

Happenings At Hope

July - August 2016 ~ Vol. 3, No. 4

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Worship & Study

Bible Class & Sunday School

9:30am

The Divine Service

Sundays 10:30am

Wednesdays 7pm

Ladies' & Men's Bible Studies

1st and 2nd Saturdays of the month respectively, at 9am

Hope Lutheran Church

2930 W 9000 S

West Jordan, UT 84088

westjordanlutherans.org

Pastor Paul Webber

Office: (801)569-1111

Cell: (385)222-0808



Evangelical
Lutheran
Synod

From the Pastor

Dear members and friends of Hope Lutheran Church. It won't surprise you when I say that July is a month that I have been looking forward to for some time. As I write this, my wife and I are on "any time now" status for the birth of our third child. Hopefully by the time most of you are reading these words, we will have already welcomed him into the world.

But even though the arrival of our next baby is certainly a big deal, it isn't the only reason why I have been looking forward to July. At the end of the month I will be taking four of the teens from our congregation to the national youth convention of our synod. At this "LYA" (Lutheran Youth Association) convention, our young people will be able to do something that they aren't usually able to do—interact, learn, and worship with hundreds of teens who have the same faith and worldview that they do. And, I won't pretend that I'm not looking forward to seeing some of my own friends from college and seminary, who like me will be there with young people from congregations where they are either members or pastors.

But the LYA convention will take place at the very end of the month. There is another event which takes place at the beginning of the month—our national day of independence. The ethics of the war for independence which was fought by our literal and/or figurative ancestors is one over which Christians have always struggled. Was it right for our forefathers to do what they did in fighting to throw off the power of King George III and the English Parliament?

In this issue of *Happenings at Hope* you will find only two articles. One has to do with that

very question—can the American Revolution be justified? The other is essentially a preview of part of the presentation that I will be making at the youth convention. The latter will take the place of the usual liturgy study, which will resume in the next issue. May God bless and keep you all during these summer months.

– Pastor Webber

Why These Same Old Songs?

The music that you hear in church is very different from the music that you hear on the radio. There are several reasons for this. The first is the purpose that the music, and just the music, of the Church is meant to serve. The worship of the Church is when Christians are gathered together around God's Word and Sacraments. They are gathered together; in other words they are united.

The unity of mind and spirit in the church is brought about by the word of God. And, the unity of mind and spirit in the church should be supported by the way in which the church functions, including the music which guides the way in which the church worships.

To put it plainly, there is not one, single, genre of music which is preferred by all the members of Hope Lutheran Church, or any Church for that matter. As a general rule, people prefer the music that they listened to when they were in their teens and twenties. So if the Church were to either pick a certain era of popular music for use in worship, or if the Church were to tie itself to the ever-changing pop music scene, then it would be impossible for many Christians to not feel like they have been culturally “left in the dust.”

This is one of purely practical reasons for retaining the traditional music of the Church. It is a genre of music on which everyone can agree, because it is a genre of music which inherently doesn't care about agreement. Even though the music of the liturgy and hymns of the Church would seem to fall into the camp of what is called “classical music,” that doesn't mean that all of the music of the church was written a long time ago.

It is true that many of our hymns are old, and it is true that essentially all the music of the historic liturgy is *very old*. But there are also new hymns being written right now. And there will continue to be Christian composers who will create new hymns and new musical arrangements of the liturgy. These additions will not be good or bad *because* they are old or new. They will be good or bad because they either do or don't accomplish the purpose which is meant for the music of the Church.

One of these purposes, the one stated above, is to not pick the musical tastes of one generation over another. This includes the way in which we perceive music. When you are sitting or standing in church, the music which you hear and sing shouldn't remind you of a

Holy Ghost, with Light Divine

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A. Reed, 1788-1862, alt.

SONG 13
O. Gibbons, 1583-1625

1. Ho - ly Ghost, with pow'r, Shine up -
2. Let me see thy Sav'r, Let me
3. Ho - ly Ghost, with joy, Cleanse this
4. Ho - ly Ghost, with joy, Cheer this

on this heart of mine; Chase the shades of
all His beau - ties; Show those glo - rious
guilt - y heart of mine; In Thy mer - cy
sad - dened heart of mine; Yield a sa - cred,

night a - way; Turn the dark - ness in - to day,
truths to me; Which are on - ly known to Thee.
pit - y me; From sin's bond - age set me free.
set - tled peace; Let it grow and still in - crease.



rock concert that you recently attended. The music of the Church should remind you of *Church*.

And another purpose of Church music has to do with what worship is. Christian worship is not, primarily, something that we Christians do. The fundamental purpose of worship, and the structure around which the worship of the Church is built, is the fact that we need to receive what God gives us in the means of grace. The three pillars of the liturgy are; Confession and Absolution, the reading and preaching of God's Word, and the reception of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. This is the primary reason why we come to church, not to give but to receive. It is only after we have been “given” by God that we give back to Him. And when we do so, *we* do it.

Worship is not a show that we watch. Worship is something in which we actively participate. To give thanks to God, and to proclaim to all the wonders of what He has done, is a right and privilege which God has given to all his redeemed children, not just to those whom He has also blessed with above-average musical abilities. This is not to say that every Christian necessarily has a good singing voice. But what this does mean is that the music of the worship of the Church needs to be the sort that is meant to be sung by a lot of people, not just a select few.

When visitors attend services at Hope, one of the questions which I always ask them was “what did you think of the service?” And, one of the most common replies to that question is that they are surprised/amazed at how much the congregation sings. (They also usually express surprise at how good the singing at Hope is, given the fact that we aren't a very large congregation) They are surprised by this because congregational singing, including how large a part it plays, is one of the distinctive markers of Lutheran Worship.

So this is why we keep using these “same old songs” in worship. The genre of church music is one on which everyone can agree, because it is a genre on which no one agrees. And, church music is not meant to only be watched and listened to. It is a genre of music which is meant to include everyone. God has blessed all of us with his gifts of faith, forgiveness, and salvation. And just as we have all been blessed, so also we all have the right to return our thanks. The style of music which we use in church should reflect this universal right. All to whom God has given a voice and faith should be able to use that voice *in* faith.

– Pastor Webber



*Magdeburg,
Germany in the
year 1600*

A Lutheran Understanding of Political Resistance

Lutherans have a reputation for being *quietists*—for not wanting to “rock the boat” but instead accepting the existing political order. While people like Thomas Muentzer, a radical Anabaptist leader, was promoting the Peasant Revolt of 1525, Luther called for obedience to the state. In the view of many Lutherans even today, the American colonists committed a sin by declaring their independence from England in 1776. Such, however, is not the only Lutheran way of thinking, nor does this thinking necessarily reflect Luther’s own view of the duties of citizens and of Christian magistrates in the face of tyranny.

Throughout his life, Luther’s default position remained obedience to the state. However, in the 1530s he became more open to political resistance than he had been during the 1520s. One turning point in Luther’s thinking came in 1530, when Lutheran lawyers met with Lutheran theologians in the city of Torgau. The result of this meeting, called *The Torgau Declaration*, acknowledged that under the constitution of the Holy Roman Empire, the emperor was *not* entitled to absolute obedience by local magistrates or their subjects. Rather, political power was shared between the emperor and the local magistrates, particularly with those magistrates who served as electors of the emperor. The electors had the responsibility not only to choose who the emperor should be, but also to hold that officeholder accountable to his office. Accordingly, the doctrine of the divine right of kings had to be adjusted to recognize that no monarch wields unconditional power.

In the years following *The Torgau Declaration*, Lutheran theologians and lawyers continued to unpack all of its the implications, even as their political rights in Saxony fell increasingly under the threat of Emperor Charles V, who had sided with the Roman Papacy against the Lutheran Reformation. In response to this threat, local princes formed the Schmalkaldic League to prepare for the protection of the Lutheran church. They did so under a principle that came to be known as interposition—the duty of a lesser magistrate to *interpose*, or place himself between, a tyrannical higher magistrate and the people.

Such an interposition was what had spared Luther’s own life following the Diet of Worms in 1521. His prince, Frederick the Wise, staged a kidnapping of Luther to protect him from the Edict of Worms. That edict, which had been adopted by a dubious constitutional procedure¹, had declared Luther an outlaw and demanded that local magistrates assist in apprehending him; anyone who found him could kill him without fear of punishment.



¹ Luther had been promised safety to and from the Diet of Worms, but this promise was revoked with the justification that one was not obligated to keep a promise made to a heretic.

For as long as Luther was alive, Charles V did not take any military action against his Lutheran subjects. But following Luther's death in 1546, Charles V renewed the pressure for Luther's followers to return to the Roman Church. Following a brief conflict, Charles tried to force his Lutheran subjects to accept *the Augsburg Interim*. This would have allowed Lutherans to retain some of their teachings, but it also would have required them to adopt the Roman Catholic position on other doctrines.

Lutheran theologians were split: some thought that the only way to retain some of the good that had been accomplished by the Reformation was to compromise, while others insisted that no compromise was possible when the Word of God addresses a matter so clearly. Local magistrates also were divided. Some chose to make their peace with the Emperor. Others chose political resistance; most notably, the city of Magdeburg withstood a 400-day siege.

The Lutheran theologians of Magdeburg not only supported their magistrates in resisting the Augsburg Interim, they also wrote a confession of faith justifying their decision. *The Magdeburg Confession* of 1550 closely tracks both Luther's own writings and the Torgau Declaration. Whenever possible, citizens should obey the state. The church should not meddle in civil affairs, nor the state meddle in theological matters, but rather each should respect what Lutherans call the Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms.

The Magdeburg theologians were by no means eager for revolt. That being said, Romans 13 was not to be interpreted as a *carte blanche* endorsement of the current ruler, nor as an unqualified demand that citizens obey the ruler's every whim. The "authorities ... appointed by God" (Romans 13:1) and "every ordinance of man" (1 Peter 2:13), to whom people were subject, referred not so much to individuals who held an office but rather to the constitutionally defined office itself.

The Magdeburg confessors argued that when the person inhabiting an office of civil authority transgresses the constitutional limits of his power, then those beneath him are not obligated to follow him in that breach, but rather may resist and correct him.

Specifically, lower magistrates have the duty, according to their own vocations from God, to interpose for the protection of the people when a higher officer becomes a tyrant.

The Magdeburg confessors did not intend to invite anyone to resist at the smallest breach; rather, their confession identified four levels of injustice, and the appropriate response to each one.

Even though Charles V had violated both the political and religious rights of his citizens, the rulers of Magdeburg still implored him to restore their rights. They offered to renew their obedience to him, if only he would restrain himself to the proper boundaries of his office.

Ultimately, one of the German princes who had sided with Charles V against his fellow Lutherans reversed his position. Charles V never achieved his dream of a Europe united under the Roman Catholic Church. *The Magdeburg Confession* had exposed his political tactics as tyrannical and his theological posture as diabolical, and the people of Magdeburg had

4 Levels of Injustice

Level 1 The "Not Excessively Atrocious" Governor

Level 2 The Lawless Tyrant

Level 3 The Coercive Tyrant

Level 4 The Persecutor of God

Adapted from the *Magdeburg Confession* (1550)

www.intoyourhandsllc.com/interposition

demonstrated both their right and their resolve to resist such tyranny under the protection of their local magistrates.

In a sense, the Magdeburg confessors are America's "Lutheran founding fathers"; their resistance during 1550–1551 left a legacy that can be traced into the political and theological culture of colonial America. No, the Declaration of Independence and the Magdeburg Confession are not identical. In fact, Lutherans today may continue to disagree in good conscience over whether the American Revolution was justified. Even so, some connections may be drawn, the clearest of which is this: *that Romans 13 does not insist upon unqualified obedience to an officer but rather God-fearing obedience to an office, and that each office is defined by the operative constitution.*

In the case of Magdeburg, Charles V clearly had progressed to a level 4 injustice; in the American situation, arguably the British empire had only progressed to level 2 or 3, violating rights that the British constitution had designated for local assemblies and local subjects. Whereas the Magdeburg Confession affirms a *duty* to resist against a level 4 injustice, the confessors conceded only the *permission* to resist, upon prudent deliberation, against lesser injuries.

The question is then, did the lesser magistrates who gathered in Philadelphia in 1776 have sufficient cause to declare independence? The Continental Congress, first convening in 1774, had certainly been in no hurry to declare independence, but by July 4, 1776, the delegates adopted the following statement:



When a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.—Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government.

The delegates, as representatives of their respective colonial assemblies, resolved to sever the political bonds connecting themselves to the imperial British government. Their actions mean that Romans 13 could no longer mean obedience to *both* the local magistrates and to the imperial government; each American had to choose one or the other. Perhaps some of them made the decision from sinful motivation. It does not follow, however, that all of the signers of the Declaration did so in sinful rebellion. For many of America's founding fathers, their letters, diaries, and public speeches consistently indicate that their resistance came reluctantly, and that their desire for reconciliation with the Crown had been sincere through the close of 1775. Only when such reconciliation had become impossible did they ultimately declare independence.

Not a single Lutheran signed the Declaration of Independence, but it seems appropriate that one might have done so had he been a colonial delegate. Lutherans did later serve at the conventions drafting the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution, and the first Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives was a Lutheran. American Lutherans today

needn't feel ashamed of their nation's origin. Instead, Lutherans today have good reasons to cherish their 500-year heritage that includes the doctrine of the two kingdoms, the doctrine of vocation, and—during the 20 years spanning the Torgau Declaration (1530) and the Magdeburg Confession (1550)—the biblically sound development of a “mature theory of political resistance.” Let us preserve that heritage today, for it may be the tool by which God preserves our children's church tomorrow.

This article is a condensation of one written by Dr. Ryan MacPherson. Dr. MacPherson is a professor of history at Bethany Lutheran College. The entire article can be found at this link: www.hausvater.org/articles/336-the-magdeburg-interpretation-of-romans-13-a-lutheran-justification-for-political-resistance.html

Parish News

Special Events

July

17 – 12pm, Congregational Forum and Voters Meeting

28-31 – LYA Convention @ University of Texas, Dallas

31 – Home Mission Presentation by ELS Home Mission Counselor

August

6 – Ladies' Study of *The Hammer of God*

7 – Golf outing after Church

13 – Men's Study, Islam and the Reformation

14 – 7pm, Movie Night, *Risen*