



# FREEDOM LESSONS

## STUDY GUIDE



SARAH CROWDER: *Freedom Lessons* (feat. Blake Flattley) · HEIDI GOEHMANN: *The Promise* (feat. Steve Zank) · JOHN NUNES: *Old Man New Man* (feat. Loso) · ERICA SORENSEN: *Apostles' Creed* (feat. Nayanna Holley & Steve Zank) · SHELLY SCHWALM: *Can You Hear Me?* (feat. Blake Flattley & Steve Zank) · GERARD BOLLING: *Means of Grace* (feat. Steve Zank & Nayanna Holley) · GABRIEL SONNTAG: *Table of Duties* (feat. Blake Flattley, Steve Zank & Nayanna Holley) · MAGNUS PERSSON: *The Blessing* (feat. Blake Flattley & Nayanna Holley)

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## *Welcome to your* **FREEDOM LESSONS** *Study Guide!*

The catechism is meant to be shared with everyone. So we asked people from all around the globe to contribute to this Study Guide to provide a rich experience as you share the Good News of God's promises to all people. If you are a parent, teacher, small group leader at church, or someone who is just trying to figure out what this Good News is all about, our prayer is that you will use and adapt this for your context. We have suggested activities and discussions, but feel free to use what is best for you and your group. All of the following lessons are based off of individual tracks from the album Freedom Lessons. You can find more information about the record at [1517.org/FreedomLessons](http://1517.org/FreedomLessons) and listen to it on all streaming platforms. Regardless of how you use this study guide, it is our prayer that you will continually be reminded that you are forgiven and free on account of Christ alone.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Crowder & Blake Flattley



# TRACK 1: FREEDOM LESSONS

THIS IS A STORY OF ABJECT FREEDOM (FACT)  
WHERE WE LEARN TO LOVE, FEAR, AND TRUST IN  
THE GOD WHO GAVE HIMSELF  
IT ALL BEGINS WITH A PROMISE (WITH A PROMISE)  
WHEN GOD PLACES HIS NAME UPON US  
(WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?)

OVER AND OVER AND OVER IN THE SCRIPTURES  
GOD'S PAINTING FOR US A PICTURE (WHAT'S THE  
PICTURE OF?)  
GRACE THAT WILL NOT RUN OUT  
THIS IS THE STORY OF GOD WHO IS FAITHFUL  
TO OVERCOME SIN, DEATH, AND THE DEVIL  
(WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?)  
WHEN ON THE CROSS HE DIED  
(AND THEN HE ROSE AGAIN, YEAH)  
ALL SO WE MIGHT KNOW THAT WE ARE LOVED

OF COURSE, THE CATECHISM HAS BEEN A RITE OF  
PASSAGE FOREVER.  
AND THE TRICK IN TEACHING IT, I ALWAYS THINK IT  
TO GET TO THE PROMISE

THIS WAS AN HONESTLY BRILLIANT PROJECT BY  
LUTHER TO SUSTAIN YOU IN THE FAITH. IT'S REALLY  
STRUCTURED TO KIND OF GUIDE THE CHRISTIAN

THROUGH THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. THIS ISN'T A  
HANDBOOK FOR DOCTRINE. THIS IS A HANDBOOK  
FOR LIFE

EVERYBODY, IN THE U.S. AT LEAST, WANTS TO  
BE FREE AND BOASTS ABOUT THEIR INDIVIDUAL  
DECISIONS AND ALL, BUT I GET THE IMPRESSION  
THAT A LOT OF THEM ARE, MAYBE NOT IMPRISONED  
BY GUILT IN THEIR- IN THEIR CONSCIOUSNESS, BUT  
THEY'RE IMPRISONED BY FEAR OF THREATS FROM  
OUTSIDE AND CONSEQUENCES FOR THEIR ACTIONS.  
(THAT'S EXACT) I THINK IF WE CAN SOMEHOW GET  
THIS IDEA OF BEING FREE FROM EVERYTHING THAT  
MAKES US FEAR

I GUESS I'D SAY A PATH TO FREEDOM

FREEDOM LESSONS, FREEDOM LESSONS,  
FREEDOM LESSONS

# Freedom Lessons (feat. Blake Flattley)

by Sarah Crowder

## OBJECT: ENVELOPE

Freedom Lessons! It is a powerful album to share the true freedom in Christ and his love for us. It's an exploration of Martin Luther's Small Catechism. If you have read the Catechism, I wonder what you think about it. I want you to imagine this:

You see an envelope.

It's addressed to you, it's handwritten. You wonder, is it junk mail? Is the handwriting a computer-generated ploy to trick you into opening it? Could it be a bill? It doesn't look like a bill, and most of your bills are online now, right? This envelope is for you. It's addressed to you. But it's not your birthday or an anniversary. What could this mean?

You open it, curious what could be inside.

It's not a bill, it's not junk, it's an announcement from God.

He has made a declaration about you!

He loves you and wants to be your God.

It is a gift! A gift of love, forgiveness, and freedom.

It is an announcement you have a loving God, and he has a promise for you that brings you into new life.

But you hesitate. You don't trust this gift.

You think there must be a catch.

You try to turn the gift into something you must earn because you know that there is no such thing as a free lunch, and therefore, there can be no freedom unless you do something.

Plus, you wonder about all the guilt that you carry. You know you don't deserve an envelope like this. Instead, you need to work on yourself. Give yourself a few months to sort some things out. Get better at getting things done. Become the kind of person who deserves this kind of attention. But no! This gift is for you.

The words of promise of God's love for you say this:

You are chosen by God, not because of your righteousness, but because he has chosen you. You are adopted into the family of God because of your brother Jesus and his righteousness. You are redeemed by the blood of Jesus, who lavishes the grace of God over you. You are promised an inheritance. It is the testimony of Christ for you to receive it in his name.

The good news is that this proclamation is not something to see as a bill or debt we must repay.

This news is the promise of freedom that we have in Christ Jesus. It is not something we deserve, and you can't begin to earn it. It is a promise freely given.

I've taught catechism for many years. I know it can sometimes be seen as a rite of passage that we must do for life in the church. I know for many, catechism feels like a burden or a weight. A law we must fulfill and memorize. What if we thought about this catechism differently? It begins with God's Promise that he is our God.

What I love about this first track is the good news shared by such excellent theologians.

Blake Flattley shares a pure gospel hope: "This is the story of God who is faithful to overcome sin, death, and the devil when on the cross he died."

FLAME responds: “And then he rose again!

Then we hear Rev. Dr. Jim Nestingen, in his cheerful voice, describing how the trick in teaching the catechism is to get to the promise.

Dr. Scott Keith follows up with this gem,  
“the Catechism is not a handbook for doctrine.  
This is a handbook for life.”

Then, Rev. Dr. Robert Kolb describes how many people who desire individual freedom in their choices are imprisoned in fear of the consequences of their actions. He says we need to get the idea that we are free from what we fear.

The story of the catechism is the announcement that God has for you. He wants to be your God and give you gifts like forgiveness, hope, eternal life, and restoration through a relationship with His Son. These gifts are free but come at such a high cost. So, as we think about what it means to live a Christian life, we MUST put to death the idea that the Christian life is about living a good moral life. NO! Our sinful self is put to death, and now we live free in Christ as adopted children of God. This is a daily action and struggle, but we live not in the chains of our guilt, sin, or doubt but in the freedom of our loving God’s promise to us.

Listen to the freedom Paul proclaims to the Ephesians:  
“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have

redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ to as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

Think back to the envelope. Think about this announcement. It is not a bill. It is not even a paycheck. It is a gift of love. It’s an announcement that God has chosen you. Hear this good news! Jesus has conquered sin, death, and the grave, and this gift is for you.

Dear Heavenly Father,

You are an amazing gift giver. We confess that we often will make your gifts into something we deserve or something that we have chosen. Forgive us for looking to ourselves when we should look to your Son. Thank you for the gift of Jesus, who gives us forgiveness and redemption. Please help us look to the promises in your Word that show us Christ Jesus, our Redeemer. In His name we pray, Amen.

## Discussion Questions:

Describe the best gift you have ever received.

Have you ever received an unexpected letter in the mail?  
How did you feel?

Why do you think that gifts are sometimes hard to accept from some people?

How does the announcement that God is for you, no matter what, impact your view of Him?

## Activity

God's promises are a gift to us. Let's make a reminder of these promises.

Take a blank sheet of paper and fold it into an envelope shape. Write on the inside this verse:

1 John 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

Or you can find other promises in Scripture. Keep the envelope as a reminder, or share it with your neighbor!





## TRACK 2: THE PROMISE

CAN YOU KEEP YOUR PROMISE TO ME WHEN I AM UNFAITHFUL?  
CAN YOU KEEP YOUR PROMISE TO ME THEN?  
THOUGH I DON'T DESERVE YOUR GRACIOUS HAND  
LORD GOD, SHINE YOUR BLINDING LIGHT.  
OVERWHELM THE DARKNESS

[FLAME]

DOES IT APPLY AT THE BOTTOM  
WHERE THERE'S NO LIGHT AT THE BOTTOM  
WHEN LIFE HAS DISCARDED ME, LEFT ME FOR DEAD  
CAN I RELY ON YOUR PROMISE  
I HEARD YOU CALLING ME, BUT I HID. YOU TOLD ME NO, BUT I DID  
THE CHARGES AGAINST ME, WILL THEY CONDEMN ME  
CAN YOU FORGIVE ME? CAN YOU CONVINC ME?  
I BELIEVE, HELP MY UNBELIEF  
YOU CAN SEE WHAT IS UNDERNEATH  
SEWING FIG LEAVES, TRYING TO FIX ME, CAN YOU INTERCEDE  
PLEASE FOR ME JESUS

CHORUS:

CAN YOU KEEP YOUR PROMISE TO ME WHEN I AM UNFAITHFUL  
CAN YOU KEEP YOUR PROMISE TO ME THEN  
THOUGH I DON'T DESERVE YOUR GRACIOUS HAND  
LORD GOD, SHINE YOUR BLINDING LIGHT. OVERWHELM THE  
DARKNESS

IF NOTHING CAN SEPARATE US RIGHT  
THEN WHY I FEEL SEPARATED LIKE  
AS FAR AS THE DAY IS FROM THE NIGHT  
ALL MY PRAYERS BREAKING THROUGH MY PLIGHT  
YOU SAID IT WAS GIVEN AND SHED  
FOR THE REMISSION OF SIN  
WHEN WE TAKE WINE AND WITH BREAD  
SAY THEY'RE HIS BODY AND BLOOD

SAME BODY RESURRECTED  
JUSTIFY ME AND ELECTED  
PROVIDED WITH ME WITH ABSOLUTION  
PLUS AND PRIVATE CONFESSION  
CONSCIOUSSES STILL ACCUSE  
GUESS THE LAW DID ITS THING  
REPENTANCE BROUGHT TO MY KNEES  
IN MY COFFIN I BLEED  
BUT WITH THE OFFICE OF KEYS  
PASTOR TAUGHT ME IM FREE  
ON THE CROSS THEN WAS PAID  
IT'S NOT BY WORKS THAT I'M SAVED  
THOUGH I'M SERVING MY NEIGHBOR  
THAT'S NOT THE BASIS FOR SALVATION AT ALL  
CAN'T SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD  
I HEAR YOUR CALL EVEN WHEN I FALL FLAT  
AND WHEN IT'S HARD TO WALK I CAN CRAWL BACK  
YOU CARRY ME  
BY YOU I'M BEING BROUGHT BACK  
YOUR FAITHFUL WHEN I'M NOT THE SCRIPTURES TAUGHT THAT  
YOUR WORD IS ACTIVE AND IT MAKES ALIVE  
WORD AND SACRAMENTS, BAPTIZED  
BODY BLOOD THROUGH BREAD AND WINE  
FAITH CLING TO THE PROMISE OF GOD  
THOUGH MY FEELINGS FAIL ME AGAIN  
AND I DON'T FEEL LIKE I'M FORGIVEN  
I DON'T DESERVE FORGIVENESS  
I CONFESS IT, BUT BY FAITH BELIEVE YES TO THESE QUESTIONS

CHORUS:

CAN YOU KEEP YOUR PROMISE TO ME WHEN I AM UNFAITHFUL  
CAN YOU KEEP YOUR PROMISE TO ME THEN  
THOUGH I DON'T DESERVE YOUR GRACIOUS HAND  
LORD GOD, SHINE YOUR BLINDING LIGHT,  
OVERWHELM THE DARKNESS



# The Promise

## by Heidi Goehmann

### OBJECT: HEARTBEAT

Every day we go about our business. What is the business of your day? List or name 5-10 things you do during the course of an average day.

You do all these things each day with your body doing its faithful work in the background—your stomach digests food and extracts the nutrition you need, your brain connects neuron to neuron to create thoughts and ideas and bring them into your consciousness, your muscles stretch and bend to move through the day, your bones hold everything in place and keep you from literally turning into a puddle on the floor.

Sit for a moment and notice the workings of your body without you even asking it to do anything. What do you notice?

Perhaps one of the most faithful and easiest pieces of us left unnoticed is our heart. Beating the steady rhythm of life, our hearts pump and move blood, air, and immunity into our whole being. Our heart is faithful! Set your hand on your chest where your heart lies underneath and notice the rhythm. God created our hearts to be steady. Our hearts are one way God supplies our needs through physical means. Our hearts can also surprise and even disappoint us— skipping a beat, changing their rhythm unexpectedly, impacted by original sin like the rest of us, with holes and disease and blockages and various kinds of attacks. Our hearts will eventually wear out. Hearts are faithful and also physical manifestations of our humanness, dependent on God for everything.

Our hearts are good reminders of God's unseen daily faithfulness, and of our human dependence on Him. God is steady and faithful like our heart and more so! We live in an in-between, a now and not yet, a both/and life -

We are human with human hearts that fail and mess up and we are created by God with hearts that beat a steady rhythm.

We are filled with brokenness, surrounded by brokenness, and filled with forgiveness, bringing the Gospel of Redemption to the world

We also are sinful humans, capable of failing and being quite messy and we are steady believers in God, filled with the unseen Holy Spirit of God inside of us. .

We are sinners and saints in Christ Jesus.

Flame and Steve Zank ask the rhythmic question in *The Promise, Freedom Lessons, Track 2* -

“Can You keep Your promise to me when I am unfaithful, can you keep your promise to me then?”

As humans we are either/or thinkers. We tend toward thinking in terms of being thankful or unthankful, good or bad, knowledgeable or ignorant, suffering or thriving, believing or unbelieving. This cognitive distortion is a coping mechanism we think will protect us from shame. If I can identify and pinpoint the right and wrong inside of me and around me, I feel like I might be safer in this world of trouble.

God's thoughts are INFINITELY bigger than our own. God has the ability to hold our belief and our unbelief together perfectly. God has the ability to hold our sin and the sin of the world alongside His faithfulness in Jesus Christ, which allows God to see past or even outside the guilt and the shame in a way that is often challenging for us.

Flame asks:

“Does it apply at the bottom, where there’s no light at the bottom? Where life has discarded me, left me for dead...you told me no, but I did.”

We will be sinful and we will experience guilt. In Jesus Christ, we can live outside of the shame of sin. When God tells us no and sin anyway, we have confession and absolution to cleanse and purify our hearts, souls, minds, and bodies. We know in our sinfulness, God will not desert us. God sees our sin and our Savior in the guilt and shame we bring on ourselves.

We can also find ourselves “at the bottom” at times, under the shoeprint of life’s turmoil and mess, sometimes not because of our own sin, but simply because sin came and fractured the whole universe. I have found that the bottom is often where we experience our greatest sense of shame - wondering if God has left us because of our failures or simply left us because He is a leaver. This shame expands when we are shocked by our own unfaithfulness in our questions or accusations of God:

“Can You keep Your promise to me when I am unfaithful, can you keep your promise to me then?”

God keeps his promises. He is the steady heartbeat of our souls that does not quit, does not forsake, never leaving us. God sees us fully, we are naked before Him, and He clothes us in righteousness. He lives in relationship with us in both our nakedness and beautiful, pure clothing. God sees both our guilt and our shame, always, always in the redemption of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:33-39 states:

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the

one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We face famine of the spirit, hardships throughout life, we are aware of our vulnerability and nakedness... and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. No matter the charge, we are free, outside of the shame of this world, #because of Jesus’s death. Christ’s resurrection, and our own in our baptism, raises us from shame, to life in the steady heartbeat of God’s faithfulness.

## Discussion Questions:

What kinds of sin in our daily lives tend to make us aware of our “nakedness before God” and leave us wondering if we are good or bad, faithful or unfaithful?

What kinds of troubles and challenges do we confront in life that leave us wondering if God will keep His promise to never leave or forsake us?

What specific promise of God in Christ Jesus brings a sense of freedom from shame into your heart, mind, soul, and body?

## Activity

Heartbreathing -

Take a moment and find where your heart lies in your body. Place your hand over your heart and imagine it's connections inside your body: to your lungs that bring air, pumping blood and oxygen to your brain for your thoughts, pumping to your muscles for movement and service in loving your neighbor.

With your hand on your heart, name other places where your heart supplies the deep rich blood of life to you for today's activities.

When we experience shame or guilt, we often also experience real, physical anxiety or sorrow. One way we can bring the promises of God and our baptisms each day into our lives is by speaking a promise of God from His Word, breathing them directly to our hearts. We know from research that this physically slows down and steadies our own heartbeat and lowers our blood pressure in stress! We have a connected and connecting God who is always a restorer and healer.

Alternative: You might also try this exercise by confessing and bringing the reminder of God's forgiveness and faithfulness to mind with your hand on your heart. Intentionally breathe oxygen to your heart and let your whole self be fed by God's grace in the remembrance and assurance of his forgiveness.





# TRACK 3: OLD MAN, NEW MAN

[KID A:]  
WHAT IS MEANT BY SUCH A WATER BAPTISM?

[KID B:]  
YEAH, WHAT'S MEANT BY THAT?

[FLAME:]  
IT MEANS, THAT THAT THE OLD ADAM IN US SHOULD BE DROWNED BY DAILY SORROW AND REPENTANCE AND DIE WITH ALL SINS AND EVIL LUSTS, AND, IN TURN, A NEW PERSON DAILY COME FORTH AND RISE FROM DEATH AGAIN; HE WILL LIVE FOREVER BEFORE GOD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PURITY

[KID A:]  
WHERE IS THIS WRITTEN?

[KID B:]  
YEAH, TELL US WHERE?

[FLAME:]  
SAINT PAUL SAYS TO THE ROMANS IN CHAPTER 6, WE ARE BURIED WITH CHRIST THROUGH BAPTISM INTO DEATH, SO THAT, IN THE SAME WAY THAT CHRIST IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD BY THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, THUS, ALSO, WE MUST WALK IN A NEW WAY

[LOSO:]  
YEAH YEAH YEAH, "PREACH THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF, PREACH THE GO-"  
MAN, TAKE SOME ACTION BRO  
THAT WHOLE MINDSET DOES NOT WORK  
I MEAN LOOK AT YOU, HAHA  
ANOTHER GUY THAT LIES  
SAYS HE'S GOT THE MIND OF CHRIST  
ADD ON A FRONT LIKE IT'S MONETIZED  
I HEARD THAT DEATH WAS ON THAT PLATE FOR US BUT IF HE REALLY ATE OURS, WHY I'M WORKING OUT MY SALVATION LIKE A 9-TO-5?  
THEY TELL THESE CATS "LISTEN  
IF YOU STRUGGLING WITH SIN THEN LOOK WITHIN AND START REMEMBERING YOUR BAPTISM"  
MAN THAT'S BAD WISDOM  
ALL THAT DOES IS GIVE YOU GRACE AND A COPOUT SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO ACT CHRISTIAN  
THAT'S WHY I SERVE LIKE ITS BADMINTON  
CURVE ALL THE BAD WOMEN  
WORD IN MY BACKGROUND LIKE I'M ADLIBIN'  
READ EVERY VERSE THAT WAS HANDWRITTEN  
THOSE SAME GUYS ([FLAME:] AIGHT) WILL TELL YOU THAT OUR WORKS PROVE THAT HE HAS RISEN

[FLAME:] YOU GOT A MEAN BACKSTROKE FASHO,  
YOU'RE STILL TALKIN', BUT I'M BAPTIZED THOUGH  
SO GO TO YOUR SEALED COFFIN  
YOUR LITTLE RESURRECTIONS HERE AND THERE  
AIN'T NO USE IN TRYNNA FRONT  
YOU BROUGHT A CIVIL WAR IN ME  
BUT JESUS DROWNED YOU AT THE FONT  
YOU MY OLD MASTER TRYNNA TROLL,  
TRYNNA GET BACK CONTROL  
BACK TO STACKIN', TOLLIN' UP MY SPIRITUAL GOALS  
TO SAVE MY SOUL  
BUT IT IS NO LONGER I WHO LIVE BUT  
CHRIST WHO LIVES INSIDE OF ME  
CAUSE I DIED TO YOU, YOU NO LONGER REIGN INSIDE OF ME  
"WE WORKING OUT SALVATION ON OUR OWN"? THAT'S A LIE  
READ THE REST OF THE VERSES, ITS GOD WHO GIVES  
THE WILL TO DO AND DESIRE  
THIS AIN'T NO COPOUT TO WILE OUT, YOU ALWAYS ON YOUR TRIP  
GOT A NEW IDENTITY, THE BAPTIZED, ROMANS 6

[LOSO:]  
OKAY, YOU LIKE TO PRAISE SINNERS  
AND PUT A SAINT IN A CHOKEHOLD AND DON'T GROW,  
WHEN HE NEVER PRAY WITH A  
CONFIDANTS BECAUSE THEY AIN'T WINNERS  
YOU TRIED TO DROWN ME WHEN YOU GOT BAPTIZED  
BUT I'M A GREAT SWIMMER  
SO TELL ME THIS, IF I START ASKING ABOUT YOUR LIFE  
TO YOUR PASTOR AND YOUR WIFE  
WILL THEY SAY YOU HONOR GOD OR JUST  
AN ACTOR FOR THE CHRIST  
I'M LAUGHING AT THIS GUY, YOU BATTLING ME  
BUT I'M NOT A FACTOR IN YOUR LIFE?  
YEAH RIGHT!

[FLAME:]  
YOU CAN ASK ABOUT MY LIFE, I AIN'T TRYNNA DODGE  
I DESERVE DEATH AND HELL, AIN'T GOT NOTHING TO HIDE  
PLUS I SERVE A SAVIOR WHO HAS SUFFERED AND HAS SATISFIED  
EVERYTHING THE LAW HAS DEMANDED ON THIS MAN WE HAVE  
UNITED IN HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION  
THANKS BE TO GOD THIS WRETCH NOW HAS HIS PERFECTION  
YEAH, ROMANS 7 BUT KEEP READING ROMANS 8  
AIN'T NO CONDEMNATION  
BACK TO YOU WATERY GRAVE, STAY IN YOUR PLACE  
YEAH, THE NEW MAN STRONG CAUSE HE GOT A STRONG SAVIOR  
(THAT'S FACTS)  
UNITED WITH HIM IN HIS DEATH (I'M BAPTIZED, I'M BAPTIZED)  
UNITED WITH HIM WHEN HE RESURRECT  
(I'M BAPTIZED, I'M BAPTIZED)

# Old Man, New Man

by John Nunes

## OBJECT: NIAGARA FALLS

I was born “down by the bay,” in Montego Bay, Jamaica—the Caribbean city, not actually in the waters of the bay itself. I was born again five weeks after my birth also in Montego Bay with three splashes of water. John Arthur is my name, but I was named and claimed as one of God’s own at St John’s Methodist Church in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When my family moved to Canada, we also lived near water, but, unlike Jamaica, this water froze into ice in the winter in Hamilton, Ontario. This hockey-playing, hard-hat wearing city of a half million people is the steel-manufacturing capital of Canada, its skyline marked with smog-churning smokestacks. Hamilton is located between two of the five Great Lakes, Lake Ontario and Lake Erie.

Water is life. Water is growth. Water is industry. Water connected to God’s Word is the source of our salvation. Our birth in faith—the new birth—comes through water. Like ancient Israel, with its identity-defining narrative, its freedom song through the Red Sea, “we are those who have come through the water.”

Growing up in Hamilton also placed us 45 minutes away from one of the seven natural wonders of the world: Niagara Falls. Being so close to the largest and most touristy waterfall in North America meant that when out-of-town guests came, especially family from Jamaica, we would go there on the obligatory sightseeing visit. Frequent day trips to the falls led to us becoming immune to its grandeur, taking it for granted.

Recently, I visited my mother who still lives there.

“We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.”  
(T.S. Eliot, “Little Gidding”)

I stopped by the Falls, and it was as if I was both remembering and experiencing it for the first time. The sight of their sparkling nobility, the sound of their volcanic roar, the smell and feel of the fresh mist. My senses remembered something at a primal level from when I was a kid, but they overwhelmed me that day in a brand-new way.

We often forget the sacrament of holy baptism, taking for granted its daily gifts. “The Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, begun once and continuing ever after.” (LC KW 465: 65). When we overlook the benefits, under-regard the blessings, clean forget the work of the Spirit, we are depriving ourselves of more than what water can do, but what God has done for us in Jesus Christ, when the Word of God is annexed to the water, annexing us to our primordial purpose—God’s handiwork created from eternity to do good works (Ephesians 4:10).

There are some fun analogies between the Falls and the watery ways God saves us from the fall into sin.

**Baptismal Flow:** Think about a bathtub. Now think about a million bathtubs filling up every minute with water. That’s how much water flows over Niagara Falls every minute. Fish go over the falls, and most live because they flow with the water. Being in the baptismal flow means that the ongoing promises of God carry you through the dangerous temptations and trials of life.

**Baptismal Freedom:** The historic village of Lewiston is located near the Falls; it is the site of the first battle of the War of 1812, a war fought in the ongoing struggle by the United States to establish freedom from the British empire. Lewiston was also a last stop for freedom seekers fleeing to Canada from slavery through the underground railroad. Baptism sets us free from every chain and snare of sin.

**Baptismal “Fear and Trembling”:** Paul reminds God’s people of this in Philippians: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13, ESV). There is a fear, as in awe-inspiring, when we see Niagara Falls. Not only is it beautiful, but it has a thunderous presence. You cannot get away from its mighty sound. Even walking a distance from the Falls, you are reminded of its presence through the sound and the refreshing mist radiating from it. Even as we walk years removed from our baptisms, the Holy Spirit continues to speak to our spirit, reminding us of what we cannot get away from.

But also, as life-giving as these Falls are, they are not to be played with. As life-giving as God is, we must take utterly seriously the gravity of the eternity at work in baptism. It is a holy thing, not to be played with.

**Baptismal Force:** God’s source of energy  
More than half of the water flowing down the Niagara River becomes hydroelectric power, 25% of power used in New York State and the Canadian province of Ontario. The watercourse runs from the source with singular force. Likewise with our baptisms, we are called to connect with one another in unity, even as we are connected to the source of life. We are called to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,

one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4).

**Baptismal Formation:** Baptism signifies so much more than an initiation rite; rather it signs the baptized ones into the Christian life. Baptism is a boundary sacrament that shapes and forms the entire life of the Christian. It permits believers to see themselves as anointed ones (literally, christened ones or Christians), new creations. Baptism serves as the foundation for the other church rites. Confirmation is a primary affirmation of Baptism, and Confession and Absolution is the primary practice of Baptism. Baptism places us into Christ, theologian David Scaer once preached, and the Eucharist places Christ into the baptized. We are clothed and fed—clothed in the new self in baptism, and fed with the bread of eternity, drinking the cup of our salvation.

Ephesians 4:22-24

22 to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

God overflows with love because God is love. God is not miserly with misericordia (mercy), but from the source we are drawn along his love-lavished course which consists of pardoning offenses, commuting sentences, suspending punishments, extending new leases on life, passing over faults, drowning sin like the Egyptians (a baptismal foreshadowing), showing a unique faithfulness that leads to complete forgiveness. All of that is ours in baptism.

We don’t say I was baptized or I have been baptized. We say: I AM baptized. This corresponds to the great I

AMs. Jesus is God's great present tense for you:

He says I AM...

...the bread of life.

...the good shepherd.

...the resurrection and the life.

...the way, truth, and life.

...the true vine.

...the light of the world.

YES, you ARE a sinner.

But YES you ARE baptized.

Not WAS baptized, on such-and-such a date.

Not WAS baptized, as if baptism has an expiration date.

But baptism delivers Jesus' perfect present tense presence.

You are, in the words of the old Motown song

"Signed, Sealed, and Delivered" I'm yours, Lord!

Signed with the cross of Christ;

Sealed with the Holy Spirit;

Delivered from sin, death, and the devil.

Not just for forever. But for this day, this sin, this guilt, this shame.

This song sings words and swings swords in a rap war that mirrors musically the hostility between the old self and the new self spiritually; it's the old and the cold in a brutal battle against the new and the true; the old school style, struttin' and cuttin' and scratchin' on JBL tables as it seeks to disable and take down from the tip top of the hip hop shelf the trinitarian new self, but this child of God replies with stylized snippets of rhythmic baptismal triplets. The dusty old Adam with his rusty old-school egotistical braggadocio shows up as a verbal abuser, a soul accuser (literally, Satan), the old Satanic punk unsurprisingly tries to puncture the new person's confidence in God's presence and providence.

This is no sanctimonious confusion, but rather an unambiguous fusion of styles that's analogous theologically to the schizophrenic anthropology of someone or anyone who's ever been both a loser and the winner, a simul iustus et peccator, a simultaneous saint and sinner.

Yes, Jesus satisfied everything the law specified, and if you trust just that, then just like that you're justified, but that does not just give you is a "cop out to wild out." No, what it is all about is paying attention to this progression: In the Epistle of the Apostle Paul, the old self with its tricks is dead in Romans 6, crucified with Christ's dying, unified with Christ rising, glorified and ready-to-go, but no, because life is a puzzle and faith is a struggle and even good Christians get lost in the jungle of good wheat and bad weeds, of good deeds and bad seeds, growing side by side inside the hell and heaven we see in Romans 7; it's a spiritual fight, like the civil war guns that once thundered in the battle of Fort Sumter, so many anonymous dead that can't afford to die, so many guilty lies devoid of any plausible alibis, so many trespasses that smack like an old "intractable, refractory ass"—(btw, that bad word is directly from the Formula of Concord.) Let's rush to Romans 8 where we get a fresh and clean slate, it states that nothing in all creation can even begin to even think of even trying to bring any condemnation upon God's chosen generation, from the devil's attacks, they get a cross-backed emancipation. And, yes, that's facts!

## Bible Verses

“For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is ever before me. (Psalm 51:3, ESV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17, NRSV)

## Prayer

Holy Spirit,  
My vocabulary is fatigued by its finitude. I can't find the words to thank you. Against all odds you are my God. You have broken through the shell of my stubbornness and rejuvenated me with reasons to rejoice. In the face of the evil that creeps back into my life, please come to me, have mercy on me, become my peace, my forgiveness, my gladness, my holiness. Through the daily splashes that recall your baptismal grace, remind me that I am a new person in the cross of Jesus applied to my life.  
Amen.

## Discussion Questions:

In what ways is the guilty conscience of a Christian different than that of someone who does not know the grace of God in Jesus Christ?

What are some of the voices of shame that eat away at you? How can these be counteracted?

Do you have any rituals or activities you use to keep you grounded in your baptism?

What relationships remind you of who you are in Christ Jesus?

## Activity

Create a short daily prayer you can say or read to remind you of your Baptism.







# TRACK 4: APOSTLES' CREED

UH, LET'S GET INTO IT  
APOSTLES' CREED, FACTS  
WE GOIN' WALK OUR WAY THROUGH  
LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

YEAH, GOD CHOSE TO MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN  
PLUS, WITHOUT HIS REVELATION WE'D BE WRONG  
AND GUESSING BY THE PURPOSE AS WE ROAM  
THROUGH A METAVERSE OF SORTS TO SIT ON GOD'S THRONE  
BUT IT'S BEEN REVEALED THAT WE MADE FROM DIRT  
IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH  
SO IF I'M STRUGGLIN' WITH FEAR OR ANXIETY  
SEEKIN' TO MANIPULATE GOD WITH THESE APPEALS TO MY PIETY  
THEN IT'S GOD'S PROMISE THAT'LL QUIET ME  
'CAUSE AS A GOOD FATHER, EVERYTHING I NEED,  
HE PROVIDED ME  
EYES I CAN SEE WITH, MOUTH I CAN EAT WITH  
CLOTHES WITH A NEAT FIT, HOME I CAN SLEEP IN  
FEET PLUS FAMILY, AND MEETING NEEDS DAY-TO-DAY  
A GOD FULL OF MERCY, EVIL CAN NEVER HURT ME  
THOUGH, I DON'T DESERVE IT, I'M THANKFUL HE  
KEEP HIS WORD, THOUGH  
BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER, MADE THE HEAVEN  
AND EARTH, BRO

UH, THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE  
GOD CREATED EVERYTHING  
READ IT IN THE CREED  
CREATED, REDEEMED, SANCTIFIED ME  
WAS A LOST SHEEP 'TIL HE INTERVENED

UH, THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE  
GOD CREATED EVERYTHING  
READ IT IN THE CREED  
CREATED, REDEEMED, SANCTIFIED ME  
WAS A LOST SHEEP 'TIL HE INTERVENED  
WITH THE WHOLE CREW, TALKIN' OUR FAITH  
BAPTIZED, WE ALIVE 'CAUSE OF GOD'S GRACE  
GIFT OF BELIEF, WE BEEN SET FREE  
BAPTIZED, WE ALIVE, WE ARE NOT ASLEEP  
WITH THE WHOLE CREW, TALKIN' OUR FAITH  
BAPTIZED, WE ALIVE 'CAUSE OF GOD'S GRACE  
GIFT OF BELIEF, WE ARE SET FREE

BAPTIZED, WE ALIVE, WE ARE NOT ASLEEP, WOO  
YEAH, I BELIEVE IN JESUS  
CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY GHOST TO RELEASE US  
FROM OUR CAPTIVITY, AND OF PRACTICING DEITY  
AND TRYIN' TO PLEASE GOD WITH OUR DEEDS THAT WE HEAP UP  
THE OLD ADAM IN US STILL SWIMMIN' TRYNA KEEP UP  
BUT JESUS DESCENDED INTO HELL, THEN HE LEAPED UP  
ON THE THIRD DAY, THEN ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN  
NOW HE SAVES SINNERS FROM SIN AND SENDS US INTO HEAVEN  
PLUS HE GAVE THE SPIRIT TO US TOO  
WHO'S OUR COMFORTER AND COUNSELOR  
AND KEEPS US IN THE CREW  
SANCTIFIES, ILLUMINATES, AND LEADS US TO THE TRUTH  
UNITED US WITH JESUS AND HE KEEPS US IN HIM TOO  
IT'S THE SPIRIT WHO'S ENLIGHTENING AND  
TURNIN' ON THE LIGHTS  
WHO HOVERED OVER WATER AT THE ORIGIN OF LIFE  
IT'S THE SPIRIT WHO'S DELIVERING THE BENEFITS OF CHRIST  
UNTIL HIS WHOLE HOLY CHURCH IS LIVING IN ETERNAL LIFE,  
SWEET!

UH, THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE (WE BELIEVE)  
GOD CREATED EVERYTHING  
READ IT IN THE CREED  
CREATED, REDEEMED, SANCTIFIED ME  
WAS A LOST SHEEP 'TIL HE INTERVENED

UH, THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE (WHAT WE'VE RECEIVED)  
GOD CREATED EVERYTHING  
READ IT IN THE CREED  
CREATED, REDEEMED, SANCTIFIED ME  
WAS A LOST SHEEP 'TIL HE INTERVENED  
WITH THE WHOLE CREW, TALKIN' OUR FAITH (THIS IS OUR CREED)  
BAPTIZED, WE ALIVE 'CAUSE OF GOD'S GRACE

GIFT OF BELIEF, WE BEEN SET FREE  
BAPTIZED, WE ALIVE, WE ARE NOT ASLEEP  
WITH THE WHOLE CREW, TALKIN' OUR FAITH (WE BELIEVE)  
BAPTIZED, WE ALIVE 'CAUSE OF GOD'S GRACE  
GIFT OF BELIEF, WE ARE SET FREE  
BAPTIZED, WE ALIVE, WE ARE NOT ASLEEP, WOO

# Apostles' Creed

## by Erica Sorensen

### OBJECT: LOST TOY

“Was a lost sheep till He intervened.”

As we walk through the Small Catechism, the Apostles' Creed and explanation give us some beautiful pictures of how God Creates, Redeems, and Sanctifies us. The image of the lost sheep is powerful. Have you ever had a pet or maybe a stuffed animal that was lost? Jesus, our Good Shepherd, never stops seeking to love and save us. We belong to him, and when we wander from him, he always pursues us with his goodness.

Do you remember the movie *Toy Story*? It's a story all about Andy's toys. Remember what happens when a new toy joins the group? Andy wrote his name on his toys. He marked them as his own with his name. In our Baptism, God writes Jesus' name on us. We belong to him in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This promise is what we confess when we say the creed. We are created by God the Father, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Our God loves us.

Simply put, a creed is just a statement about what we believe to be true about God. Yes, the creed is a handy summary of the Christian faith, but what is it good for? It's a great way to quickly explain what Christians believe to someone who doesn't know. But it's meant for you too! It's a shorthand way to be reminded about God - who He is, who we are to Him, and how he demonstrates His love for you! You can even think of it as God's job description in relation to you.

So what is God's Job Description? According to the chorus, He “created, redeemed, sanctified me.” Okay,

but why did he need to do that? The answer is also in the chorus: I “was a lost sheep ‘til He intervened.” We know that in the beginning, God created all things, including us, and it was GOOD. By good, I mean without sin. Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin entered the world and separated us from our Holy God. We are imperfect now. We want to do God's job and try to manipulate God into getting what we want. But God had a plan for salvation, and that's where His job description comes in.

Let's dig a little bit further into those three bullet points of God's job description mentioned in the chorus.

**Creator:** God created us in His image. He made the heavens and earth and still sustains us as our Good Father, providing everything we need to live this life here on earth. He guards and protects His children (us) from evil, as good fathers do. That leads us to the next point in His job description.

**Redeemer:** God sends His Son, Jesus, in the flesh to save us from evil: sin, death, and the devil. It's a rescue mission, and we are saved! He does that by taking the punishment for every sin you and I commit and wipes the slate clean forever. Then He shows Himself not just to be man but also true God when He undoes death for us all by His resurrection from the dead. We are baptized into the family and given faith. We are fed in the Lord's supper and are promised forgiveness of all our sin.

**Sanctifier:** What does it mean to sanctify something? It simply means to “make holy.” We are baptized into God's family and given faith. That is what the Holy Spirit does. He gives us faith, makes us holy, and, through the new life we have in Jesus, helps us to love and care for the people around us. The Spirit does this

work in the entire Christian. Work for every believer until Jesus comes again.

What a phenomenal plan for salvation! It isn't just a plan, though, it's been done. Accomplished. Finished. We are no longer lost but found and free! Thanks be to God! That's what freedom is all about.

## Bible Verse

Ephesians 1: 3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

## Prayer

Dear Father,

Thank you for your eternal plan of salvation. Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ to spill His blood on the cross and thereby redeem the entire world. Daily you fill us with your Spirit that awakens us to the promises given in Christ which fill us with hope as we await eternal life with you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, your Son,

Amen

## Questions for Discussion

What are some things we can think about as we read the Apostles' Creed?"

What are some words you have that could describe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

How does the fact that God had a plan to save you and sustain you even before the world was created make you feel?

Can you think of any ways the Apostles' Creed can help us share the Gospel with others? How do we open doors for conversations about our Faith with others?



# TRACK 5: CAN YOU HEAR ME?

I COME TO YOU FATHER  
CAUSE YOU MADE A PROMISE AND PUT IT IN ACTION  
WRAPPED IT IN FLESH AND BLOOD AND  
SENT IT WITH SINLESS PERFECTION  
I NEED YOUR HELP  
MY DAILY BREAD  
MR OLD MAN, THOUGHT HE WAS DEAD  
FEELING DISCOURAGED  
HONESTLY SCARED  
THAT MY DESPAIR WOULD TURN TO REJECTION  
I KNOW THAT JESUS HE TAUGHT US TO PRAY TO YOU  
AND WHAT TO SAY TO YOU WHEN WE IN PRAYER  
BUT BETWEEN SIN AND MY SUFFERING  
DEATH AND MY LOVINGS  
I'M WONDERING  
ARE YOU REALLY THERE

I KNOW YOU TAUGHT US YOU NEVER WOULD LEAVE US  
AND YOU'VE GOT A KINGDOM THAT'S TRULY WOULD COME  
ONE THAT YOU STARTED WITH WATERS OF BAPTISM THAT HAS  
DELIVERED WHAT JESUS HAS WON  
BUT KEEP ME FROM EVIL  
LEAD ME NOT TO TEMPTATION  
CAUSE WHEN I START TO WORRY,  
MY VISION GET BLURRY  
AND MY FAITH STARTS TO WAVE  
AND YOUR VOICE STARTS TO FADE

I CAN HEAR YOU  
CALLING OUT  
BEFORE A WORD IS EVEN SPOKEN  
I CAN HEAR YOU  
CALLING MY NAME  
CAN YOU HEAR ME?  
REACHING OUT  
PREACHING WITH THE LAW AND GOSPEL  
CAN YOU HEAR ME?  
I'M CALLING YOUR NAME

YOU ARE THE GOD OF THE EXODUS  
PROTECT AND DELIVER US FROM DECADENCE  
TAKE OUR FAITH AND MAKE IT TEFLON  
SEEMS LIKE IT'S ALWAYS GETTIN STEPPED ON  
WHEN A MOM LOSE A FIRST BORN  
TRYIN TO HEAL FROM HER HEART BREAK  
WHEN YOU STRUGGLE TRYIN TO FIND A JOB  
NOW YOU LATE TRYIN TO MAKE CAR PAYMENTS  
IF YOU ARE THE GOD OF THE RESURRECT  
WHY IS IT HARD AND NOT BETTER YET  
I'M SEARCHING AND SEEKING YOUR FACE  
BUT ALL I GET IS YOUR SILHOUETTE  
WE SUFFER, WE CRY, WE FALL  
WE STOOD, WE BEND, WE CRAWL  
STILL WE PRAY FOR YOUR WILL, (FOR REAL)  
TO BE DONE RIGHT HERE WHERE WE LIVE  
ON EARTH, IT HURTS, IS YOUR KINGDOM COME INSTEAD

I CAN HEAR YOU  
CALLING OUT  
BEFORE A WORD IS EVEN SPOKEN  
I CAN HEAR YOU  
CALLING MY NAME  
CAN YOU HEAR ME?  
REACHING OUT  
PREACHING WITH THE LAW AND GOSPEL  
CAN YOU HEAR ME?  
I'M CALLING YOUR NAME

I CAN HEAR YOU  
CALLING OUT  
BEFORE A WORD IS EVEN SPOKEN  
I CAN HEAR YOU  
CALLING MY NAME  
CAN YOU HEAR ME?  
REACHING OUT  
PREACHING WITH THE LAW AND GOSPEL  
CAN YOU HEAR ME?  
I'M CALLING YOUR NAME

# Can You Hear Me?

by Shelly Schwalm

## OBJECT: A ROOM

“Can You Hear Me?”, the powerful fifth track on the Freedom Lessons album addresses the Lord’s Prayer. What images did this song evoke for you? For me, I pictured a room.

Imagine it. A cozy room with soft lamp light and a rug on the floor. There are a couple of soft chairs facing one another. In my mind, they’re blue with buttons across the back. There’s a side table holding some books, a plant, and a tissue box. There’s nothing out of the ordinary about this room, but it is certainly purposeful and inviting.

You walk into the room, not quite sure what to expect. It seems inviting enough, though. You sit down and exhale as you sink into the cushion of the seat.

It’s obvious to you: these are chairs for conversation. This space was created intentionally for shared connection and relationship with you.

This seat, this room is yours to share what’s on your heart.

In Matthew 6:6, before Jesus gives the disciples the words of the Lord’s Prayer, He says, “when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.”

Jesus was showing his disciples a different approach to prayer than being spiritually showy in front of crowds in the streets like the religious elites. When He tells them to go into their room, He’s not necessarily talking about a room with blue chairs and

lamp light, but a place and space for intimate prayer with the Father.

Jesus goes on to say, “your Father knows what you need before you ask him” and the words of the Lord’s Prayer follow.

“Pray then like this:

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed by your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.”

Listening to these words of prayer and the song, “Can You Hear Me?” from Freedom Lessons finds me in this room held in the comfort of one of these soft chairs.

The Lord’s Prayer is that room.

In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus gifts the disciples and each of us with architecture for conversation with our Heavenly Father. It offers words and structure that facilitate connection with God. It opens with the relational phrase, “Our Father in heaven.” This isn’t a bench for small talk among strangers or a silent waiting room. It is a secure space for loved children to communicate with their Heavenly Father.

While “father” language can carry the baggage of our earthly father experiences, this Father is like no other. He is trustworthy. Our Father knows you and wants to hear from you. Our Father built the room for conversation and has invited you in. He isn’t

inconvenienced or uninterested. He invites you in on purpose before you could even ask.

As the chorus of the song says,  
“I can hear You calling out, before a word is even spoken. I can hear You calling my name.”

As we call out, “Our Father,” we can rest assured that God is the One who called us first. We can call God our Father because He makes us His children by being adopted into His family through the blood of Jesus. What sin and brokenness has severed, Christ has reconciled when He suffered for our sin and defeated death. We are brought home and made children of the Father through Jesus.

This good Father knows every need of His children and is providing, protecting, and bringing heaven to earth before we could even find the words to ask.

Martin Luther’s answers to “what does this mean” about each petition or section of the Lord’s Prayer makes it clear that God already is aware of the needs of the world and our lives and is meeting them far before we can get the prayers out of our mouth. God’s kingdom is coming without our prayers. God’s will is being done without our prayers. God is making earth more like heaven without our prayers. God knows and meets our daily needs without our prayers.

The activity, goodness, and kindness of God in the world is not dependent on the quality or frequency of our prayers. Prayer is not a vending machine transaction with God waiting for us to hit the right combination to unlock blessings.

God’s care for us and restoration of all things has always been initiated by Him. It is nothing but grace—a gift. We just receive it. And yet, there is this room.

For a time when I was in college, I really struggled with the concept of prayer and its purpose. I thought, “if God already knows and is going to do what He’s going to do anyway, why pray?”

I wrestled with it. I studied the Scriptures about prayer. I discussed prayer with trusted friends and mentors. In one conversation, it surfaced that maybe I was asking the wrong question. If the God of the universe has built a room for you and me to have conversation and relationship—a room called prayer—why not pray?!

We get to say out loud (or in our head) in this room of prayer what’s on our heart and mind to the God who hears us and it doesn’t just have to be the happy or polished things. There are tissues in this room.

In the verses of “Can You Hear Me,” Flame’s lyrics capture honest questions and heartaches. When talking to our Father, we can voice our complaints and questions on hard days like Flame’s words do:

*“My sin and my suffering, death of my loved ones,  
I wonder if you are really there”*

*“If you are the God of the resurrection, why the hard not better yet.”*

*“On earth, it hurts, is your kingdom coming still?”*

This room of prayer can hold honest cries. Many of the Psalms do just that! There is space in this room for tears, for confessing and asking forgiveness, and even angry shouts.

The Lord’s Prayer contains multitudes, just as our conversations can. As you listen to this song, study the Lord’s Prayer in the Scriptures, and unpack its meaning in Luther’s Small Catechism, see the permission it gives to come in and talk to our Father.

He can and will hear you. So why not?

## Prayer:

Our Father,  
We thank You for the gift of prayer. We are so grateful that even as You are the God of the universe, You have built and offered us space to connect with You in honest and intimate conversation. Thank you that your Kingdom is coming and Your will is being done. Help us see it and join You in it. Thank You for being faithful to provide for us, protect us, and save us, before we could even ask for it in prayer. Forgive us, God, in our offenses against You and each other. Steer us from temptation and protect us from evil and its schemes. Lord, as You long to have us come sit with You, help us to take You up on that invitation as often as we can. Help us to see that as You hear our hearts in prayer, we get to better know Yours, too. Thank You for calling to us first. Thank You for hearing us always. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

## Questions:

If you had to capture what prayer is in 1-3 words, what would you say?

When you imagine prayer as a room for conversation with God, what comes to mind?

Are there parts of the Lord's Prayer that you find particularly comforting? Helpful? Challenging? Which parts and why? What has your experience with prayer been like?

Do you prefer using words that are already written and formed or tend toward whatever is on your heart and mind?

## Activity:

Using the "room" that the Lord's Prayer offers, write out each petition/phrase of the Lord's Prayer. As you pray that phrase, spend some time reflecting and writing in your own words what this petition means.

Use the song as an example. What specific prayers surface for you in this petition? What questions or confessions? What thanksgivings or laments? Allow these petitions to be room for you to sit and converse with the Lord about what comes to your heart and mind.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.



# TRACK 6: MEANS OF GRACE

HE SAID FLAME, "MAN, I REALLY WANNA KNOW"  
OK, I SAID "TELL ME WHAT YOU REALLY WANNA KNOW"  
(GO AHEAD)  
IS MY CHANGE, MY FRUIT, MY GROWTH  
THE PLACE WHERE I HANG MY COAT?  
I SAID NO, THE MOST ORDINARY THINGS YOU CAN FIND  
WORD, WATER, BREAD, WINE  
IT'S SO SIMPLE  
LET ME SAY IT ONE MORE TIME  
WORD, WATER, BREAD, WINE

THE WORD OF OUR GOD  
THE SACRAMENTS ARE  
JUST LIKE A CAR  
THEY CARRY AFAR  
THE GOSPEL AND LAW  
DELIVERS THE PROMISE THAT GOD IS AMONG US  
THE SPIRIT OF GOD  
CREATES FAITH THAT WE CLING WITH THAT  
THROUGH HIS PROMISE IN BAPTISM WE CLING WITH THAT  
THE MEANS OF GRACE WHERE WE CAN TASTE  
CHRIST IS FOR US, FORGIVEN US

THE GIFTS OF GOD BY HIS DESIGN (BY HIS DESIGN)  
WORD, WATER, BREAD, AND WINE (WORD, WATER, BREAD,  
WINE)  
ORDINARY AND DIVINE (YEAH, YEAH)  
WORD, WATER, BREAD, AND WINE  
(WORD, WATER, BREAD, AND WINE)  
(WORD, WATER, BREAD, AND WINE)

LET ME EXPLAIN WHAT I MEAN (WHAT I MEAN)  
GOD ALWAYS CHOOSE PHYSICAL MEANS  
TO ACCOMPLISH SPIRITUAL THINGS  
THROUGH HIS WORD OF PROMISE, AND PHYSICAL THINGS  
MOSES HIS ROD  
PILLAR OF FIRE  
TREE OF LIFE IN EDEN  
OR EVEN MESSIAH  
ON TABERNACLE, WE LAUGH AND WE CACKLE  
WITH SACRAMENTS LIKE WE'RE BACKWARDS IN BABBLE  
LIKE, WE DON'T UNDERSTAND HIS WORD (HIS WORD)  
HE CREATE WHAT HE SAY WITH HIS WORD  
LIKE LET THERE BE LIGHT WITH HIS WORD  
LAZARUS COME BACK TO LIFE WITH HIS WORD  
PLUS HE USE PEOPLE AND PREACHERS TO PREACH  
PASTORS AND PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO TEACH  
(SWEET)  
SISTERS AND BROTHERS WHO EAGERLY SPEAK  
INACCURATELY BEAR WITNESS TO THESE THOUGH

THE GIFTS OF GOD BY HIS DESIGN  
WORD, WATER, BREAD, AND WINE  
(WORD, WATER, BREAD, AND WINE)  
ORDINARY AND DIVINE  
WORD, WATER, BREAD, AND WINE  
THE GIFTS OF GOD GOD BY HIS DESIGN (BY HIS DESIGN)  
WORD, WATER, BREAD, AND WINE  
(WORD, WATER, BREAD, WINE)  
ORDINARY AND DIVINE  
(YEAH, YEAH) WORD, WATER, BREAD, AND WINE



# Means Of Grace

## by Rev. Dr. Gerard Bolling

### OBJECT: A PIZZA TABLE

One of the most contentious arguments I have ever been in was an argument with my neighbor growing up about the use of a particular object—the pizza table. This tiny table has ONE DESIGN USE and ONE DESIGN USE ONLY in my estimation.

To keep the cheese off of the roof of the pizza box!  
Like, dude, NOBODY WANTS THE UBER DRIVER TO ACCIDENTALLY GIVE YOU SAUCE WITH A SIDE OF CHEESE found stuck to the top of the box!  
The importance of this object is fundamental to my being—I know it to be true to my CORE!

My neighbor had a different suggestion. He suggested that the pizza tables design was to hold the pizza together. WHAT?! Unthinkable! I had never been faced with this type of philosophical conundrum. I felt—undone! We must have argued for hours that day. But then I got to thinking as I stared at one of these curious little white tables a little later in life. What if there was no clear winner for the pizza table use argument—what if we were both right?  
This reminds me of what Jesus does for us in the Means of Grace. He does BOTH things at the same time.

First and foremost, as I believe the little table did for the pizza so long, He helps separate us from our doom. The price to pay for our sin was eternal damnation—separation from God Himself (Romans 6:23). We deserved to be pierced for our OWN transgressions, to be crushed for our OWN Sins—not Jesus! He didn't do it! Why is he choosing to get ripped apart by the box—why for US (2 Corinthians 5:21)?! But God took all this on Himself when Jesus went to the cross for

us and paid our debt. And now, He separates us from eternal damnation by taking the attack of death on Himself, and bursting forth in glorious day with His Resurrection! He is our “little table”—separating us from that which wants to snatch us from the victorious hands of Christ.

But—He is also our God who holds all things together (Colossians 1:17). He not only holds the entire universe together, but He binds us together as one body with His tangible means of Grace. These simple and ordinary things that become so complicated as they connect us to God and to our neighbors.

Word, Water, Bread, and Wine—simple ordinary things that are extraordinary in the hands of Jesus. What a joyous occasion that we get to have as we celebrate together (I hope everyone was doing ALL OF the 70s dances—no hip breaking, folks!) as one great big family of Christ.

The WORD of God—living, active, moving, and present in our lives—something to dance over!  
The WATER—Being made part of God's Family and bearing His seal—something to dance over!  
BREAD and WINE—Simple things that become the family dinner—as we gather together to receive His good gifts—something to dance over!  
This song is a celebration of all our Father has done for this family. We can all get in one electric slide line together and dance in front of King Jesus who has made ordinary things worthy to dance over. There is a FREEDOM in this type of dance. A freedom to be who we are because of who Christ proclaims us to be to Him!

Colossians 1:15-20

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,

whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

The “little table” of Jesus binds us to one another and also is the table He sets as He gives Himself for us in the visible means of the bread and wine with the outpouring of His Body and His Blood. Thank God we are connected through the water of Baptism to Him and to one another. And thank God that His Word is still a cause for celebration—is still the word that lets FREEDOM ring.

## Prayer:

Dear Jesus, You are the best. You, like the little pizza table, separate us from what we deserve while simultaneously binding us to you and to one another. We confess of all the times we looked at you and tossed you to the side. Where we didn't think we needed you. Where we ignored you or even “threw you in the trash.” Thank you for forgiving us and for using this Word, Water, Bread and Wine to continue to show us just how much you love us. Thank you for continuing to invite us to your little table. It is in Jesus' name we pray—AMEN!

## Questions

1. What are some simple ways you can remember your Baptism?
2. How do you add reading the Word of God into your daily life?
3. How does Church sometimes feel like a “family reunion” around the Word, Water, Bread and Wine?

## Activity:

Create a “Family dance” together to the song! The electric slide is a great place to start—a simple dance that can remind you of the joy of this lesson!





# TRACK 7: TABLE OF DUTIES

IN CHRIST WE'RE FREE TO LOVE OUR  
NEIGHBOR  
BROTHER SISTER MOTHER FATHER  
ALL WHOM WE'VE BEEN CALLED TO -  
BY OUR SAVIOR

PRE CHORUS  
SO LET US WALK IN RESPONSE TO HIM  
REFLECTING GRACE WE'VE BEEN GIVEN  
LET US WALK IN RESPONSE TO HIM  
WITH CARE AND LOVE FOR CREATION

(CHORUS)  
CHRIST SHINE THROUGH  
WHEREVER YOU CALL US TO  
AND GRACE ABOUND  
WHEREVER YOU SEND US TO

(VERSE 2)  
IN CHRIST WE'RE FREE TO BE CITIZENS  
SEEKING JUSTICE LOVE AND MERCY  
IN THE SYSTEMS WE ARE ALL, LIVIN' IN

(PRECHORUS)  
SO LET US WALK IN RESPONSE TO HIM  
REFLECTING GRACE WE'VE BEEN GIVEN  
LET US WALK IN RESPONSE TO HIM  
WITH CARE AND LOVE FOR CREATION

(CHORUS)  
CHRIST SHINE THROUGH  
WHEREVER YOU CALL US TO  
AND GRACE ABOUND  
WHEREVER YOU SEND US TO  
CHRIST SHINE THROUGH  
WHEREVER YOU CALL US TO  
AND GRACE ABOUND  
WHEREVER YOU SEND US TO

BRIDGE  
LET EACH LEARN HIS LESSON WITH CARE  
AND ALL THE HOUSEHOLD WELL WILL FARE  
BROTHER AND SISTER CONTINUE IN PRAYER  
ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS TO BEAR  
ALL YOU CHILDREN DO WHAT'S RIGHT  
LET HUMILITY TAME YOUR PRIDE  
WE'RE MASKS OF GOD AND SERVANTS OF  
LIGHT  
LOVING NEIGHBOR IN THE JOY OF NEW LIFE

(CHORUS)  
CHRIST SHINE THROUGH  
WHEREVER YOU CALL US TO  
AND GRACE ABOUND  
WHEREVER YOU SEND US TO

# Table Of Duties

## by Gabriel Sonntag

### OBJECT: A LIST / TABLE OF DUTIES

After listening to the songs from the album “Freedom Lessons”, we are getting close to the end with the song “Table of Duties”, at the end of the catechism we have the opportunity to reflect on some duties. Come with me, let’s think about it together.

Have you ever had a Table of Duties at home? It sounds tiresome, doesn’t it? It reminds us that we have things to do, such as tidying the house, feeding the dog, doing the laundry, etc. I remember when I was a teenager, everyone in our house had a homework board, and we could only have fun once we’d finished our chores.

Maybe it’s like that in your house too. Everyone has a role, a Table of Duties. Maybe you never realized it, but your list of duties was a blessing in your family’s life. Every time you helped with something at home, you were helping to take care of the place God has given you and the people you love. Chores aren’t always pleasant to do, I don’t think anyone enjoys cleaning up the mess or making the effort to tidy up the house, but the result was important for everyone’s life.

Our household chores look like work and stress, but deep down they are expressions of care and love. That’s why Luther included a table of duties in the Small Catechism, to help us care for each other based on the love we receive from God. In God’s family, you are loved, God sent his Son Jesus to die for your sins. He has made you a child of God and brings you promises of forgiveness and life. God invites you to live as a family, to act with the love you have received.

In the song we sing, “Let us walk in response to him. Reflecting the grace we’ve been given.” The table of duties is a response, a loving reaction to all that we have received. We are freed to live love, to look at others with mercy, welcoming those who are by our side.

I know that the first impression is that the table of duties is a burden, perhaps a tiring commitment of the Christian life, after all we are already so tired of the things we have to do in our work or studies. However, what we have before us is a commitment to love, to seek to live with joy the freedom that Christ has won for us, and to bless the lives of those around us.

The song “Table of Duties” puts into a very beautiful melody what it means to live out love for others. Just as the music takes over the atmosphere around us, the love of Jesus enters our hearts to love those around us. He sends us to our neighbors to enlighten them with his great love.

God calls us to live out our responsibility of care and love for our neighbor and for all creation. Luther says that we are God’s “masks”; through us, God cares for and preserves life. We are all called to live out these responsibilities in love. In the *Small Catechism*, Luther chose two contexts in our lives that are part of most people’s routines: family and work. Wherever you are, God calls you to love your neighbor, to “walk in response to him”.

See what the apostle Paul says:

Romans 13, 8-10 (ESV) Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: your

neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Everything we learned in the Small Catechism about our relationship with our neighbor is summed up by Paul in Romans, the fulfillment of the law is love. Let’s look at the table of duties as active faith in love.

## Prayer:

Gracious God, I praise you that you loved me first, came to meet me in baptism and in the Word, and granted me forgiveness of sins and salvation. I am loved by you Lord, and so I ask you to teach me to love too. I have many people around me and I want to share the love I have received from you. Help me to look with mercy on those who suffer and help me to share your love according to the strength I receive from you. I am in your hands, Lord, amen.

## Questions:

How are chores distributed at your house? Do you have your own “table of duties”? If so, how does it work? Which chores do you find to be most burdensome? In what ways could your chores be seen as an opportunity to help your family? How can a “table of duties” be an opportunity to love our neighbors?

## Activity:

1. Make your own “table of duties” using that section of the Small Catechism.
2. Listen to the song and reflect on ways God can use you as an instrument to bring love to others at home, or work, or school, or your community.
3. Reflect on how our duties are not a chore but a joyful response to Jesus’ saving work in your life.





## *TRACK 8:* **THE BLESSING**

HEY, YOU KNOW HONESTLY,  
WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT ALL CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US,  
'EM I MEAN ALL ALL YOU CAN SAY FOR REAL IS  
AMEN, AMEN, AMEN, LORD LET IT BE  
MAKE STRONG OUR FAITH THAT WE  
MAY DOUBT NOT AND KNOW WE ARE FREE  
AMEN, AMEN, AMEN, LORD LET IT BE (LET IT BE)  
IT'S IN YOUR NAME AND AT YOUR WORD  
AND BY YOUR GRACE WE CAN SAY,  
(WHAT WE SAY?)  
OUR FATHER, WHO FROM HEAVEN ABOVE  
YOU'RE THE GIVER OF ALL THAT WE NEED (ALL THAT WE NEE)  
THROUGH YOUR SPIRIT YOU CALL US  
TO THE GRACE OF YOUR SON  
AND AS SAINTS AND SINNERS WE SING!  
LORD, LET IT BE (AMEN)  
LORD LET IT BE (AMEN)  
(AMEN)  
LORD LET IT BE (LET IT BE)  
AMEN, AMEN, AMEN

# The Blessing

## by Magnus Persson

### OBJECT: WORD ART "AMEN!"

I've been enjoying the beats and the lyrics on every track of Freedom Lessons! The album wraps up just as it should, by proclaiming AMEN! Listening through the tracks with their lessons and proclamations on freedom we understand that there is nothing left for us to do, it is done. There is only one thing left for us to say and that's AMEN! In the catechism there is one question that is repeated again and again by Martin Luther: What does this mean? So, what does amen really mean and why should we say it?

Amen is probably one of the most heard words in church and in all things Christianity, yet probably one of the least understood. Amen is a word that has endured for many thousands of years and instead of being translated it has stayed the same and been implemented into hundreds of languages. As a little kid I understood amen as, "The end." As a young and restless boy it was quite a word to look forward to after long winding prayers around the family table or stuck in between my parents in the church pew. When the preacher finally found his way to the magic word amen, it meant for me that freedom was around the corner and I would soon be released from my Sunday obligation.

Although my childish understanding of the word amen didn't really nail it, there are connotations that are worth mentioning. But Amen does not mean "the end" although we usually say it at the end of our prayers. In one way it rather means the beginning. Let it be! Let it happen! It's like a ratification of what has been said, preached or prayed with a major YES. It's like saying: I am in on it. Go for it! Bring it on!

This I believe - let it be!

Our amen is not just an empty utterance; it's an expression of profound trust in God's words, a resounding affirmation of what has been said and promised. It is our response to God's Word. The gospel is never about what we should do for God. The gospel is a declaration about what God has done for us in Christ Jesus and what he now offers us freely. The gospel, unlike human promises, is a declaration of what God has already accomplished through Christ Jesus and is a divine pronouncement that brings about what is promised. God's Word does what he says and says what he does.

As humans we can talk about this or that, give promises and offer something to our neighbor, but there is never a hundred percent assurance that we actually will deliver on our promises and live up to our words. God is different because God is truth and can never lie. He is holy and righteous. His words are not just mere explanations, suggestions or invitations. His words are performative proclamations. Jesus Christ is the very Word of God who became flesh, the Living Word. His name is "The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness" (Rev 3:14). And Paul the Apostle continues and says: "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory" (2 Cor 1:20).

In church we are pretty passive, although we sing and pray and engage in different ways. God is the main actor in church through Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. He calls us and invites us and we come. He speaks and we listen. He gives and we receive. He blesses and sends us - we go. If you think of it, our task is to passively receive all the good gifts that are handed out to us in Word and Sacraments. In the beginning of the service the pastor signs the cross over

the congregation and reminds us that we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And to that we basically agree and claim our identity as dead, buried and raised with Christ in our baptism, with a loud amen. We say our amen to the prayers prayed. We say our amen receiving the promises proclaimed in the preaching of Christ for us. It is not only information, we actually receive the gift of absolution “declare unto you the forgiveness of sins” and we agree and say our amen, let it be so. We stretch out our empty hands and receive bread and wine under the words, “Christ’s body and blood given for you for the forgiveness of sin” and all that is left to say is... yep, you got it, amen! And so it continues all the way to the end of the service when the pastor raises his hands and does the blessing over us and to us. We are the lucky ones that sit in our seats and all we have to do is say our amen.

Thus amen is a central and most important word. With amen you are buying into all the benefits achieved by Christ on the cross which are now handed out and coming your way.

The young virgin Mary was suddenly surprised by the message from heaven. The angelic messenger spoke to her marvelous words. Words that she could not really comprehend. She heard words that most likely did not align with the way she understood and identified herself.

Luke 1:30-33 “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Mary gives her response: “How could this be?” How could this even be possible? How can this happen since I am a virgin? When God speaks he does not only speak according to what actually exists and in accordance with what we can see and agree on with our senses. He speaks of what will be in accordance with his living, active and creative word. His word comes in the Holy Spirit to a virgin and makes her pregnant.

In the same way His word comes to unrighteous sinners like you and me and makes us righteous and holy. How is this possible? Because of the life, death and resurrection of Christ for you. Somebody else outside of you has done the work for you, and because of the work done by Christ it is credited to you by grace alone through faith alone. Romans 4:5 says “to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.”

To the amazing and good news that is proclaimed over us by the messenger from God we only have to do what Mary did: “let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). That is our amen - let it be to me according to the word of God I have received in the Freedom Lessons! My response is one of trust, a trust that is created by the very words I have heard and God has spoken to me. I don’t fully understand how it can happen, but I receive the good news saying: “If God says so - let it be according to his word and promise”. If he tells me I am saved and my sins are forgiven, not because of anything I have done or left undone, but only because of the work of Christ for me and delivered to me in baptism, in the sacrament of the altar, in the absolution and the preaching of God’s Word – all that is left for me to do is say - I believe! This is true, verily, truly, certainly! I trust this, so be it, let it be accordingly. Amen!



So, are you moved by the songs and the promises proclaimed? Join us by singing and confessing at the top of your lungs – Yes and Amen! Let it be!

## Questions:

What does the word “Amen” mean to you?

How does “The Blessing” expand on this one word?

Is there a particular lyric that most speaks to you?

## Activity:

On a sheet of paper, write out the word AMEN in block or bubble letters. Then using colored pencils, crayons, or markers, fill in the word AMEN with what you think AMEN means. Or, fill in the word amen with the words of a prayer you have memorized.



# AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES



## Sarah Crowder

Sarah Crowder is passionate about sharing the Gospel with freshmen students as a teacher at Faith Lutheran High School in Las Vegas, NV. She is in the Ph.D. program at Concordia Seminary St. Louis, with a focus on Reformation History. Sarah is a recipient of The Rod Rosenblatt Philosophy, Theology, and Apologetics Fellowship and loves to bring Reformation stories to life.

## Shelly Schwalm

Shelly Schwalm, DCE ('10), MFA ('19) is the Director of the DCE (Director of Christian Education) Program and Assistant Professor of Christian Ministry. Shelly is an alum of Concordia St. Paul, both from the DCE program, as well as getting her master's degree in creative writing. Shelly served in college ministry at CSP for 9 years before moving into a faculty role. She has also served in parish ministry, as well as serving the larger church body of the LCMS as a planner for the 2019 and 2022 LCMS Youth Gatherings. Her roles have included serving on the theological advisory team and the Bible study team. Shelly is also a song and liturgy writer, treasuring the space for creativity in the Christian faith.



## Magnus Persson

Magnus is a husband, father and grandfather. He is an ordained Verbi Divini Minister and works as a pastor for EFS - a missional renewal movement in the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church. He is also the network co-ordinator of Re:formera and the host for its weekly podcast.

## Erica Sorenson

Erica is in charge of Individual Partnerships in the Development Department at 1517. She holds a B.A. in both International Economics and Spanish from Valparaiso University and a M.A. in Teaching from the University of St. Thomas. Erica has a diverse work background in non-profit business operations, K-12 education, and fundraising. She is a passionate Gen Z advocate and speaker to church leadership and youth alike, teaching about the unique joys and challenges of sharing the Gospel message with young people in a post-Christian world.



## John Nunes



Dr. John A. Nunes is interim president at California Lutheran University. Since 2020, he has served on the Academic Leaders Task Force on Campus Free Expression at the Bipartisan Policy Center, influencing many universities' campus cultures. Nunes is a senior fellow at the Center for Religion, Culture and Democracy. He was president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief, an endowed professor at Valparaiso University, and author of five books. Born in Jamaica and raised in Canada, Nunes holds degrees from Concordia College (BA), Concordia Seminary (MDiv), and the Lutheran School of Theology (ThM and PhD). He and his wife, Monique, have six children and 13 grandchildren.

## Heidi Goehmann

Heidi is a licensed clinical social worker and mental health provider and also a deaconess. She loves walking with people to find the ways God has built restoration into our bodies and souls. She provides therapy, writes, and creates resources about mental health, genuine relationships, hope, and restoration at [heidigoehmann.com](http://heidigoehmann.com). She loves her giant dog, Star Wars, hockey, adventures, and new ideas. She lives in Ludington, Michigan with her husband, four amazing kids, and 1.5 dogs.



## Gabriel Sonntag



Pastor Gabriel Schmidt Sonntag is married to Polyana Schulz and they live in the city of Domingos Martins, ES, Brazil! He graduated from Seminário Concórdia (Brazil) in 2017 and has been a pastor since January 2018. He is currently pursuing his doctorate at Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, in the Systematics Department. He is currently the national coordinator of the catechetical teaching commission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil.

## Gerard Bolling

Rev. Dr. Gerard Bolling is a seasoned Pastor, orator, diversity teacher/leader, researcher, digital education leader, writer, conference/training leader, and Lutheran Educator. He holds a BA in Theatre from Concordia University Chicago (2012), an MDiv from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (2016), and a Doctorate of Education from Concordia University in Wisconsin (2020). Born and raised in New York City, he resides in St. Louis, MO, where he is Assistant Professor of Leadership & Theology at Concordia University Texas and Lead Pastor at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, leading staff in Word and Sacrament, community engagement, and development. Dr. Bolling and his beautiful wife, Lorenda, have two children Lincoln and Monroe. They were both born in different years but on the same exact day—October 5th!













MUSIC

