

The Kaiserslautern Lutheran

By the time Luther's translation of the New Testament, the *Septembertestament*, was published in 1522, the Reformer was already at work translating the Old Testament. At the beginning of 1523 the Pentateuch was published with a preface for the Old Testament. In April, 1524, the second part of the Old Testament, Joshua through Esther, was printed and intended to be bound with the Pentateuch. Job and the Psalter were also both printed in 1524 along with the books of Solomon: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

The Preface to the Old Testament in general, like that of the Preface to the New Testament, Luther distinguishes between the Old and New Testaments in terms of Law and Gospel. But first he advocates reading the Old Testament as it is in light of the New Testament rather than spiritually or allegorically. Luther cites multiple examples from the New Testament where the Old Testament is utilized and warns the reader not to despise the Old Testament because the stories seem simple in language and content: "I beg and really caution every pious Christian not to be offended by the simplicity of the language and stories frequently encountered there, but fully realize that, however simple they may seem, these are the very words, works, judgments, and deeds of the majesty, power, and wisdom of the most high God. For these are the Scriptures

Martin Luther's Prefaces for the Books of the Old Testament

By Pastor Nathaniel Jensen

which make fools of all wise and understanding, and are open only to the small and simple, as Christ says in Matthew 11[:25]."¹ Luther compares the treasures of God's Word in the Old Testament to the simplicity of Christ, the divine hidden in the human.



Luther reiterates the idea found in his Preface to the New Testament that the Old Testament is primarily a book of law, showing sin and demanding good while the New Testament is chiefly a proclamation of grace.

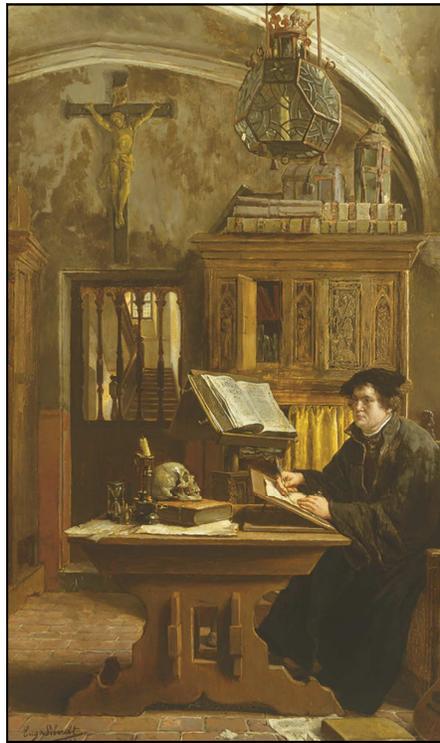
Nevertheless, the Old Testament contains promises of Christ and grace and the New Testament contains certain laws and commandments for controlling the flesh. Then Luther goes through each of the books of the Pentateuch outlining the contents and explaining where Law and Gospel are found therein. Genesis narrates the origin of sin and death but also promises the coming of Christ. It illustrates faith and unbelief as well as the fruits of faith and unbelief. Exodus tells about the Law given to reveal sin. Leviticus is all about the establishment of the priesthood, an office established to reveal sin and make atonement before God. Numbers is about the proliferation of laws. Deuteronomy is about the second giving of the law and speaks about faith in God and love toward neighbor.

Luther stresses that the Old Testament laws allow no room for self-invented works or forms of worship based on human notions of reason or free will.² Luther then goes through the three kinds of law: temporal for prevention of wrong, those that teach about the external worship of God,

and laws about faith and love. Here Luther lists examples from the Old Testament of doing away with the law where faith and love require it, such as David sparing Joab (1 Kings 2:5-6) and David eating the shewbread in the Temple (1 Samuel 21:6). Christ interprets the law in the same way when he allows rescuing temporal goods despite Sabbath regulations (Matthew 12:11). Important to keep in mind is that Moses mixed up all the temporal and spiritual regulations because he wrote according to the situation, as is the case in all governing and living.³

Luther then explains that the true intention of the law of Moses is to reveal sin so that the people might long for grace. Here, Luther cites Paul's interpretation of the Law from Galatians and Romans: "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin" (Romans 3: 20). The Law is given that man might recognize his sin both outwardly and inwardly. According to his natural, fallen reason, man believes he fulfills the law by his outward actions, but Moses teaches that one must also fear, trust, believe, and love God and desire the best for the neighbor.⁴ This recognition, then, prepares the way for the Gospel: "The purpose was to burden the conscience so that the hardened blindness would have to recognize itself, and feel its own inability and nothingness in the achieving of good. Such blindness must be thus compelled and forced by the law to seek something beyond the law and its own ability, namely, the grace of God promised in the Christ who was to come."⁵ Luther then lists the three kinds of people to whom the Law comes: the first hears the law and

despises it, the second attempts to fulfill the Law on their own, without grace, and the third understands that the intention behind Moses is to demand impossible things and so lead to Christ.



After discussing the five books of Moses, Luther explains that the rest of the books of the Old Testament are the same thing: they all propagate the office of Moses, guard against false prophets (who lead the people to trust in their own works), and to hold fast to the true intention of the Law.⁶ All the prophets reflect Moses's purpose for the Law and point the people forward to the coming of Christ. Luther also gets into the spiritual interpretation of the Levitical law and priesthood using the book of Hebrews as the interpretive key. Although Luther denied the Pauline authorship of Hebrews and its canonicity in his New Testament prefaces for 1522,

even here Luther admitted that "it is still a marvelously fine epistle. It discusses Christ's priesthood masterfully and profoundly on the basis of the Scriptures and extensively interprets the Old Testament in a fine way."⁷

Luther's preface for the entire Old Testament, just like his preface for the entire New Testament, is all about Law and Gospel. Luther is concerned about interpreting the Old Testament correctly, namely, in light of the New Testament and the coming of Christ. The laws of the Old Testament have many uses, but the primary use was to increase sin and so lead the sinner to flee to the grace of Christ. Luther's understanding of the entire Old Testament in this preface cannot be separated from his theology presented in the preface to the New Testament and especially in his preface to Romans. Thus, for Luther, Romans truly does serve as an introduction to the Old Testament and is indeed the light and power of the Old Testament.⁸ The terms Luther defines in the preface to Romans are integral to how Luther interprets the Old Testament as revealing the true intention of God's Law and pointing to the salvation that comes with Christ's fulfillment of the Law for sinners.

Luther's prefaces to Job, the Psalter, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes in 1524⁹ all deal with the adversity of the saints and the grace of God often being hidden for a time. Once again, the translation of specific key words is discussed, "mercy" and "truth," "judgment" and "righteousness" in the case of the Psalter: "When in the Psalter and elsewhere you perceive that the reference is not merely to judgment and justice but to God's judgment and justice, or when the address is to God, Thy judgment and justice, then you must understand justice to be faith and judgment, the killing of the old Adam."¹⁰ Here

¹ AE 35:236.

² AE 35:239.

³ AE 35:241.

⁴ AE 35:243.

⁵ AE 35:244.

⁶ AE 35:246-47.

⁷ AE 35:395.

⁸ AE 35:380.

⁹ See Reu, *Luther's German Bible*, 201-04 for the 1524 prefaces to these books. AE 35 only provides later, revised prefaces here.

¹⁰ Reu, *Luther's German Bible*, 203.

Luther refers to both Romans 1 and 7. The 1524 preface to Proverbs speaks about the foolishness according to the world in comparison to foolishness according to God's Word, where fools are defined as "those who live without God's word, acting and speaking according to their own reason and purpose." Paul's dealings with the Galatians and Christ's with the Pharisees shed light on what Solomon means by foolish people.¹¹ The Proverbs of Solomon are especially for training the young to "act acceptably before God, according to the spirit, and wisely before the world, with body and possessions."¹² By "spirit" and "body" here is to be understood the unity in division Luther explains in his preface to Romans.

In the preface to Ecclesiastes from 1524, Luther says that "this book ought really to have a title [to indicate] that it was written against the free will."¹³ Luther wrote this preface at the beginning of his controversy with Erasmus over the freedom or the bondage of the will. Here we see a theological controversy of Luther's day specifically influencing how Luther interprets Scripture for a larger audience. Luther clarifies that the talk of "vanity" that destroys free will is not a value judgment on God's creation in itself (Genesis 1:31 calls all God's creatures "good") but a warning against those who are not satisfied with what God gives them. He notes that "things turn out anyway as God wills and purposes, not as we will and purpose."¹⁴ Luther then cites Christ's prohibition against anxiety in Matthew 6:34 and says that this is really the point of Ecclesiastes: "Anxiety about us is God's affair; our anxiety goes wrong anyhow, and produces nothing but wasted toil."

Luther's 1528 Preface to the Psalter

After Luther's translation and prefaces to the Old Testament until

1524, there was a period of time where translation and the writing of prefaces slowed down.¹⁵ The timeline of the Reformation from that period explains why Luther's work on translation and the prefaces began to stall. There was the literary battle with Erasmus on the Bondage of the Will, the Peasants' War in 1525 and Luther's wedding, and the controversy with Zwingli over the Lord's Supper leading up to Luther's 1528 *Confession*, just to name a few. The controversies in the midst of Luther's work on Scripture informed his prefaces when he began revising them and writing new ones.



The 1528 preface to the Psalter is completely different than the 1524 preface and would be included in all subsequent editions. By the end of 1527 there had been twelve different editions of the Psalter, but in 1528 Luther decided to completely revise it.¹⁶ In the new preface, Luther concentrated on comparing the

Psalter to the legends of the saints that were in common use and argues that the Psalms are far greater because it describes not only what the saints have done but gives us the actual words with which they prayed to God. The Psalter also "promises Christ's death and resurrection so clearly—and pictures his kingdom and the condition and nature of all Christendom—that it might well be called a little Bible."¹⁷

Luther's heightened awareness of the bondage of the human will following the controversy with Erasmus is seen in statements such as: "A human heart is like a ship on a wild sea, driven by the storm winds from the four corners of the world. Here it is stuck with fear and worry about impending disaster; there comes grief and sadness because of present evil. Here breathes a breeze of hope and of anticipated happiness; there blows security and joy in present blessings."¹⁸ The Psalms, according to Luther, provide language for the Christian as the storms and the pleasant seasons of life come and go, all completely out of human control. This is similar to how Luther described the Christian life in his 1524 preface to Ecclesiastes, written at the beginning of the debate with Erasmus. A Christian is not to be anxious about the future and cannot change what God wills, but the Psalms provide the language appropriate to those occasions.

Luther also has a comment in his 1528 preface to the Psalter that reflects the ongoing debate with Zwingli over the Lord's Supper. Luther finds security in praying with the words of the saints because it holds one to the communion of saints: "the

¹¹ AE 35:261.

¹² AE 35:262.

¹³ AE 35:264.

¹⁴ AE 35:264.

¹⁵ Although Luther did write prefaces for Jonah and Habakkuk in 1526, he did so as a

counterbalance to his constant polemical work at that time.

¹⁶ Reu, *Luther's German Bible*, 205.

¹⁷ AE 35:254.

¹⁸ AE 35:255.

Psalter holds you to the communion of saints and away from the sects. For it teaches you in joy, fear, hope, and sorrow to think and speak as all the saints have thought and spoken."¹⁹ This is the same way Luther speaks about holding to the simple explanation of the words of Christ in the Lord's Supper, in spite of the mad raving of the sectarian spirit. The simple and plain words of Scripture, including those of the Psalter and the Words of Institution, keep one within the fold of the Church. Although Erasmus and Zwingli are not explicitly mentioned in the 1528 Psalter, one can see a change in how Luther speaks that was affected by the preceding controversies.

Die Propheten Alle Deutsch of 1532

After writing a preface on the apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon in 1529 and influenced by the events leading up to 1530, including the Diets of Speyer,²⁰ Luther wrote a long preface to the book of Daniel. He works through the book chapter by chapter and explains everything according to prophetic fulfillment in history, from the Assyrians and Babylonians to the Medes and Persians and then to the Greeks and Romans. Luther believed the empire of the Greeks was transferred to the Germans by the Romans, and that no other subsequent kingdoms were to be expected.²¹ Luther's comments about the fate of temporal authority makes sense in light of the political discussions underway (and consider that the first translation of Daniel was dedicated to Elector Johann Friedrich): "If the kingdom is to endure, it must find its strength and victory in God's providence alone."²² Luther uses Daniel to explain much about temporal and spiritual authority,

the fate of tyrants, and most importantly the kingdom of Christ, "which by the grace of God triumphs over all men and devils."²³

In 1532, Luther finally completed translating all of the major and minor prophets into German. He included a preface for all the prophets, as he had done for the New and Old Testaments. Just like in his preface to the Old Testament, Luther notes that the



prophets seem of little account compared to the wisdom of the world, but they are to be read diligently by Christians because they proclaim the kingdom of Christ. Luther separates his followers from "sects of the Turk, the pope, and others"²⁴ and recognizes that the great glory of Christ's kingdom must be preceded by crosses and suffering. As with the rest of Luther's introductions, the main theme Luther finds in the prophets is that of Law and Gospel: "So to read or hear the prophets is surely nothing else than to

read and hear how God threatens and comforts."²⁵ Luther's prefaces to the individual prophets repeat this point in each instance. Every prophet threatens with God's Law and comforts with the promises of the coming kingdom of Christ, as Luther pointed out already in his preface to the entire Old Testament. Luther also uses the preface to the prophets to highlight idolatry, both in its ancient and modern forms. The Jews of the Old Testament and Christians today constantly need to hear God's judgment against idolatrous worship, which so often is hidden from the eyes and appears like the true worship of God.

Prefaces to the Apocrypha, 1533–1534

With the translations and prefaces to the Apocrypha, Luther had finally translated the entire Bible. The Apocrypha appeared last because of Luther's judgment that these spurious books are not actually scriptural, but nevertheless are good for Christians to read, especially because of the history and wisdom they provide for the intertestamental period. For example, 1 Maccabees provides helpful historical information for understanding Daniel 11 and who the true Antichrist is. Luther begins his preface to each book explaining why he believes it should not be considered canonical.

In explaining the content of each apocryphal book, the themes that have been addressed so far in Luther's prefaces to the New Testament, the Old Testament, and the Prophets emerge again. 1 Maccabees shows how the reign of Antiochus before the first coming of Christ reveals how life will be under the true Antichrist to come before the second coming of Christ. Antiochus is

¹⁹ AE 35:256.

²⁰ Luther translated and wrote a preface for the Wisdom of Solomon because the Second Diet of Speyer prevented those who were going to work on a translation together from meeting and because Luther was prevented by an unexpected weakness. He chose to work on the Wisdom of Solomon in the meantime and highlights the advice therein for worldly leaders, very appropriate for the diets including religious and secular leaders occurring at the time.

²¹ AE 35:295.

²² AE 35:296.

²³ AE 35:299.

²⁴ AE 35:266.

²⁵ AE 35:266.

²⁶ AE 35:351.

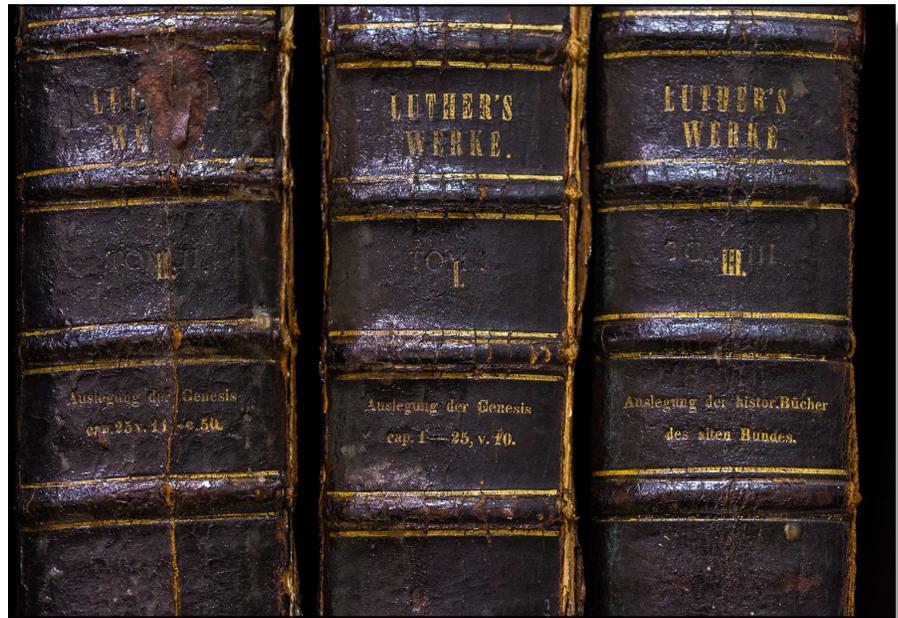
an image of the Antichrist. And yet even in discussing such a theme, Christians are to take comfort in the final salvation. God has already begun to grant help and provides the Word of God to attack the Antichrist, just as the Maccabees drove out Antiochus.²⁶ Disloyal Jews in the intertestamental period are compared to false Christians of all times.

Other apocryphal works could be interpreted in terms of the three estates (the parts of Esther and Daniel). Some encourage the fear and trust of God (Wisdom of Solomon) or give a sort of table of duties (Ecclesiasticus). In the end, Luther is able to find the same themes in the Apocrypha as he does in the canonical Scriptures and he uses these books as a way of teaching what is found explicitly in the canon.

Conclusion

By 1534 Luther had completed the process of translation, editing, and commenting on the Scriptures begun at the Wartburg in 1521, at least in a way. In 1535, the complete Luther Bible was published in whole, but the editing continued until Luther's death in 1545 and even afterwards with an edition based on some of his notes in 1546. The prefaces modeled after what appeared in the 1522 *Septembertestament* continued to be published with every installment of a portion of Scripture. Some prefaces remained the same and some were altered for later editions, and some were replaced completely.

Luther's prefaces to the books of the Bible provide more than basic outlines for reading Scripture. They also reveal key aspects of Luther's biblical theology that he intended everyone to know well, especially in Luther's preface to the New Testament, the preface to Romans, the preface to the Old Testament, and the preface to the Prophets. Themes



such as Law and Gospel, New Testament and Old Testament, the definitions of key terms such as faith, righteousness, spirit, and flesh, and the duties Christians have in the spiritual and temporal realms come out more than strongly in Luther's prefaces. The prefaces also changed or took on different tones based on historical circumstances, such as the dispute with Erasmus, Zwingli, and the various diets of the Holy Roman Empire.

Luther's prefaces to the books of the Bible continued to be theologically relevant subsequent to the Reformer's death. They continued to be printed even in CPH editions of the Luther Bible all the way up until 1974. With a shift to English in the Missouri Synod, the printing of Bibles with Luther's prefaces ceased, and so also the devotional use of Luther's prefaces. An overview of the historical and theological background of Luther's prefaces shows that the themes Luther addresses are the themes necessary for reading Scripture. One must come to Scripture with an understanding that Christ and the New Testament are at the center, that Law and Gospel inform every aspect of the Bible, that

faith manifests itself in works of love and within different stations of one's life. One must approach Scripture with a correct and precise theological vocabulary. Luther's prefaces help the reader do this. Although Luther's prefaces are indeed historical pieces, their theological character is the same today as it was during the Reformation.

LOOK FOR US ON FACEBOOK & MESSENGER

Kaiserslautern Evangelical Lutheran Church (KELC)

For news, worship sign-ups
and fellowship events.



A Letter from the Mission Field

Pastor Christian Tiewws

This picture was taken at a “Meet Your German or Iranian Neighbor” workshop recently held at Redeemer Lutheran (SELK), Düsseldorf. Notice anything? Almost everyone is facing the camera, including the Iranians. Before taking the picture, the cameraman pointed out that anyone not wishing to be recognized (for fear of their image winding up in the hands of Iranian security) was free to turn away. Almost no one did. In fact, someone even blurted out, “Why turn around? The mullahs are on their way out!” Everyone cheered at that statement. Organized by Rev. Gerhard Triebe, pastor of Redeemer Düsseldorf, and Rev. Walter Hein, pastor emeritus of the Church of the Cross, Witten, this workshop provided an excellent venue for the two groups to get to know one another better—both in private

conversations and also through the testimony of many Iranian church members regarding their refugee / immigration experience. Once again, we heard the stunning statistic that less than 20 percent of Iranians are interested in Islam. In fact, many observers feel that, were the mullahs to disappear tomorrow, a large percentage of the population would become or reveal themselves as already being Christian. This flies in the face of the Iran we all thought we knew, where for decades we’ve seen pictures of angry mobs supporting the Ayatollah. Please continue to stand alongside your LCMS missionaries, and our brothers and sisters in the SELK, as we share the Gospel with these brave Iranian women and men. We pray that the



cruel Iranian regime would soon be swept into the dustbin of history—not only so that the oppressed would be liberated, but especially so that Christianity would once again be able to flourish in one of the first regions to embrace our faith. After all, one of the oldest churches in the world (built in 66 A.D.—during St. Paul’s lifetime) is in West Azerbaijan Province, Iran!





Elder's Corner

Insights, thoughts, and inspirational messages

Spotlight Verse

Jesus is telling us how to re-focus our minds. ²² The eye is

the lamp of the body.

So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.

Matthew 6:22

In Focus by Jeff Peterson

²² The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. ²³ "but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" Matthew 6:21-22

With so much information today, it is easy for us to get consumed with bad information, and a lot of times, we not only get consumed, but we can literally and figuratively become blind to God's word. As the old saying goes "Garbage in, Garbage out!"

Jesus is telling us here in this passage to re-focus our minds (sight) onto Him and His word, bring in healthy information, spiritual food to give us clearer focus.

Just as a "healthy" eye lets in "light" to guide an entire person, an eye "focused" on God will see clearly everything spiritual. Just as a blind person sees only "darkness", one consumed with things of this world and/or worshipping their possessions (meaning the wrong priorities or bad focus) will get everything wrong from God's perspective.

So, as you start to feel the light dim (confusion/unsureness) or you're not seeing God clearly, then remember to go back to Him and recharge, let Him bring everything back into focus!

Remember, you are loved, and you are forgiven!



Once again, we are partnering with Rhema Café to spread God's love through Operation Christmas Child. Boxes are available for pickup in the narthex now. The boxes need to be filled and returned by Nov. 14th. They can be dropped off at Rhema Café or KELC. Monetary donations are also accepted to help cover shipping costs.

Sundays at KELC

Divine Service

Sunday Mornings
8:30-9:30 AM

—

Fellowship Time

Sunday Mornings
9:30-10:15 AM

—

Sunday School & Bible Study

at Kirche Mittendrïn
10:15-11:15 AM

—

Catechesis

St. Michael's Basement
11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Sat. Dec., 10th

Pastor Jensen will be preaching at the Choral Vespers at the Alte Nikolaikirche on the Römerberg plaza at 1700. Hannah, Emma and the choir from Trinity will be participating in the service as well. Then we can enjoy the market afterwards.

Or Sun. Dec., 18th

The Sunday before Christmas gives us another chance to go to the market together.

Join us for a beautiful evening of fellowship at the Frankfurt Christmas Market.



Wedding Anniversaries



Happy 20th Anniversary to
Seth & Heidi Worley
On November 23rd

Happy 30th Anniversary to
Raymond & Camille Ayers
On November 28th

CONFESSIONS STUDY



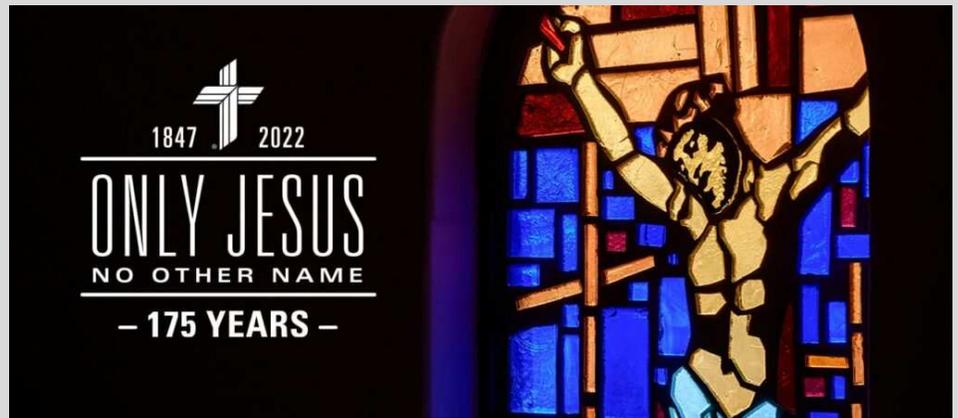
Thursday Nights
at 7:00 PM

Location: St. Michaelis

Fellowship Lunch

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, Nov. 20th



Thank you to everyone who was able to come to Rhema Café in October to help serve dinner to our Ukrainian friends. It was a fun evening of pizza, dessert, games, crafts and love.

Please join us in praying for the important work of the Kaiserslautern Military Resiliency Center in Landstuhl, Germany.



November Birthdays



- 1 Stephanie Guzik
- 2 Michael Landers
- 10 Mindy Malenius
- 12 Jeba Kumar
- 13 Dewey Landers
- 16 Anthony Swenson
- 25 Gwen Landers