



Breakaway Session A

Created Body and Soul

Rev. Kevin Belter

OR - A - Jr. Howard Hall 135

In Luther's explanation to the First Article, we confess that "God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul." The fact that we have real, physical bodies is self-evident. What about the soul? The philosophies of physicalism or materialism, which deny the existence of an immaterial substantial soul, still dominate many university departments and professional fields. As Christians who live in but are not of the world, how can we confidently say to God, "You have delivered my soul from death." (Psalm 56:13a)

Rev. Belter is the pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Danville, CA. You can reach him at westfarthinger@gmail.com

Isaiah and the Drunken Peasants

Rev. Dr. Peter Elliott

OR - A - Miller 102

In Isaiah 6, we witness the prophet's terror concerning his sin and how the Lord comforts him through the atoning sacrifice. By his encounter with the Word, God has graciously worked contrition and faith in Isaiah, and this faith bears fruit in his willingness to serve. This is where God wants us. However, like drunken peasants, we often fall off the horse on either side. We are constantly tempted to self-righteousness and to lawlessness. We are prone to both pride and despair. Left to ourselves, we'd bring our faith to nothing, but God's Word is powerful to save!

Rev. Dr. Elliott is the pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church Hanover in Seattle, WA. You can reach him at pastor.elliott@messiahseattle.org



Self-Esteem Is Demonic

Rev. Harrison Goodman

OR - A - Miller 105

OR - C - Olin 301

Self-esteem is a no-win scenario. Too little is bad, but so is too much. And you don't get to choose. When what's expected of us crashes into what we actually do, the mess left behind very rarely matches up with the person we wish we were. It leaves us feeling lost, worthless, and without a place. When we carry all that baggage around, expecting someone to actually love us becomes an exercise in schizophrenia or a lifetime spent in fear of people finding out the truth. Your worth is not in what you can do. It's found in what's been paid for you.

Rev. Goodman is the content executive for Higher Things and a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mt. Vernon, IA. You can reach him at rev.goodman@higherthings.org

Vocation and the Invisible God

Rev. Grant Knepper

OR - A - BoDine 300

Many Christians think that the faith can only be lived out in lives of extraordinary service. The pressure to change the world for the better can be unrelenting and results in a skewed view of what a Christian life looks like. The books of Ruth and Esther show us how God works behind the scenes in the lives of ordinary people to fulfill his promises in ways that are unseen. Your life as a Christian can be perfectly ordinary and still be a life through which God works to fulfill his promises for you as well as for your neighbors.

Rev. Knepper is the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Modesto, CA. You can reach him at gknep@icloud.com

Seeing God Behind the Pain

Rev. Alexander Lange

OR - A - Olin 301

Why do we suffer in this life? Is God punishing us for some particular sin? Is God just capricious and mean? Often, people wrestle with the Problem of Pain. Sometimes, the seemingly arbitrary suffering that fills this world shakes our faith. We wonder, "If I am truly righteous in God's sight, then why does he seem to be against me?" Job is a very profound and complex book. Using poetic dialogue, Job encourages reflection on human suffering. Job doesn't answer all of our questions, but in the end God does comfort his children by revealing His grace hidden behind the pain.

Rev. Lange is the pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Albany, OR. You can reach him at gracealone11@gmail.com



Being Human: What the Catechism Teaches

Rev. Dr. John T. Pless

OR - A - Olin 204

This session will look at Luther's Teaching on what it means to be human in both the Small and Large Catechisms, exploring the topic from the perspective of each article of the Creed, distinguishing the law from the gospel, the demands that come on us in creation from the promise given in Baptism which frees us to live with faith in the forgiveness of sins in lives of love directed to the neighbor.

Rev. Dr. Pless is the assistant professor of pastoral ministry and missions at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN. He also serves on the board of directors for Higher Things and is a member of Zion Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, IN.

Helping Others Understand the Liturgy

Rev. Jeffrey Ries

OR - A - Jr. Howard Hall 102

OR - C - Miller 102

We all have non-Lutheran friends and family, many of whom are either unchurched or who go to non-sacramental churches often described under the blanket term "American Evangelical." They often criticize the liturgy to us without really understanding what they are criticizing. This breakaway is designed to help us learn to speak of the liturgy in "Gift" language, understanding that we practice it not because of our own preferences but because it was given to us for our good, handed down through many generations. The liturgy's purpose is to keep us focused on Christ rather than ourselves, to deliver the Gifts of Christ, and to prepare us for the fullness of life eternal.

Rev. Ries is the pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tacoma, WA. You can reach him at rev.ries@gmail.com

Martin Luther – Spiritual Forefather of Adolph Hitler?

Rev. Jeffrey Ware

OR - A & E - Fowler Council Chamber

“Next to the devil, a Christian has no more bitter and galling foe than a Jew” – Martin Luther. Shocking comments like these have led some historians to conclude that the seeds of anti-Semitism in Germany, which led to the Holocaust, were planted by Martin Luther himself. Is this true? How do we respond to those who would lay blame for the Holocaust at the feet of Martin Luther? More importantly, how should we treat our Jewish friends and neighbors today?

Rev. Ware is the pastor of All Saints Lutheran Church in Charlotte, NC. He also serves on the board of directors for Higher Things. You can reach him at revware@outlook.com



Breakaway Session B

Who's That in the Dress?

Vicar Jonah Clausen

OR - B - Olin 301 OR - D - Jr. Howard Hall 135

This breakaway will cover the vocation of the pastor, starting in worship settings and stretching out until it covers his role at conferences. You will learn the symbolism behind the various pieces of vestments and why the pastor faces the altar and, at other times, faces the congregation. By learning more about your pastor's identity and vocation, you will learn more about how his identity relates to yours. While his vocation might differ from yours, he is here to remind you of the love of Christ.

Vicar Clausen is the Higher Things summer vicar. He's receiving his training from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN. You can reach him at jonah.clausen@ctsfw.edu

Hurt (or what I wish I knew to tell Ashley)

Rev. Harrison Goodman

OR - B - Fowler Council Chamber

OR - D - BoDine 300

When someone close to you is hurting, you just want it to stop. When it leaves scars and welts, it's terrifying. The temptation to answer with platitudes like "it will be OK" gives way to outright lies that only try to bury the hurt instead of facing it. The truth is, sin isn't just an idea that can be pushed aside by a smile and positive thinking. Sin is brokenness and hurt, but our God really did bleed for sin. Our God really did die for you. It is already finished.

Rev. Goodman is the content executive for Higher Things and a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mt. Vernon, IA. You can reach him at rev.goodman@higherthings.org

Wet & Miserable

Deac. Emma Heinz

OR - B & C - BoDine 300

Being wet and miserable sounds, well, miserable! We avoid being uncomfortable or experiencing pain. We sometimes expect our faith to spare us from suffering and evil. We put our trust in God to preserve us from evil (rightly), but we then forget the words of Christ Jesus, which plainly tell us if we lose our life for His sake, we will gain life eternally (Matthew 16:25). So what are we to do? Cling to your Baptism! Suffering in this life will not be removed, but take heart: Christ has overcome the world. Remember your Baptism and learn to faithfully endure being wet and miserable, knowing that Christ Jesus is with you.

Deac. Heinz is the registrar for Higher Things and a member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Lowell, IN. You can reach her at e.brauckman@gmail.com



Oregon Breakaways

Who Am I - 2024

Humility Under God's Mighty Hand

Rev. Asa Hoffman

OR - B - Miller 105

"Let each his lesson learn with care, And all the household well shall fare." Every generation inherits the goods and the ills of its fathers, and youths are often so overwhelmed by the prospect of undoing the ills that they neglect and even despise the goods. As inheritors of a rich Christian tradition, we can look to the clear instructions of Holy Scripture, which Dr. Luther compiled in the Table of Duties. Do you bear the withered fruit of a twice-dead tree or the bountiful harvest of Christ's vine? God has ordained good works in which for you to walk!

Rev. Hoffman is the pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Gresham, OR. You can reach him at a.hoffman@lutherclassical.org

Jesus Angry as Hell

Rev. Eric Lange

OR - B - Olin 204

The Bible pictures Jesus as Meek and Mild, but sometimes He appears angry as Hell. Why does it seem like Jesus says two different things? And what does this mean in our Christian lives? Come find out what's up with Jesus and learn how this impacts you and your vocation.

Rev. Lange is the pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Gresham, OR. You can reach him at rdrm-lcms@juno.com

My Name's Christian, but I Care What You Think

Rev. Michael Miller

OR - B - Jr. Howard Hall 102

What are you insecure about? Your looks? What you're good at? Who would ever be attracted to you? There are answers, but they direct you to an unattainable past, or a super-human stone skin. What security can we actually find for the insecurities that plague each of us? Come and learn what a precious foundation and identity God gave you in Baptism. Take comfort, too, in how He continues to uphold you whenever you are racked by doubt.

Rev. Miller is the pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Lebanon, OR. You can reach him at rev.michaelamiller@gmail.com



Oregon Breakaways

Who Am I - 2024

Cantorology 101

Paul Soulek

OR - B & E - Flanagan Chapel

Hear from Cantor Soulek about the what, why, and how of church music. What do church musicians do? Why do we sing the things we sing? How do we equip God's people to do this? Participants will join in choral warmups, hymn selection exercises, and will also dive into the basics of the pipe organ and its role in supporting the congregation's song.

Paul Soulek is the cantor of St. John Lutheran Church in Seward, NE. He also serves as the cantor for Higher Things. You can reach him at paul.soulek@stjohnseward.org

The Other lord's prayer

Dr. David Vetter

OR - B - Miller 102

Consider that the Gospel contains a second "lord's prayer." Jesus made a point of warning us about this prayer that we are tempted to pray in our lives. He offered our best defense against this temptation in His true "Lord's Prayer." The Parable of the Rich Fool illustrates the false prayer, taking the form of a soliloquy. Comparing and contrasting these prayers - who we are praying to, who we are praying with, and what we are praying for - we begin to realize that the Lord's Prayer is intended to be our very own family prayer as believers.

Dr. Vetter is a member of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Milton, WA.



Breakaway Session C

Christians and Gender Dysphoria

Rev. Merritt Demski

OR - C - Fowler Council Chamber

A lot of people say a lot of things about gender and sexuality. It can be confusing and overwhelming. We'll discuss what Scripture says about man and woman and how we live out our Christian faith amid this world that is increasingly filled with people talking about Gender Dysphoria / Transgenderism. This is a Christ-centered opportunity to dig into Scripture, ask questions, and cling to the peace that passes all understanding in Christ regardless of your background or knowledge of the topic.

Rev. Demski is the pastor of St. John Lutheran Church Hanover in Alta, IA. You can reach him at pastor.demski@gmail.com

Faith That Sees Through

Rev. Dr. Alfonso Espinosa

OR - C - Miller 105

Dr. Espinosa will take us through the dualities and paradoxes in the Word of God, which help protect our identities in Christ as we walk by faith and not by sight. We affirm the right answer to "Who am I?" when we understand exactly what stands against us – sin, the world, and the devil -- and the new identities we have in Christ as Christians, Disciples, and Royal Priests. We are also fortified in our identities in Christ when we can answer the questions according to God's Holy Word: "What is Real?", "What Am I?", "To Whom Am I Speaking?", "Where Are We?", "When Are We?", "and "What Do I Say?".

Rev. Dr. Espinosa is the pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Irvine, CA. You can reach him at revdrespinosa@gmail.com

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Church Work Vocations and You

Mr. Glenn Rollins

OR - C - Olin 204

Have you thought about what career you want to pursue after high school? Do you prayerfully ponder serving the Lord in a full-time church work vocation? Have you considered how your Gifts, talents, and abilities will inform how you can make a positive impact in this world? Come and hear about LCMS church work vocations and listen to the stories of current Concordia church work students. Learn their pathway toward a church work vocation to help you understand your own vocational journey.

Mr. Rollins is serving the Synod as the manager of Set Apart to Serve - LCMS Church Worker Recruitment. You can reach him at glenn.rollins@lcms.org

Helping Others Understand the Liturgy

Rev. Jeffrey Ries

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Oregon Breakaways

Who Am I - 2024

Lord, Remember Us in Your Kingdom and Teach Us to Pray: Praying the catechism with Luther

Vicar Sam Scheltens

OR - C - Jr. Howard Hall 135

How should I pray? For what should I pray? God commands us to pray and promises to hear our prayers, but sometimes it's hard. He's God, after all – what am I supposed to say? Luther's letter to his friend, Peter Beskendorf, the barber, teaches us how to meditate and to consider the catechism (Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed) as a framework to focus our prayers when we aren't sure what we should say to God. Together, we'll dive into the Word of God with Luther and learn to pray.

Vicar Scheltens is serving at Messiah Lutheran Church in Danville, CA. You can reach him at henry.scheltens@ctsfw.edu

How To Train Your Imagination

Rev. Samuel Schuldheisz

OR - C - Jr. Howard Hall 102

Everyone has it. Everyone uses it. But what is your imagination? Imagination, in one way, is like a muscle; you never really lose it; it's always there, but it certainly can weaken or atrophy when we don't use it. When we think about the conference theme of "Who Am I," part of who you are is a creature made in God's image with an imagination. How do we love God and our neighbor with our imagination? Come and learn how to train your imagination.

Rev. Schuldheisz is the pastor of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Milton, WA. You can reach him at samwise.schuldheisz@gmail.com



Breakaway Session D

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The Idol of Uniqueness

Rev. Merritt Demski

OR - D - Fowler Council Chamber

It's tempting to put our fear, love, and trust in what makes us different from others. We're often tempted to start glorifying our skills and talents rather than thanking God and doing all things to His glory. God doesn't use a cosmic cookie cutter to make us, but we also don't want to place our confidence in being unique. God calls us through His Word to be one people of one mind in Christ. We thank, praise, serve, and obey Him rather than ourselves.

Rev. Demski is the pastor of St. John Lutheran Church Hanover in Alta, IA. You can reach him at pastor.demski@gmail.com

Faith That Shines In Culture

Rev. Dr. Alfonso Espinosa

OR - D - Miller 105

Dr. Espinosa will fortify your identity in Christ by helping us understand THE (singular) Call that makes us the baptized children of God. From our singular or VERTICAL Call, we are then put in the position to understand our several calls (plural). These are our HORIZONTAL calls in life. All these take place within God's three great estates or realms: The Family Estate, The Church/Congregational Estate, and the State Estate. Through all of them, we learn that Christ's love for the neighbor works in and through us so that His light reaches everyone in our lives (known as our estate of Christian love or "spiritual estate." To know these is to become strong in one's identity in Christ.

Rev. Dr. Espinosa is the pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Irvine, CA. You can reach him at revdrespinosa@gmail.com



Oregon Breakaways

Who Am I - 2024

Hurt (or what I wish I knew to tell Ashley)

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When someone close to you is hurting, you just want it to stop. When it leaves scars and welts, it's terrifying. The temptation to answer with platitudes like "it will be OK" gives way to outright lies that only try to bury the hurt instead of facing it. The truth is, sin isn't just an idea that can be pushed aside by a smile and positive thinking. Sin is brokenness and hurt, but our God really did bleed for sin. Our God really did die for you. It is already finished.

Rev. Goodman is the content executive for Higher Things and a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mt. Vernon, IA. You can reach him at rev.goodman@higherthings.org

How to Talk to the Devil

Rev. Mark Nierman

OR - D - Jr. Howard Hall 102

Can we talk to the devil? Sure we can! Luther did it often. Few people today believe that the devil is even real. The Scriptures proclaim that he is real, and he diligently tempts us to sadness and despair. Luther understood the devil's power but confidently believed that Christ has overcome the devil. When Luther talked to the devil, he constantly reminded him of Christ's victory. He rubbed it in the devil's face. We can do it too. Luther will show us how.

Rev. Nierman is the pastor of Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Loveland, CO.

What's in a name?

Mr. David Pratt

OR - D - Olin 204

What kind of evidence do we have that Scripture is true? Is it possible there are details in the Gospels that give solid testimony of the fact that the authors were eyewitnesses of the events they describe, or was the New Testament written long after the life of Christ and the first disciples? This session will examine the use of names and other details in the Bible and compare archaeological evidence to show how Christians can have confidence in what they read and in who they are in Christ.

Rev. Pratt is the pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Las Vegas, NV. You can reach him at davepratt@mac.com



Oregon Breakaways

Who Am I - 2024

Does Life Have A Purpose?

Rev. Matt Thompson

OR - D - Olin 301

The world will tell you that there is no order or purpose to life and that your life has no real meaning. This is simply not true. God created the world with order and design, and every part of creation serves a purpose. You also were created for a purpose, and your life has real meaning and an eternal goal. In this session, we will discuss from the Bible the revealed purpose of God in creation.

Rev. Thompson is the pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Bismarck, ND. You can reach him at mt@midco.net

I Am Not Worthless

Rev. Glenn Worcester

OR - D - Miller 102

What do you say you're worth? What does the world say you're worth? More importantly, what does God say you're worth? And why does it matter? Paul writes in Romans 5 that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Even in your sin, you are worth saving. There may be times in your life where you feel worthless. As you take a look at the cross, you will see that you are not worthless. In fact, what you are worth is nothing less than the precious life of Jesus Christ.

Rev. Worcester is the pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in Winnipeg, MB, CA. You can reach him at pastorq@peacelc.com



Breakaway Session E

Rags to Riches to YOU

Mrs. Michelle Bauman

OR - E - Miller 105

A spoiled king and an orphan girl. A beauty pageant and an evil villain. An uncertain bride and an oblivious groom. Sounds like the storyline from The Selection series by Kiera Cass, doesn't it? But this rags-to-riches tale is real. Even more, it reminds us of who we are and how we're equipped for such a time as this to uphold life. Find out how YOU are called and equipped to be God's hands, feet, and voice in the world. Find out how you are blessed to uphold LIFE!

Michelle Bauman is the executive director of Y4Life, the youth arm of Lutherans for Life. You can reach her at michelle@y4life.org

A Biblical Theology of Missions

Rev. Joel Fritsche

OR - E - BoDine 300

Mission talk in the Church today often flows from our Lord's Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20. That's certainly biblical, but a biblical theology of mission spans the entire Scripture: Old and New Testament. The mission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ has its basis in the salvation God planned in the sending of His Son from before the foundation of the world. God's people of old asked, "Who am I?" just like you and I do. What does it mean that you are the new Israel in Christ? Come find out!

Rev. Fritsche is the Director of Vicarages and Deaconess Internships and Assistant Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. You can reach him at fritschej@csl.edu

I am Body, Soul, Spirit

Rev. Michael Miller

OR - E - Miller 102

We're hearing a lot about Who am I? Let's spend some time in the Scriptures considering What am I? No, I'm not saying we should wear cat ears and a tail. Each of us is a creature of God, composed of body, soul, and spirit. In this confusing time when our friends might struggle to answer the question, "What am I?" come and learn what God's Word tells us about our bodies, souls, and spirit. You'll find that God our Savior is present for us exactly as He made us.

Rev. Miller is the pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Lebanon, OR. You can reach him at rev.michaelamiller@gmail.com



Oregon Breakaways

Who Am I - 2024

Youth Ministry 101

Mrs. Crysten Sanchez

OR - E - Olin 204

Thinking about putting together a youth program can seem daunting. Let's start with some building blocks that go into a healthy, sustainable, safe youth program! We'll share resources and ideas as well! Crysten Sanchez, former youth coordinator at a church in Iowa, will walk you through the many pieces of the puzzle.

Crysten Sanchez is the events executive for Higher Things and is a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mt. Vernon, IA. You can reach her at csanchez@higherthings.org.

Is it OK to be single?

Rev. Josh Schmidt

OR - E - Jr. Howard Hall 135

I'm growing and looking at life. I know that God has a plan for me. It seems like everyone is looking for "the one" or already has someone. What is wrong with me that I don't have anyone? Could this be part of God's plan, too? I keep going from "the one" to "another one;" is that normal? Does God still love me? Is He really there for me... even if sometimes I feel like I am empty or not enough on my own? In case you can't make it to the breakaway session, God declares you to be His child, and that is enough. You are not alone, especially when you feel that way.

Rev. Schmidt is the pastor of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Monterey, CA. You can reach him at pastorblcmonterey@gmail.com

Cantorology 101

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Hear from Cantor Soulek about the what, why, and how of church music. What do church musicians do? Why do we sing the things we sing? How do we equip God's people to do this? Participants will join in choral warmups, hymn selection exercises, and will also dive into the basics of the pipe organ and its role in supporting the congregation's song.

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Be a Man! A Godly Man.

Rev. Randy Sturzenbecher

OR - E - Olin 301

This is a tough life for a young Christian man. Social media, culture, family dynamics, and, let's not forget the temptations of our sinful flesh, which have very strong opinions on what a man is or should be. Christianity and masculinity are both under attack. To be a Christian is to be viewed as narrow-minded and weak. To embrace your masculinity is considered toxic. What does a 21st-century Christian man look like? We will explore the qualities of manliness, good and bad, throughout the Scripture and especially in the perfect man, Jesus the Son of God. Ladies, this is for you, too, so you know what to expect in a Godly man.

Rev. Sturzenbecher is the pastor of Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church. He also serves as the president of the Higher Things board of directors. You can reach him at dslcpsturz@divineshep.org

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