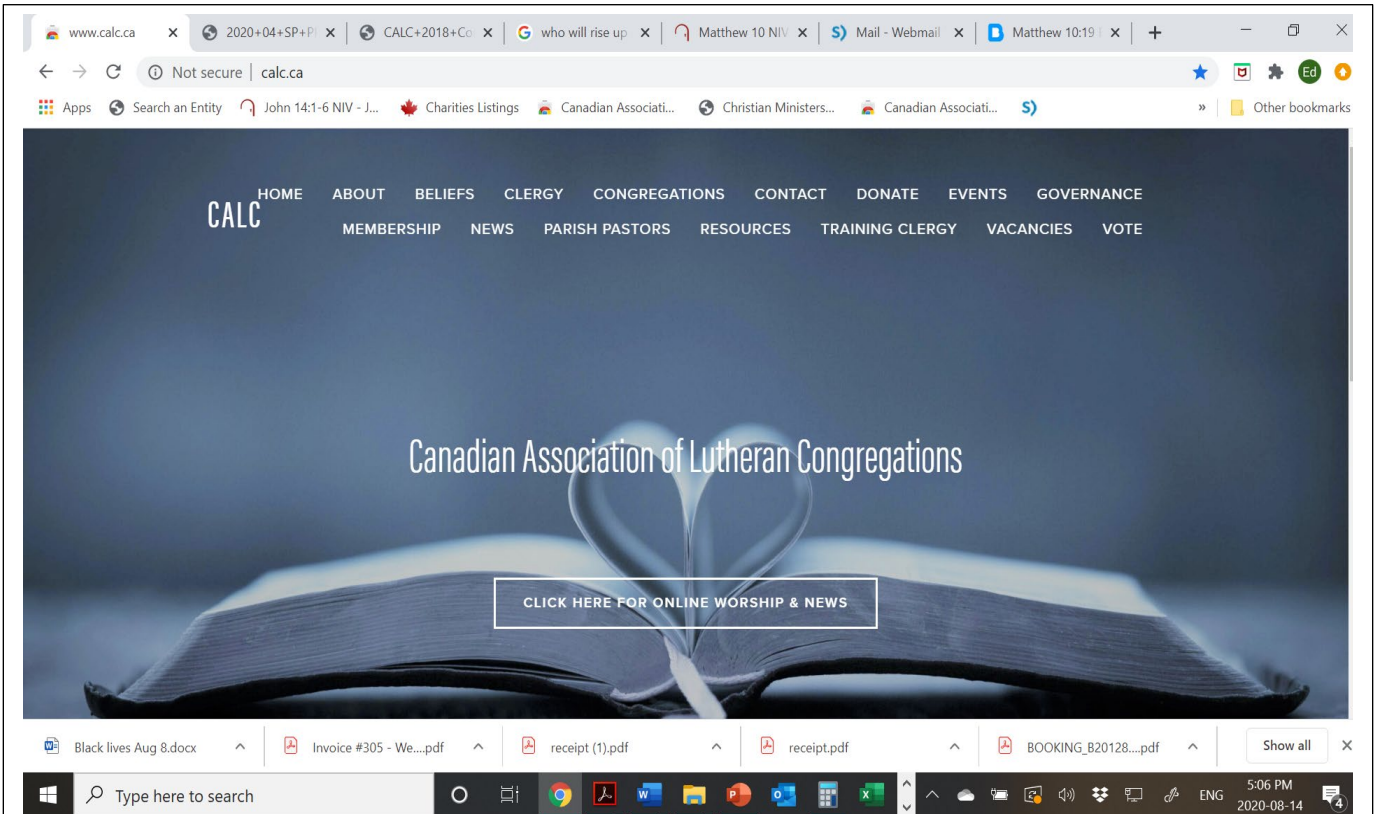
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