

Session A

Merciful Father - All Things New

Rev. Daniel Voth

CFAC 125 Multipurpose Room

"There was a man who had two sons." So begins one of Jesus' most famous parables. Both sons are lost and separated from their father. Can they be made new? Will they be made new? Can you be made new, not just in eternity, but here, now, in this age? Join me as we dig into Jesus' parable from Luke 15 and see how you can be made new now and for eternity because of the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Voth serves Immanuel Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, ND. He's also the Higher Things Catechesis Coordinator. You can reach him at rev.voth@higherthings.org.

The Visual Language of Christian Symbols

Edward Riojas

CFAC 135 - Instrumental Room

Since the infancy of the Church, visuals and symbols have been used to underscore Holy Scripture. Indeed, Christ Himself spoke of mundane things to help followers understand much greater realities. Thus, a sort of visual language evolved within Christendom to help us understand our beliefs. Humans, however, are a forgetful, stupid lot, and we often lose the meaning behind those things which we stare at every Sunday. Just as it is imperative that we constantly remain in the Word, so it is necessary to frequently reacquaint ourselves with the visuals that ultimately enrich the very things which we profess.

Mr. Riojas is a Lutheran artist of sacred themes. He is a member at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, MI. You can reach him at edriojasartist@gmail.com.

O Lord, Open My Lips!

Rev. Stephen Mueller
CFAC 222

“Do you kiss your mother with that mouth?” is an idiom sometimes said to someone using expletives or other inappropriate language. The troubles of the tongue originate from our sinful heart. When we constantly hear corrupting talk in our sinful world, we begin to mimic it. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing; this should not be so! We are created to praise God with our lips. Learn to identify sinful influences and guard your lips from corrupting talk. As the Spirit cleanses our hearts for right speech, so our mouths may declare His praise.

Rev. Mueller serves at Concordia Lutheran Church in Geneseo, IL. You can reach him at stvmchlmllr@gmail.com.

Vocation in the Now and Not Yet

Rev. Matt Wietfeldt
CFAC 252

As Christians, we live in the tension of the “now but not yet”—redeemed by Christ and called to live with purpose, even as we await the fullness of His Kingdom. In this breakaway session, we’ll explore what it means to live out your God-given identity and purpose today, in the middle of a world that feels unfinished and uncertain. Through Scripture, discussion, and practical encouragement, you’ll discover how God works through your everyday life to serve others, share hope, and glorify Him—even as you wait for what’s still to come.

Rev. Wietfeldt is with Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN. You can reach him at matthew.wietfeldt@ctsfi.edu.

Baptism Makes You New

Rev. Dr. Jacob Corzine
CFAC 255

If baptism is as important as Lutherans say it is, you should notice that! But somehow the actual place of baptism in our Christian lives falls far short of what we say about it. This talk will explore what the bible says about baptism and answer the question of what being baptized actually means for your everyday life. Some people say that baptism isn't for children (wrong!), but it's easy to make the opposite mistake, and think it's only for children (just as wrong!). The truth is, the more you embrace your baptism, the more you'll discover each day how much it is for you, whatever your age.

Rev. Dr. Corzine works at Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis, MO. You can reach him at jacob.corzine@me.com.

For the Bullied

Rev. Harrison Goodman
CFAC Recital Hall

When you're the kid who gets bullied, the weight of each day gets heavier. You wake up and go to sleep feeling unsafe. Alone. Worthless. Trapped. In short, it's a reversing of everything God speaks about you in the Gospel. Words have power, but God's Word speaks louder and more. It points you to the places where your identity is secure as He gives strength to endure your enemies with long-suffering patience and even hope. The Bible doesn't make bullies go away, but it secures us in something that endures. We are more than conquerors through Him who loves us!

Rev. Goodman is the Executive Director of Mission and Theology of Higher Things. You can reach him at rev.goodman@higherthings.org.

The End of Man

Rev. Jeff Hemmer
CFAC Swets Choral Hall 115

What is a human being and what is the purpose of being one? We live in a tragically dehumanizing time and culture. From AI and sex robots to transhumanism and gender reassignment, we have lost a sense that it's actually good to be a human being. Mankind has a telos—a goal—that we see in Creation and see restored in the Resurrection. Spoiler: the robots and people-haters don't win in the end.

Rev. Hemmer is the pastor at Bethany Ev. Lutheran Church in Fairview, IL. You can reach him at jeffhemmer@gmail.com.

Jelly Roll Sanctification

Rev. Tim Chase & Rev. Chris Hull
Commons Annex Alumni Board Room

Things may not be going ok in life but because you are claimed by Jesus, everything is all right. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, and He does. But you need to be reminded of it on a daily basis. Take some time with Pastor Chase and Pastor Hull to go through some Biblical passages that will remind you: Even though life may appear dark, you abide in the life of Christ.

Rev. Chase is the pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School in Truman, MN. Rev. Hull serves Immanuel Lutheran Church and Student Center in Macomb, IL.

Prepared to Defend: Christian Apologetics

Rev. Dr. Alfonso Espinosa
Commons Annex Lecture Hall

Based on Rev. Dr. Espinosa's upcoming 2025 release "Contending for Christ Through the Creed" (Wipf and Stock Publishers). Come and be equipped in Christian Apologetics, how to give reasonable answers for the hope of Christ that is within you (1 Peter 3:15) and how to contend for the faith (Jude 3) without being contentious or argumentative. It's not about winning arguments, but it's about giving good answers to good questions about the Christian faith. This is where the heart and mind come together for the sake of helping people know why the Christian faith is objective and true.

Rev. Dr. Espinosa serves St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Irvine, CA. You can reach him at rev.dr.espinosa@gmail.com.

Friend or Foe? or Friend and Foe?

Todd Schenider
Meeter Center Lecture Hall

Friendship is a blessing. Friends are fun to hang out with, to share moments with, to talk with, and be there for each other. But can some friends also be pulling you away from Christ and His Church? Should you be friends with non-believers or non-Lutherans? In this session we will discuss how you might determine if your friends are at risk of causing you harm. We'll look at what Scripture teaches us about the company we keep and look to the 10 Commandments to see how it can be applied to our circle of friends.

Mr. Schneider is with Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Columbus, OH. You can reach him at schneittodd@gmail.com.

Jesus vs. The Jehovah's Witnesses

Rev. Eric Lange
Science 203

What do Jehovah's Witnesses believe about Jesus and God? Why in the world isn't it obvious to Jehovah's Witnesses that Jesus is God? Why would anyone want to deny this basic biblical truth? Is there anything in how the Bible presents Jesus that might lead to confusion? What really is the Jehovah's Witnesses ultimate authority? How does what they believe about the person of Jesus influence how they think about His work. Learn why it's important for you to know that Jesus is Jehovah, the ways that Jehovah's Witnesses respond to traditional proofs that Jesus is God, and how to talk to them about the true Jesus when they come knocking.

Rev. Lange is the pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Gresham, OR. You can reach him at eric.lange4444@gmail.com.

A Good and Virtuous Life

Rev. Jeremy Swem
Science 303

What does it mean to live a good and virtuous life? Today some would advocate digging deeply into your inner life to find happiness, satisfaction, and a sense of purpose or meaning. Thousands of years ago, Aristotle advocated something different—choosing to do that which is good. By practicing defined virtues, and avoiding vices, he taught one could live a good life. Drawing from Aristotle, Roman Catholic theologians like Pope Gregory I and Thomas Aquinas taught something similar using seven vices and virtues. Martin Luther takes a different approach. Come hear from Luther's preaching the source of a good and virtuous life and how we are to achieve it.

Rev. Swem serves Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, MI. You can reach him at jswem@oursavior-gr.org.

The Kingdom is Like... A.I.?

Dr. Bryan Stearns
Science Lecture Hall 010

The kingdom of God is like... artificial intelligence? God made man in His image, and man makes machines in our image. Our machines can give us perspective for what humanity is like before God. Come and discuss how A.I. shows us imagery for faith, for our dependence on the Word of God, and especially for our looking forward to Christ's return when all humanity's "training period" will be complete, when God will separate the good from the bad, and when we will be harvested for God's eternal kingdom in paradise.

Dr. Stearns is a member at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Overland, MO. You can reach him at games.bearealis@gmail.com.

Session B

How to Thrive in the Military as a Lutheran

Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana
CFAC 135 - Instrumental Room

Efficacy of Holy Scripture validates military service and the necessity of serving ones country. Also, we will explore Luther and his booklet, "Whether a Soldier Too Can Be Saved" as an understanding of citizenship and serving ones country. Finally we will dive into a brief excursion into Romans 13.

Rev. Dr. Hokana is with the Ministry to the Armed Forces in St. Louis, MO. You can reach him at hokanasteve@gmail.com.

Just a Shell? -- or NOT!

Rev. Rich Heinz
CFAC 222

A loved one has gone to the Lord, and now your family needs help planning a funeral. Aunt Janet wants "In the Garden," Cousin Emily wants some "Praise" piece you've never heard of, and Grandpa wants "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." And someone wants to give a eulogy. What is a Lutheran funeral like? How do we work through this? Join Pastor Heinz as we look at the Lutheran funeral liturgy, and talk about this great opportunity through Scripture and music selections to be a final witness of the faith we have been baptized into.

Rev. Heinz is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lowell, IN. He's also the chaplain for this conference. You can reach him at revfrhein@gmail.com.

Christian Hope, Nihilism's Cure

Rev. Samuel Beltz
CFAC 252

Nihilism is the experience described by Friedrich Nietzsche, who observed that the Christian and “secular” worlds had lost their way. In both locations, the aims were lacking and the question “why?” had no good answer. This experience, Nihilism, has become a normal and persistent issue in America and its religions as well. God’s Promises of Resurrection and New Creation give hope that cures the ennui so common in Western hearts and minds. That is to say, the Resurrection of Jesus justifies, satisfies, and makes right the heart and mind, thereby converting Nihilists to Christians by the Power of the Holy Spirit. In this breakout we will explore this situation and hopefully convert some Nihilists.

Rev. Beltz is the pastor at St. John Ev. Lutheran Church in Oskaloosa, IA. You can reach him at samuel.beltz@gmail.com.

“Wake, Awake!” for Today’s Lutheran

Dr. William Lipke
CFAC 255

This is a wake-up call for today's Lutheran youth from Pastor Philipp Nicolai's famous hymn “Wake, Awake for Night is Flying”, based on Christ's Parable of the Ten Virgins—five wise and five foolish. Emphasis will be on the text's message to be ready for Christ's return and his finished work on the cross. Musical settings based on Johann Sebastian Bach's iconic cantata will be shown to be useful for today's liturgical services. This session, including live performances, will increase your understanding of Law and Gospel in Lutheran chorales as congregational members, choir members and aspiring church musicians.

Dr. Lipke is with Luther Classical College in Casper, WY. You can reach him at wlipkescholar@gmail.com.

Recalled to Life

Jocelyn Benson
CFAC 264

"It was the best times, it was the worst of times. . . ." This famous line from Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* is only the beginning. A few pages in, a mysterious message gets delivered and the return message is simply: "Recalled to life." What does this mean? *A Tale of Two Cities* helps us to grapple with life in the "now, but not yet." With Dickens, we'll ponder the baptismal realities of daily dying and rising as we live out our vocations this side of heaven.

Mrs. Bensen is the Headmaster of Wittenberg Academy. You can reach her at joyful1j@gmail.com.

Hurt (or What I Wish I Knew to Tell Ashley)

Rev. Harrison Goodman
CFAC Recital Hall

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 Executive Director of Mission and Theology of Higher Things. You can reach him at rev.goodman@higherthings.org.

Organ Boot Camp

Paul Soulek
Chapel

The organ is the king of instruments . . . and for good reason! The organ occupies a key role in the Lutheran liturgy and in presenting the church's music. But sometimes the organ can seem a bit intimidating. What do those buttons actually do? Do you really play with your feet? And how many pipes is too many (trick question . . . you can never have too many!)? This session will explore how the organ works, what it takes to play the organ well, and what makes for a great church organist.

Paul Soulek is the Cantor at St. John Lutheran Church in Seward, NE. He also serves as the HT Cantor. You can reach him at paul.soulek@stjohnseward.org.

“Why God?” Keeping Good-as-New-Faith When Suffering

Rev. Dr. Seth Clemmer
Commons Annex Alumni Board Room

“If God is all-powerful, and if God loves me, then why did He allow this tragedy?” Questions like this are often in the background of those who have walked away from the Christian faith. This breakaway will discuss that question, giving a clear understanding of Christian suffering and helping attendees prepare to endure the sufferings of life that they might stand firm in times of trial. Further, we will discuss ways to engage those who might have left the Christian faith as a result of suffering.

Rev. Dr. Clemmer is the pastor at Bethany Lutheran Church in Naperville, IL. You can reach him at clemmer96@gmail.com.

The Battle Within the Christian

Rev. Dr. Alfonso Espinosa
Commons Annex Lecture Hall

Rev. Dr. Espinosa will present a major chapter from his 2018 CPH book “Faith That Sees Through the Culture” and the battle within every Christian between the sinful nature and the born-again spirit of the Christian. It’s old man versus new man. Who will win? The Word of Christ teaches us on what the battle feels like and how to live in the life of Christ when confronted by the old man. Romans 7 and Galatians 5 will be taught and applied!

Rev. Dr. Espinosa serves St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Irvine, CA. You can reach him at rev.dr.espinosa@gmail.com.

Here Am I, Send Me!

Glenn Rollins
Meeter Center Lecture Hall

Have you thought about what career you want to pursue after high school? Have you considered how your gifts, talents and abilities will inform how you can make a positive impact in this world? Have you heard the Lord asking, "Who will I send?" (Isaiah 6: 8) Come and hear about LCMS church work vocations and listen to current Concordia University church work students as they talk about how they made the decision to be sent to serve the Lord. Learn to their pathway toward a church work vocation to help you to decide upon your own vocational journey.

Mr. Rollins is with the office Set Apart to Serve from the LCMS. You can reach him at glennrollins79@gmail.com.

Artwork at Our Savior Lutheran Church

Edward Riojas
2900 Burton St SE,
Grand Rapids, MI 49546

This will be an on-site tour/description of original artwork hanging in the sanctuary, narthex, and hallway by Edward Riojas. The bulk of the presentation will focus on the 160-ft-long "Te Deum Polyptych," which surrounds the church sanctuary. A few other original oil paintings will be on display, as well.

Mr. Riojas is a Lutheran artist of sacred themes. He is a member at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, MI. You can reach him at edriojasartist@gmail.com.

Real Love, Real Life

Michelle Bauman
Science 203

Love. We think about it. We want it. We wonder when we'll find it. We wonder IF we'll find it. And if we do, how long will it last . . . because, let's be honest, relationships break. Hearts break. People break. Is love really all it's cracked up to be? The simple answer is, YES! God desires to give His people life-affirming love, and one of the ways He provides the blessing of love is through marriage. Learn how to spot real love, how to grow it, and how to give it as you abide in the love of Christ. Interested in learning more about REAL LOVE and how it upholds LIFE? Join this session, young lover

Mrs. Bauman is the Director of Y4Life, the youth arm of Lutherans for Life. You can reach her at michelley4life@gmail.com.

What's so funny? Humor and the New Life

Rev. David Solum
Science 301

What is the place of humor in the Christian life? Can I laugh when I carry around the burden of this sack of flesh, live in a bad news world, and am constantly under the attack of the devil? Fear, anxiety, depression, and anger are all in the devil's play book to make you think that Christ's death and resurrection were not for you, or that they have no impact on you for the here and now. Learn how to deal with the devil using a humor that keeps the Gospel in the forefront of our hearts and minds.

Rev. Solum serves Immanuel Lutheran Church in Michigan City, IN. You can reach him at solumdr@gmail.com.

They Not Like Us

Rev. Chris Hull
Science 303

We who are baptized into Christ are not like the world. The world is not like us. We are created anew in Christ to be merciful, forgiving, patient, and strong. In this breakaway, Pastor Hull will walk through how we are all 4 of these things as baptized children of God in spite of how the world wants us to be. You will hopefully grow in this breakaway in the joy of knowing that who you are, as one new in Christ, is your identity that can never be changed.

Rev. Hull is the pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church and Student Center in Macomb, IL. You can reach him at luther1546@gmail.com.

The Emperor's New Clothes: The LGBTQ+ Agenda

Rev. Mark Eddy
Science Lecture Hall 010

The media report that homosexual marriage is now favored by a "vast majority" of young people. "Dead naming" is considered "hate speech." Choosing your own "gender" is trendy. What does God think of all of this? Using the story of the emperor's new clothes, we'll investigate how people are being told to shut their eyes to what God designed sex and marriage to be. We'll see the lies told by people promoting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer agenda. Most of all, we'll see (from the Bible) God's good plan for sexuality and marriage.

Rev. Eddy serves Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Taylor Ridge, IL. You can reach him at markeddy@att.net.

Session C

Worlds at War? The Power of Worldviews

Rev. Dr. Michael Eschelbach
CFAC 125 Multipurpose Room

The worldview of our time and assumptions about human free will manufacture a religion incompatible with biblical Christianity. The world of human invention is the consequence of Adam's rebellion against God and is opposed to God in every way. The universe of God's creation and the kingdom of heaven are demonstrated in the life of Jesus in a multitude of ways yet incomprehensible to corrupt human nature. A biblical worldview opens the way of understanding God's universe of revelation in nature and in His Word. Understanding worldviews equips us to be faithful and effective ambassadors in this time when the world is so opposed and antagonistic toward truth.

Rev. Dr. Eschelbach is at Concordia University in Irvine, CA. You can reach him at michael.eschelbach@cui.edu.

What Am I Worth?

Rev. Jeremiah Johnson
CFAC 135 - Instrumental Room

Whether it's a Bugatti or a baseball contract or a Van Gogh or a diamond ring or a college education, we always want to know, "What's it worth?" We want a number that tells us how important something is. And in a world that tries to put a price on everything, it's inevitable that we would turn that same question in on ourselves: What am I worth? To my friends? To my team? To my company? To my community? To God? Thankfully, Christ tells us what we're worth—His own life. This reality enables us to live confidently and to see the value in others, even when they can't.

Rev. Johnson is the pastor at Glory of Christ Lutheran Church in Plymouth, MN. You can reach him at jeremiahdj@gmail.com.

O Lord, Open My Lips!

Rev. Stephen Mueller
CFAC 222

“Do you kiss your mother with that mouth?” is an idiom sometimes said to someone using expletives or other inappropriate language. The troubles of the tongue originate from our sinful heart. When we constantly hear corrupting talk in our sinful world, we begin to mimic it. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing; this should not be so! We are created to praise God with our lips. Learn to identify sinful influences and guard your lips from corrupting talk. As the Spirit cleanses our hearts for right speech, so our mouths may declare His praise.

Rev. Mueller serves at Concordia Lutheran Church in Geneseo, IL. You can reach him at stvmchlmllr@gmail.com.

Singing of the New Creation

Rev. Brian Hamer
CFAC 252

The Te Deum (“We Praise You, O God”) is one of the oldest and most enduring hymns of the church, the “fourth Creed” of Christendom (Luther), and one of the historic canticles of our liturgy. Though its authorship is uncertain, its trinitarian shape, biblical confession, and numerous musical settings have secured its place as perhaps the hymn of the New Creation. Walk through the text with an eye on Revelation 4 and 5, explore musical settings that are fitting for Lutheran worship. An informal companion to the field trip to see the Riojas Te Deum at Our Savior Lutheran Church.

Rev. Hamer is with the School of Infantry West, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton California. You can reach him at revhamer@verizon.net.

Baptism Makes You New

Rev. Dr. Jacob Corzine
CFAC 255

If baptism is as important as Lutherans say it is, you should notice that! But somehow the actual place of baptism in our Christian lives falls far short of what we say about it. This talk will explore what the bible says about baptism and answer the question of what being baptized actually means for your everyday life. Some people say that baptism isn't for children (wrong!), but it's easy to make the opposite mistake, and think it's only for children (just as wrong!). The truth is, the more you embrace your baptism, the more you'll discover each day how much it is for you, whatever your age.

Rev. Dr. Corzine works at Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis, MO. You can reach him at jacob.corzine@me.com.

Jesus vs. The Jehovah's Witnesses

Rev. Eric Lange
CFAC 264

What do Jehovah's Witnesses believe about Jesus and God? Why in the world isn't it obvious to Jehovah's Witnesses that Jesus is God? Why would anyone want to deny this basic biblical truth? Is there anything in how the Bible presents Jesus that might lead to confusion? What really is the Jehovah's Witnesses ultimate authority? How does what they believe about the person of Jesus influence how they think about His work. Learn why it's important for you to know that Jesus is Jehovah, the ways that Jehovah's Witnesses respond to traditional proofs that Jesus is God, and how to talk to them about the true Jesus when they come knocking.

Rev. Lange is the pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Gresham, OR. You can reach him at eric.lange4444@gmail.com.

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Rev. Goodman is the Executive Director of Mission and Theology of Higher Things. You can reach him at rev.goodman@higherthings.org.

Hope for Porn-Darkened Eyes?

Rev. Paul Mumme
CFAC Swets Choral Hall 115

The eye is a gatekeeper, letting in either light or darkness. What happens when a Christian fixes his eyes on pixelated porn? How does it corrupt the mind, the heart, the imagination? What long-term effects are there? More importantly, is there hope for porn-darkened eyes? Come and fix your eyes on Jesus, dive into His Word, find newness of life therein, and learn how God purifies pornographic passions, rightly orders natural desire, and sanctifies sexuality. Rather than cursing the darkness, we will light a candle by bringing Christ into this discussion!

Rev. Mumme serves Saint John Lutheran Church in Sycamore, IL. He's also the Catechist for this conference. You can reach him at pastormumme@stjohnsycamore.org.

“Why God?” Keeping Good-as-New-Faith When Suffering

Rev. Dr. Seth Clemmer
Commons Annex Alumni Board Room

“If God is all-powerful, and if God loves me, then why did He allow this tragedy?” Questions like this are often in the background of those who have walked away from the Christian faith. This breakaway will discuss that question, giving a clear understanding of Christian suffering and helping attendees prepare to endure the sufferings of life that they might stand firm in times of trial. Further, we will discuss ways to engage those who might have left the Christian faith as a result of suffering.

Rev. Dr. Clemmer is the pastor at Bethany Lutheran Church in Naperville, IL. You can reach him at clemmer96@gmail.com.

Extra-Terrestrials, Aliens, and Christianity

Rev. Aaron Koch
Commons Annex Lecture Hall

How should we respond as Christians to reports of UFOs/UAPs (Unidentified Aerial Phenomena)? Is the possibility of alien life consistent with the Christian faith or a diversion from it? We will explore what the Bible has to say on this subject as it relates to creation, the God-given role of human beings, angels and demons, and especially the person of Jesus Christ. His incarnation and His redemption of all creation gives us the proper framework for how to approach the existence of extra-terrestrial life.

Rev. Koch is the pastor at Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in Greenfield, WI. You can reach him at pastor.koch@gmail.com.

Lament Renewed in Christ

Rev. Matthew Berry
Science 101

This sectional strives to provide youth the language, permission, and location for their laments in Christ. Our youth might know to pray, praise, thank, and serve Christ, but lament is easily overlooked or underdeveloped. By exploring the Psalms of Lament, participants can learn from David's heartfelt cries to God, Jesus' ultimate lament on the cross, and how we, as Sons and Daughters of David, can bring our own struggles before Christ. May this sectional be an opportunity for youth and adult leader alike to learn how Christ makes all things new, especially from His cross and tomb for us in our lamentation.

Rev. Barry is the pastor at Concordia Lutheran Church, Sikeston, MO. You can reach him at pastormatthewberry@gmail.com.

Real Love, Real Life

Michelle Bauman
Science 203

Love. We think about it. We want it. We wonder when we'll find it. We wonder IF we'll find it. And if we do, how long will it last . . . because, let's be honest, relationships break. Hearts break. People break. Is love really all it's cracked up to be? The simple answer is, YES! God desires to give His people life-affirming love, and one of the ways He provides the blessing of love is through marriage. Learn how to spot real love, how to grow it, and how to give it as you abide in the love of Christ. Interested in learning more about REAL LOVE and how it upholds LIFE? Join this session, young lover

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You're Depressed, Now What?

Deac. Emma Heinz
Science 301

Congratulations, you have depression! There are a million contradictory ideas about how you got depression, why you have it, and how to deal with it. Some say that medication will fix all your problems. Some say that just praying more will make it all better. How does a baptized child of God deal with depression? How should we view those who struggle with depression when their disorder leads to doubt or despair? How can a Christian faithfully suffer with depression? Short answer: Through the work of the Holy Spirit. But for a slightly longer answer, come on over!

Deac. Emma Heinz is the Registrar at Higher Things. You can reach her at registrar@higherthings.org.

They Not Like Us

Rev. Chris Hull
Science 303

We who are baptized into Christ are not like the world. The world is not like us. We are created anew in Christ to be merciful, forgiving, patient, and strong. In this breakaway, Pastor Hull will walk through how we are all 4 of these things as baptized children of God in spite of how the world wants us to be. You will hopefully grow in this breakaway in the joy of knowing that who you are, as one new in Christ, is your identity that can never be changed.

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Session D

Merciful Father - All Things New

Rev. Daniel Voth

CFAC 125 Multipurpose Room

"There was a man who had two sons." So begins one of Jesus' most famous parables. Both sons are lost and separated from their father. Can they be made new? Will they be made new? Can you be made new, not just in eternity, but here, now, in this age? Join me as we dig into Jesus' parable from Luke 15 and see how you can be made new now and for eternity because of the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev. Voth serves Immanuel Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, ND. He's also the Higher Things Catechesis Coordinator. You can reach him at rev.voth@higherthings.org.

The Language of Truth and Deception

Rev. Dr. Michael Eschelbach

CFAC 125 Multipurpose Room

John's gospel begins by referring to the second person of the Trinity as the Word of God; that Word of God who created all things by calling it into existence. Should it surprise us to notice that the focus of the devil's assaults against God's truth and grace begin at the level of words and their meanings? This session will study how the Scriptures themselves define OT and NT vocabulary and what a contrast that is with common assumptions about word meanings. Knowing the meaning of words in God's revelation is exciting because it inspires understanding and a productive place for conversations with people.

Rev. Dr. Eschelbach is at Concordia University in Irvine, CA. You can reach him at michael.eschelbach@cui.edu.

The End of Man

Rev. Jeff Hemmer
CFAC 135 - Instrumental Room

What is a human being and what is the purpose of being one? We live in a tragically dehumanizing time and culture. From AI and sex robots to transhumanism and gender reassignment, we have lost a sense that it's actually good to be a human being. Mankind has a telos—a goal—that we see in Creation and see restored in the Resurrection. Spoiler: the robots and people-haters don't win in the end.

Rev. Hemmer is the pastor at Bethany Ev. Lutheran Church in Fairview, IL. You can reach him at jeffhemmer@gmail.com.

Recalled to Life

Jocelyn Benson
CFAC 255

"It was the best times, it was the worst of times. . . ." This famous line from Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* is only the beginning. A few pages in, a mysterious message gets delivered and the return message is simply: "Recalled to life." What does this mean? *A Tale of Two Cities* helps us to grapple with life in the "now, but not yet." With Dickens, we'll ponder the baptismal realities of daily dying and rising as we live out our vocations this side of heaven.

Mrs. Bensen is the Headmaster of Wittenberg Academy. You can reach her at joyful1j@gmail.com.

10 Reasons I'm a Lutheran

Rev. Jeffrey Ware
CFAC 264

Why am I a Lutheran? I've got ten reasons for you: Lutherans are (1) TRULY CATHOLIC, (2) FAITHFUL TO SCRIPTURE, with an (3) INTELLECTUAL HUMILITY, that results in a (4) CHRIST-CENTERED, proclamation (5) of LAW AND GOSPEL, and stresses the (6) JUSTIFICATION OF THE SINNER APART FROM WORKS. Lutherans embrace a (7) SACRAMENTAL (8) CROSS-CENTERED spirituality, that gives us (9) CHRISTIAN FREEDOM to love and serve our neighbors in our various (10) callings or VOCATIONS. Discover the ten reasons I'm a Lutheran and why you should be one too.

Rev. Ware is the pastor at All Saints Lutheran Church in Charlotte, NC. He's also the Vice President of the Higher Things Board of Directors. You can reach him at rev.ware@higherthings.org.

Do Not Be Anxious

Rev. Harrison Goodman
CFAC Recital Hall

Jesus says, "Do not be anxious about anything." Yet this statement alone produces even more anxiety. But that's not all He says! There's no off switch for anxiety just because Jesus tells you not to be anxious. It isn't a question of whether you should have anxiety. It's a question of what to do with the anxiety you have. By contrasting worry and imagination, we'll tackle anxiety, what it is, what Jesus promises for those who struggle with it, and what to do with it when you have it.

Rev. Goodman is the Executive Director of Mission and Theology of Higher Things. You can reach him at rev.goodman@higherthings.org.

What Am I Worth?

Rev. Jeremiah Johnson
CFAC Swets Choral Hall 115

Whether it's a Bugatti or a baseball contract or a Van Gogh or a diamond ring or a college education, we always want to know, "What's it worth?" We want a number that tells us how important something is. And in a world that tries to put a price on everything, it's inevitable that we would turn that same question in on ourselves: What am I worth? To my friends? To my team? To my company? To my community? To God? Thankfully, Christ tells us what we're worth—His own life. This reality enables us to live confidently and to see the value in others, even when they can't.

Rev. Johnson is the pastor at Glory of Christ Lutheran Church in Plymouth, MN. You can reach him at jeremiahdj@gmail.com.

Jelly Roll Sanctification

Rev. Tim Chase & Rev. Chris Hull
Commons Annex Alumni Board Room

Things may not be going ok in life but because you are claimed by Jesus, everything is all right. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, and He does. But you need to be reminded of it on a daily basis. Take some time with Pastor Chase and Pastor Hull to go through some Biblical passages that will remind you: Even though life may appear dark, you abide in the life of Christ.

Rev. Chase is the pastor at St. Paul's Lutheran Church and School in Truman, MN. Rev. Hull serves Immanuel Lutheran Church and Student Center in Macomb, IL.

Extra-Terrestrials, Aliens, and Christianity

Rev. Aaron Koch
Commons Annex Lecture Hall

How should we respond as Christians to reports of UFOs/UAPs (Unidentified Aerial Phenomena)? Is the possibility of alien life consistent with the Christian faith or a diversion from it? We will explore what the Bible has to say on this subject as it relates to creation, the God-given role of human beings, angels and demons, and especially the person of Jesus Christ. His incarnation and His redemption of all creation gives us the proper framework for how to approach the existence of extra-terrestrial life.

Rev. Koch is the pastor at Mt. Zion Lutheran Church in Greenfield, WI. You can reach him at pastor.koch@gmail.com.

Here Am I, Send Me!

Glenn Rollins
Meeter Center Lecture Hall

Have you thought about what career you want to pursue after high school? Have you considered how your gifts, talents and abilities will inform how you can make a positive impact in this world? Have you heard the Lord asking, "Who will I send?" (Isaiah 6: 8) Come and hear about LCMS church work vocations and listen to current Concordia University church work students as they talk about how they made the decision to be sent to serve the Lord. Learn to their pathway toward a church work vocation to help you to decide upon your own vocational journey.

Mr. Rollins is with the office Set Apart to Serve from the LCMS. You can reach him at glennrollins79@gmail.com.

You're Depressed, Now What?

Deac. Emma Heinz
Science 101

Congratulations, you have depression! There are a million contradictory ideas about how you got depression, why you have it, and how to deal with it. Some say that medication will fix all your problems. Some say that just praying more will make it all better. How does a baptized child of God deal with depression? How should we view those who struggle with depression when their disorder leads to doubt or despair? How can a Christian faithfully suffer with depression? Short answer: Through the work of the Holy Spirit. But for a slightly longer answer, come on over!

Deac. Emma Heinz is the Registrar at Higher Things. You can reach her at registrar@higherthings.org.

There Is Nothing New

Rev. Daniel Burhop
Science 110

“All Things New”? Solomon seems to say something different in Ecclesiastes. “What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:10). You think something is new? Solomon says you just don’t know the past. Why does he say this? What is he, in his wisdom letting us know? The Book of Ecclesiastes seems pessimistic, but in its pessimism, we learn how to enjoy the life God has given us, even if nothing is new.

Rev. Burhop is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Reese, MI. You can reach him at pastorburhop@gmail.com.

Christian Hope, Nihilism’s Cure

Rev. Samuel Beltz
Science 203

Nihilism is the experience described by Friedrich Nietzsche, who observed that the Christian and “secular” worlds had lost their way. In both locations, the aims were lacking and the question “why?” had no good answer. This experience, Nihilism, has become a normal and persistent issue in America and its religions as well. God’s Promises of Resurrection and New Creation give hope that cures the ennui so common in Western hearts and minds. That is to say, the Resurrection of Jesus justifies, satisfies, and makes right the heart and mind, thereby converting Nihilists to Christians by the Power of the Holy Spirit. In this breakout we will explore this situation and hopefully convert some Nihilists.

Rev. Beltz is the pastor at St. John Ev. Lutheran Church in Oskaloosa, IA. You can reach him at samuel.beltz@gmail.com.

Never Die

Rev. Dr. Aaron Moldenhauer
Science 301

Jesus promises Martha, the sister of Lazarus, “everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” Never die? Jesus’ words seem to contradict our experience of life here, where we see believers taken away in death. What kind of life does Jesus give us now that we will never lose through death? This breakaway session considers Jesus’ promises around the resurrection of Lazarus to lead to a fuller understanding of life made new in Christ. We will find in Jesus’ promises the hope of new life both in this present age and in the resurrection of the dead.

Rev. Dr. Moldenhauer is at Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon, WI. You can reach him at moldenhaueraaron@gmail.com.

Singing of the New Creation

Rev. Brian Hamer
CFAC 252
Science 303

The Te Deum (“We Praise You, O God”) is one of the oldest and most enduring hymns of the church, the “fourth Creed” of Christendom (Luther), and one of the historic canticles of our liturgy. Though its authorship is uncertain, its trinitarian shape, biblical confession, and numerous musical settings have secured its place as perhaps the hymn of the New Creation. Walk through the text with an eye on Revelation 4 and 5, explore musical settings that are fitting for Lutheran worship. An informal companion to the field trip to see the Riojas Te Deum at Our Savior Lutheran Church.

Rev. Hamer is with the School of Infantry West, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton California. You can reach him at revhamer@verizon.net.

The Kingdom is Like... A.I.?

Dr. Bryan Stearns

Science Lecture Hall 010

The kingdom of God is like... artificial intelligence? God made man in His image, and man makes machines in our image. Our machines can give us perspective for what humanity is like before God. Come and discuss how A.I. shows us imagery for faith, for our dependence on the Word of God, and especially for our looking forward to Christ's return when all humanity's "training period" will be complete, when God will separate the good from the bad, and when we will be harvested for God's eternal kingdom in paradise.

Dr. Stearns is a member at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Overland, MO. You can reach him at games.bearealis@gmail.com.

Session E

How to Thrive in the Military as a Lutheran

Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana
CFAC 135 - Instrumental Room

Efficacy of Holy Scripture validates military service and the necessity of serving ones country. Also, we will explore Luther and his booklet, "Whether a Soldier Too Can Be Saved" as an understanding of citizenship and serving ones country. Finally we will dive into a brief excursion into Romans 13.

Rev. Dr. Hokana is with the Ministry to the Armed Forces in St. Louis, MO. You can reach him at hokanasteve@gmail.com.

Just a Shell? -- or NOT!

Rev. Rich Heinz
CFAC 222

A loved one has gone to the Lord, and now your family needs help planning a funeral. Aunt Janet wants "In the Garden," Cousin Emily wants some "Praise" piece you've never heard of, and Grandpa wants "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." And someone wants to give a eulogy. What is a Lutheran funeral like? How do we work through this? Join Pastor Heinz as we look at the Lutheran funeral liturgy, and talk about this great opportunity through Scripture and music selections to be a final witness of the faith we have been baptized into.

Rev. Heinz is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lowell, IN. He's also the chaplain for this conference. You can reach him at revfrhein@gmail.com.

Vocation in the Now and Not Yet

Rev. Matt Wietfeldt
CFAC 252

As Christians, we live in the tension of the “now but not yet”—redeemed by Christ and called to live with purpose, even as we await the fullness of His Kingdom. In this breakaway session, we’ll explore what it means to live out your God-given identity and purpose today, in the middle of a world that feels unfinished and uncertain. Through Scripture, discussion, and practical encouragement, you’ll discover how God works through your everyday life to serve others, share hope, and glorify Him—even as you wait for what’s still to come.

Rev. Wietfeldt is with Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN. You can reach him at matthew.wietfeldt@ctsfw.edu.

“Wake, Awake!” for Today’s Lutheran

Dr. William Lipke
CFAC 255

This is a wake-up call for today's Lutheran youth from Pastor Philipp Nicolai's famous hymn “Wake, Awake for Night is Flying”, based on Christ's Parable of the Ten Virgins—five wise and five foolish. Emphasis will be on the text's message to be ready for Christ's return and his finished work on the cross. Musical settings based on Johann Sebastian Bach's iconic cantata will be shown to be useful for today's liturgical services. This session, including live performances, will increase your understanding of Law and Gospel in Lutheran chorales as congregational members, choir members and aspiring church musicians.

Dr. Lipke is with Luther Classical College in Casper, WY. You can reach him at wlipkescholar@gmail.com.

10 Reasons I'm a Lutheran

Rev. Jeffrey Ware
CFAC 264

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Rev. Ware is the pastor at All Saints Lutheran Church in Charlotte, NC. He's also the Vice President of the Higher Things Board of Directors. You can reach him at rev.ware@higherthings.org.

Do Not Be Anxious

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Rev. Goodman is the Executive Director of Mission and Theology of Higher Things. You can reach him at rev.goodman@higherthings.org.

Hope for Porn-Darkened Eyes?

Rev. Paul Mumme
CFAC Swets Choral Hall 115

The eye is a gatekeeper, letting in either light or darkness. What happens when a Christian fixes his eyes on pixelated porn? How does it corrupt the mind, the heart, the imagination? What long-term effects are there? More importantly, is there hope for porn-darkened eyes? Come and fix your eyes on Jesus, dive into His Word, find newness of life therein, and learn how God purifies pornographic passions, rightly orders natural desire, and sanctifies sexuality. Rather than cursing the darkness, we will light a candle by bringing Christ into this discussion!

Rev. Mumme serves Saint John Lutheran Church in Sycamore, IL. He's also the Catechist for this conference. You can reach him at pastormumme@stjohnsycamore.org.

Organ Boot Camp

Paul Soulek
Chapel

The organ is the king of instruments . . . and for good reason! The organ occupies a key role in the Lutheran liturgy and in presenting the church's music. But sometimes the organ can seem a bit intimidating. What do those buttons actually do? Do you really play with your feet? And how many pipes is too many (trick question . . . you can never have too many!)? This session will explore how the organ works, what it takes to play the organ well, and what makes for a great church organist.

Paul Soulek is the Cantor at St. John Lutheran Church in Seward, NE. He also serves as the HT Cantor. You can reach him at paul.soulek@stjohnseward.org.

Youth Ministry 101

Crysten Sanchez
Commons Annex Alumni Board Room

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.

Mrs. Sanchez is the Executive Director of Operations for Higher Things. You can reach her at csanchez@higherthings.org.

Learn to Share Jesus in a Personal Way

Rev. Dr. Alfonso Espinosa
Commons Annex Lecture Hall

Rev. Dr. Espinosa will present “The Engagement Triangle” from his 2021 CPH book “Faith That Engages the Culture” that takes away the fear and intimidation of sharing the Gospel with others. This is a natural approach that invests in relationships, loving people over programs, using a very simple and biblical approach to engage others for Christ. Come and learn the 3-parts of the triangle: Perspective, People, and Place so that anyone can share the Gospel in a loving way.

Rev. Dr. Espinosa serves St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Irvine, CA. You can reach him at rev.dr.espinosa@gmail.com.

Friend or Foe? or Friend and Foe?

Todd Schenider
Meeter Center Lecture Hall

Friendship is a blessing. Friends are fun to hang out with, to share moments with, to talk with, and be there for each other. But can some friends also be pulling you away from Christ and His Church? Should you be friends with non-believers or non-Lutherans? In this session we will discuss how you might determine if your friends are at risk of causing you harm. We'll look at what Scripture teaches us about the company we keep and look to the 10 Commandments to see how it can be applied to our circle of friends.

Mr. Schneider is with Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Columbus, OH. You can reach him at schneitodd@gmail.com.

Lament Renewed in Christ

Rev. Matthew Berry
Science 101

This sectional strives to provide youth the language, permission, and location for their laments in Christ. Our youth might know to pray, praise, thank, and serve Christ, but lament is easily overlooked or underdeveloped. By exploring the Psalms of Lament, participants can learn from David's heartfelt cries to God, Jesus' ultimate lament on the cross, and how we, as Sons and Daughters of David, can bring our own struggles before Christ. May this sectional be an opportunity for youth and adult leader alike to learn how Christ makes all things new, especially from His cross and tomb for us in our lamentation.

Rev. Barry is the pastor at Concordia Lutheran Church, Sikeston, MO. You can reach him at pastormatthewberry@gmail.com.

There Is Nothing New

Rev. Daniel Burhop
Science 110

"All Things New"? Solomon seems to say something different in Ecclesiastes. "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:10). You think something is new? Solomon says you just don't know the past. Why does he say this? What is he, in his wisdom letting us know? The Book of Ecclesiastes seems pessimistic, but in its pessimism, we learn how to enjoy the life God has given us, even if nothing is new.

Rev. Burhop is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Reese, MI. You can reach him at pastorburhop@gmail.com.

What's so funny? Humor and the New Life

Rev. David Solum

Science 203

What is the place of humor in the Christian life? Can I laugh when I carry around the burden of this sack of flesh, live in a bad news world, and am constantly under the attack of the devil? Fear, anxiety, depression, and anger are all in the devil's play book to make you think that Christ's death and resurrection were not for you, or that they have no impact on you for the here and now. Learn how to deal with the devil using a humor that keeps the Gospel in the forefront of our hearts and minds.

Rev. Solum serves Immanuel Lutheran Church in Michigan City, IN. You can reach him at solumdr@gmail.com.

Never Die

Rev. Dr. Aaron Moldenhauer

Science 301

Jesus promises Martha, the sister of Lazarus, "everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die." Never die? Jesus' words seem to contradict our experience of life here, where we see believers taken away in death. What kind of life does Jesus give us now that we will never lose through death? This breakaway session considers Jesus' promises around the resurrection of Lazarus to lead to a fuller understanding of life made new in Christ. We will find in Jesus' promises the hope of new life both in this present age and in the resurrection of the dead.

Rev. Dr. Moldenhauer is at Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon, WI. You can reach him at moldenhaueraaron@gmail.com.

A Good and Virtuous Life

Rev. Jeremy Swem
Science 303

What does it mean to live a good and virtuous life? Today some would advocate digging deeply into your inner life to find happiness, satisfaction, and a sense of purpose or meaning. Thousands of years ago, Aristotle advocated something different—choosing to do that which is good. By practicing defined virtues, and avoiding vices, he taught one could live a good life. Drawing from Aristotle, Roman Catholic theologians like Pope Gregory I and Thomas Aquinas taught something similar using seven vices and virtues. Martin Luther takes a different approach. Come hear from Luther's preaching the source of a good and virtuous life and how we are to achieve it.

Rev. Swem serves Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, MI. You can reach him at jswem@oursavior-gr.org.