

Remove from among yourselves all bitterness and anger and wrath and shouting and blasphemy with every form of evil. And be useful, compassionate, free-giving to one another, even as God in Christ has given freely unto you.

—Eph. 4.31-32



Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls
And bid resentment cease;
Then, bound to all in bonds of love,
Our lives will spread Your peace.

—“Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive”,
Lutheran Service Book #843, stz. 4

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Wenn ihr betet wollt und ihr habt einem anderen etwas vorzuwerfen, dann vergebt ihm, damit auch euer Vater im Himmel euch eure Verfehlungen vergibt (Lutherbibel 1984).

When you would pray and you have something from another to reproach, then forgive him, so that your Father in heaven also forgives your transgressions (personal translation)

—Mark 11,25

More than anything, prayer is a gift from God to us, for us to use—but on His terms, of course, and not ours.

That little caveat at the end is, as usual, somewhat of a bitter pill to swallow. So often, we do not pray, and thus use prayer on our terms, in the form of simply not praying at all, and thus unquestionably misusing God’s gift of prayer. Perhaps not nearly as often, nevertheless often enough, we use prayer on our terms in a completely different way—“Can we pray about it?”: a classic passive-aggressive stroke used solely to communicate our personal displeasure and higher moral ground concerning the personal objection-at-hand, a sentiment then confirmed and advanced further through the actual prayer uttered.

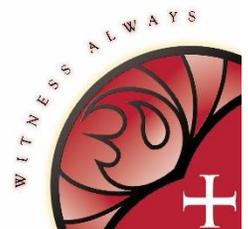
These uses, of course, do not reflect God’s terms for His gift of prayer. Much better, of course, is to take God up on His terms with respect to His gift: kill the Old Adam, pursue mercy, forgive the other, *be* the neighbor that all the others are commanded to love—and then, go to your closet (where no recipient of your passive-aggressive behavior would either desire or even dare to dwell), and pray, knowing that your words fully resonate with the promise of the Lord Jesus Himself, who even now intercedes for you, with the scars of His Passion on your behalf in resurrected flesh in full divine view for all eternity.

God’s gifts, God’s terms, God’s use—there truly is no better way!

Such trust in the divine promise and in the merits of Christ must provide the basis for prayer.

—Apology of the Augsburg Confession, XXI ¶ 20

Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds, *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 240.





Let Us Pray . . .

- In thanksgiving for our baptismal life with God
- For honest resolve toward truth and the good among our elected leaders
- In thanksgiving for recovery and renewed health and vigor
- For continued contentedness among our family and friends
- For clarity and insight into new possibilities
- For informed guidance for the *Lukaskirche* musical outreach plan



Die Klosterkirche St. Mang,
Füssen, Germany

Beschäftigung, Erholung, Erneuerung

December found us steadily busy, as is normal during Advent and Christmas, which was a blessed and lovely time for us, as we pray that it was for you. On account of vacancies at nearby congregations, requiring my German colleague to be away, I was needed more in Leipzig to preside and preach. For nearly all other services, I was needed to play the organ. Life was never dull, yet we paced ourselves in general for the sake of the family as well as for the sake of staying healthy for our vacation at the end of the month, which was a truly wonderful time. Sure enough, however, all three of the children got sick (in succession, of course, while overlapping each other) as 2016 turned the corner, and I, one of the caregivers, got sick. Up to the penning of this *Letter*, Elizabeth has remained free of all of this, thankfully. Not even one month into the New Year, a new phase of health has begun.

Änderungen, Möglichkeiten, und ein neues Projekt

In agreement with the recommendations of the architect, the Leipzig congregational leadership has approved a renovation process for *Lukaskirche* that begins with the renovation of the toilets and the envisioned catechesis room, meaning that the organ renovation has been delayed, meaning that I'm altering my original plan accordingly. Concurrently, other growing edges are emerging in the region, to which I, in concept, can lend my hand, and I have been involved in a fair amount of personal and communal strategy concerning those items. Also, I've been asked to serve as a Professional Reviewer for the new Altar Book to be mandated for use in the Ingrian Lutheran Church, a request that I happily accepted. Finally, and most happily, I'll be beginning conversations on the Christian faith with a young refugee who was relocated to Leipzig just one month ago. Pray that, in all things, Jesus Christ is proclaimed and confessed!

Elizabeth's Ecke

In addition to carrying on the regular work of keeping the Eurasia Blog and the Eurasia Facebook page up to date, I have been excited to start meeting with my fellow LCMS Eurasia women via a Webinar software for a time of Bible study. This has been a much needed addition and the first one took place on January 19. I am teaching a Promised Seed Bible study I used a few years ago at King of Kings in Round Rock, TX (hello to all my "seeds"!). It's fun to get back into teaching, something I don't feel up to doing *auf Deutsch*, and so had not had opportunity to do.

The children continue to do well. Matthias turns three this weekend (time goes by so quickly!) and will have a dinosaur party with some close family friends. He is a ball of energy and mischief, but always returns to loving and sweet. Right now he "loves" everything. "I love you, bread." Dinosaurs: "I love you, 'ceratops." "I love you Helene, Mädchen." Helene is rolling, scooting and otherwise getting around. She is thinking very hard about crawling. She says, "Ma, ma, ma, ma" and "Da, da, da, da," and, Thomas claims, "ba ba ba ba" for "brothers." Thomas continues doing very well in school. He loves to read in English and German. He is reading the Narnia books to himself (in English)!



May God in Christ through the Spirit bless you now and forever.

Christopher & Elizabeth

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