



Hope Ev. Lutheran Church

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✠ THE HOPE LUTHERAN ✠

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Practicing Our Faith in the Voting Booth

On November 3 we get to practice one of our most sacred privileges—voting. The U.S. General Election will give us the opportunity to practice our citizenship. But will we also practice our Christian faith as we vote?

When we go to the polls, we will vote for leaders of our city, state, and nation. We will also vote on important matters of policy or funding. Will we also use this privilege of voting to put our Christian beliefs into practice for good of our neighbors in society?

This may sound like a strange question, especially if we buy into the popular misconception of “the separation between church and state.” We may be told that there should be an iron wall dividing church from state; however, that’s not what God’s Word teaches us (nor does it fit with our nation’s founding, but that’s a different topic).

Government & Politics: Gifts from God

Both the Bible and our Lutheran Confessions teach us to view government and politics as gifts from God. St. Paul exhorts, “*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God*” (Romans 13:1). The Apostle also urges “*supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving,*” especially “*for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way*” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

The Augsburg Confession says this about “Civil Government”:

“Our churches teach that lawful civil regulations are good works of God. They teach that it is right for Christians to hold political office, to serve as judges, to judge matters by imperial laws and other existing

laws, to impose just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to take oaths when required by the magistrates, for a man to marry a wife, or a woman to be given in marriage” (AC, XVI, 1-2).

Since God gives us the governing authorities, we Christians are free to take part in the political process, both by voting and by holding offices. Now someone may ask: “Why would I want to take part in that ugly mess of politics?” Here’s where the rubber of our Christian faith hits the road of our society.

Making a Difference in Society

We Christians are sometimes criticized for being “so heavenly minded” that we are of “no earthly good.” However, God does want us to live in and make a difference in our society. That’s why He has placed us in this country, at this time in history. Our gracious God does want us to be of earthly good. After all, it’s His earth, and He has redeemed us by the blood of Christ to make us salt and light in the world (see Matthew 5:13-16).

The Bible gives good examples of God’s people getting involved in the messy stuff of politics and society. King David not only wrote marvelous Psalms and taught us how to worship our merciful God, but he also ruled and defended the greatest superpower of his day—the nation of Israel—for forty years.

A few centuries later God sent His people into exile in Babylon, judging them for their faithless ways of life and worship through the years. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God exhorted His exiled people to “*seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its*

behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:7).

After the Persian Empire overtook the Babylonian Empire, God's people were persecuted for worshiping only the one true God. Young Queen Esther belonged to God's people. When she heard of the plot to exterminate her people, she took action. She risked her very life by going into the king uninvited and telling him of the plot. (Going into the king uninvited usually brought swift execution!) Esther's cousin, Mordecai, who also raised the beautiful young queen, encouraged her with these words: "Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14. Read the whole book of Esther for how God delivers His people during a national crisis.)

In the same way, you and I have come to our nation for such a time as this—to make a difference in the world. So, let's seek the peace of the city, state, and nation where we sojourn, and we will have peace. We get to do that, first and foremost, by practicing our faith when we go to the voting booth.

Dr. Robert Kolb has some good pearls of wisdom in his book *Teaching God's Children His Teaching*.¹ Here are some snippets:

"Believers are also called to make a difference in the formal aspects of societal life, in their political communities" (147).

"Christians are called to active involvement in the political life of their nation.

"However, they do not participate in the political process with a 'Christian' agenda; they rather seek the practice of civic righteousness, the righteousness which common sense should show all people is the best way to live.... We cannot impose faith in God through law upon the unbelievers, but through law and political persuasion we can impose external compliance with large portions of God's design for our lives.

"Therefore, Christian citizens will not have any delusions about the possibility of making theirs a 'Christian nation.'... Culture and Christ can never be bride and bridegroom. Christ's bride is alone the church of believers.

"Nonetheless, God does want His people involved in the often 'dirty' and

compromising work of making civil society more harmonious" (148-149).

For Such a Time as This?

It's easy to lament the sorry state of our society—pandemic, economic woes, unemployment, undermining of marriage and our religious liberties, undesirable candidates, etc. We may ask, "What can any of us do about any of it?" But consider this: one likely reason we are in such a sorry state in our country is because we Christians have grown lax in participating in society and politics. We have left the "public square" to those who deny the true God.

We Christians, however, can make a difference. It is why God has put us here.

As we go to the polls, I urge and encourage you to put your faith into practice as you vote—no, not to make a "Christian nation," but to keep and enforce God's laws the best that we can. Plan ahead and be informed on the issues. Study up on the candidates and know where they stand in their policy positions. It's all part of being God's salt and light in a dirty and rotten world.

As you vote for various officials and ballot measures, think specifically of how you can practice your Christian faith in the voting booth. Look for candidates who protect God's gift of life from womb to tomb. After all, God's gift of life is most sacred and He calls us to protect it. Look for candidates who defend marriage as God's estate between one man and one woman. Look for candidates who respect and will restore our religious liberties as specified in the First Amendment of our nation's Constitution. These are specific, concrete issues that call for our Christian faith to be practiced in the voting booth.

Yes, God put us here for a reason—to work for the good of people all around us, even if they are not Christians. We certainly practice our faith as we participate in the political process, and we seek to improve all of society so that it can be more in line with how God designs all of life. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

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¹ Robert Kolb, *Teaching God's Children His Teaching: A Guide for the Study of Luther's Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Press), second edition, 2012.

LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter article – November 2020

Our Father in heaven has claimed us as His own. By the shedding of His Son's blood, His death for our sins, and His resurrection for our justification, God the Father has received us back into His family. By water – combined with His Word, promise, and Name – the Holy Spirit has taken up residence in us. ...

We belong to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is in us, and we are in Him. And, being in Him, all things are ours. In Him, we are richly and abundantly blessed.

Our true treasure is that we belong to the most Holy Trinity, and everything that is His – righteousness, peace, eternal life – also belongs also to us. Even our temporal treasures are gifts from His fatherly divine goodness and mercy.

We receive our treasures from Him, and thus, as good stewards of His varied grace, we manage them in such a way that they may be returned to Him. We bring them to Him, hallowed through prayers of thanksgiving and God's holy Word, as a sacrifice.

Thus, all our possessions, as gifts from God, are also sacrifices to Him. We eat to nourish our bodies. We share with our family, neighbors, fellow Christians, the poor, and even our enemies as holy things given by the holy God. His temporal gifts are blessings to and for us, and they bring blessings upon us even as they are pressed into His service for His kingdom.

Thus, we place all that we have into God's hands, and He never fails to remember us. He pours out the fullness of His promises upon us. We give thanks for all that He has done, is doing, and will continue to do. We give thanks

by not taking for ourselves, but giving to all even as our heavenly Father has given to us.

As we prepare for the celebrations of Thanksgiving, may we all give thanks continually for all that we are and all that we have because of God's providential care. And may we be all the more diligent in bringing everything that we have received from God to Him, so that He may bless it and employ it for the good of all – even for us. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance.



Worship: Like an Old Tennis Shoe

Participating in the liturgy should be like wearing pair of old tennis shoes or a well-worn pair of jeans. We should be so familiar with the liturgy that we don't even think about the liturgy itself, just as when we don't even think about that favorite pair of jeans or tennis shoes. When jeans and tennis shoes are well-worn and stay the same, we can focus on other things that we have to do; we don't have to fuss and fidget over the stiffness of new shoes or the discomfort of jeans not yet broken in.

*In the Church's worship, we want the liturgy to be so familiar that we don't have to focus on it, but rather on God Himself. The great Christian writer C. S. Lewis once corresponded with one of his friends on the topic of prayer. This correspondence comes to us in the book called *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*. While these letters from Lewis wanted focused mainly on private prayer, he did give this little gem on public worship, a gem that is just as appropriate and necessary now as when it was written. What Lewis says of Anglican clergymen is also very appropriate for Lutheran clergymen today.*

I think our business as laymen is to take what we are given and make the best of it. And I think we should find this a great deal easier if what we were given was always and everywhere the same.

To judge from their practice, very few Anglican clergymen take this view. It looks as if they believed people can be lured to go to church by incessant brightenings, lightnings, lengthenings, abridgements, simplifications, and complications of the service. And it is probably true that a new, keen vicar will usually be able to form within a parish a minority who are in favour of his innovations. The majority, I believe, never are. Those who remain—many give up churchgoing altogether—merely endure.

Is this simply because the majority are hide-bound? I think not. They have a good reason

for their conservatism. Novelty, simply as such, can have only an entertainment value. And they don't go to church to be entertained. They go to *use* the service, or, if you prefer, to *enact* it. Every service is a structure of acts and words through which we receive a sacrament, or repent, or supplicate, or adore. And it enables us to do these things best—if you like, it “works” best—when, through long familiarity, we don't have to think about it. As long as you notice, and have to count, the steps, you are not yet dancing but only learning to dance. A good shoe is a shoe you don't notice. Good reading becomes possible when you need not consciously think about eyes, or light, or print, or spelling. The perfect church service would be one we were almost

unaware of; our attention would have been on God.

But every novelty prevents this. It fixes our attention on the service itself; and thinking about worship is a different thing from worshipping. The important question about the Grail is “for what does it serve?” “’Tis mad idolatry that makes the service greater than the god.”

A still worse thing may happen. Novelty may fix our attention not even on the service but on the celebrant. You know what I mean. Try as one may to

exclude it, the question “What on earth is he up to now?” will intrude. It lays one's devotion waste. There is really some excuse for the man who said, “I wish they'd remember that the charge to Peter was Feed my sheep; not Try experiments on my rats, or even, Teach my performing dogs new tricks” (*Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, p. 4-5).



In the Sunday **Divine Service** God Himself comes in our midst to serve us through His Word and Sacrament. The *Augsburg Confession* makes this simple and profound statement about our worship: *“All ceremonies should serve the purpose of teaching the people what they need to know about Christ”* (AC, 24:3). That’s indeed what our liturgy does every Sunday. Here’s what we will hear and learn about Christ in the month of November:

Date	Day in Church Year	Gospel Reading	Gospel Focus (Theme of the Day)
November 1	All Saints’ Day	Matthew 5:1-12	End Time Christian Hope: Christ’s blessing for saints in heaven & on earth. Saints on earth suffer all sorts of shame, dishonor and persecution. But that does not deter us, because Jesus promises a greater gift in heaven, now enjoyed by saints who have gone before us.
November 8	22nd Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 18:21-35	The Unmerciful Servant – You and the person who has wronged you are both in great debt to God. You continue living only because God bears with you and forgives your debt! Whoever refuses to forgive his brother or sister in Christ puts himself outside of God’s grace.
November 15	23rd Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 22:15-22	Claims of the State: The state has a certain claim on you; it serves you; give back to the state what belongs it. But above all, give back to God what belongs to God! You are to give your whole self as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, for God alone has the total claim on all of you.
November 22	Last Sunday of the Church Year	Matthew 25:1-13	End Time Christian Hope: prepared and waiting for Christ’s return. Only those who are prepared by God’s Word and Sacraments will enter the heavenly wedding feast with Bridegroom Jesus. Thus we live prepared and focused on Christ.
November 29	1st Sunday in Advent	Matthew 21:1-9	The Lord who Comes – The Lord Jesus enters Jerusalem to shouts of joy: <i>Behold, your King comes; He is just and having salvation.</i>



Christian Friends of New Americans Invites
you ...

ALL NEW VIRTUAL TRIVIA BENEFIT NOVEMBER 7 and 14, 2020

CFNA’s Annual Trivia Benefit raises funds for ministry among refugees and immigrants—so important in this Covid-19 crisis. Play Trivia

either night or both nights to support the work of CFNA. This year we invite you to enjoy CFNA "Around the World" Entertainment and Virtual Trivia via Zoom. Check it out and register now: www.cfna-stl.org/trivia-night/

The deadline to register is Nov. 5 or when full. We are limited by technology, so REGISTER EARLY and gather a team. (\$20/person/night or \$160/Team of 8/night -- Mulligans are also available at registration) CFNA "Around the World" Entertainment begins online at 6:30 p.m. CST and Trivia Questions start 7:00 p.m. CST.

Unusual times call for the new ADVENTURE of CFNA Virtual Trivia Benefit – almost like CFNA's first 12 Trivia Nights. Registered players will receive a ZOOM link (plus more info) and will sign-in with the Host after 6:00 p.m. CST (on either Nov. 7 or Nov. 14). Players will watch Entertainment at 6:30 CST and be ready for Trivia Questions at 7:00 CST. After each round, teams (at up to 4 locations) go to their own break-out rooms to answer questions.

If you choose to just watch the event and support CFNA in another way, "Around the World" Entertainment and Virtual Trivia can be viewed on [facebook.com/cfna-stlouis](https://www.facebook.com/cfna-stlouis) starting at 6:30 p.m. CST on November 7 and 14.



Christian Friends of New Americans Invites
you...

ALL NEW VIRTUAL SILENT AUCTION BENEFIT

Bidding open November 7 through 14, 2020 CFNA's Annual Silent Auction Benefit raises funds for ministry among refugees and immigrants—so important in this Covid-19 crisis.

Enjoy CFNA's VIRTUAL SILENT AUCTION. Your purchases will help support CFNA and encourage many small businesses

throughout the St. Louis area! Bidding will start at 7:00 a.m. on November 7 and the Auction will close November 14 at 9:00 p.m. A simple "Donate Now" button is also available to support CFNA and as always at the website: <http://www.cfna-stl.org/opportunities/> At this time (until Nov. 5, Tues.) there is still opportunity to DONATE AN ITEM OR SERVICE (Call 314-517-8513 or email buckmancal@aol.com to make arrangements).



To safely continue this time-honored tradition, the 2020 Holiday Home Tour will be hosted virtually for all to enjoy from the comforts of home.

\$25 TICKETS AVAILABLE TODAY!
Purchase your tickets now by texting
HOLIDAY to 345345.

You will receive a private access code to watch the guided tour from your favorite device beginning December 12, 2020. Your purchase supports mental health services for families in crisis, young women facing unexpected pregnancies, and forever families created through adoption.

For more information, email Christy O'Neal or call 573-380-5277.



November 2020

Phone #314-352-0014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 All Saints' Day 9:00 Divine Service & LIVE STREAM 10:30 Bible Class/ SSchool 11:45 Voters' Assembly	2	3	4 7:00 pm Divine Service	5	6	7 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
8 Trinity 22 9:00 Divine Service & LIVE STREAM 10:30 Bible Class/ SSchool 11:45 Confirmation class	9 7:00pm Board of Elders	10	11 7:00 pm Divine Service	12	13	14 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
15 Trinity 23 9:00 Divine Service & LIVE STREAM 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 11:45 Confirmation class	16	17	18 7:00 pm Divine Service	19	20	21 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
22 Last Sunday of the Church Year(Trinity 27) 9:00 Divine Service & LIVE STREAM 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 11:45 Confirmation	23	24	25 7:00 pm Divine Service	26 <i>Thanksgiving Day</i> 9:30 Matins Church office closed	27 Church office closed	28 <i>Pastor's day off</i>
29 Advent 1 9:00 Divine Service & LIVE STREAM 10:30 Bible Class/ Sunday School 11:45 Confirmation class	30			Altar Guild: 1 Spyers/Truebe 8 Asbury/Bergdolt 15 Brown/Patton 22 Keller/Janssen 29 Spyers/Truebe		