

“Gospel Basics For Adults” – A curriculum for new members

Colleagues,

If things are going according to plan, we your editors are in South Africa on this Thursday participating in the Tenth Conference of the International Association for Mission Studies. Before we left the USA, we put 3 pieces into the pipeline to supply you with ThTh postings for the three Thursdays we’ll both be gone. Then Robin will be back, d.v., and ThTh 87 should come your way “live.” Marie and I are staying a while longer doing other chores in South Africa, Malawi, Kenya, and concluding with a few days of homecoming at our 1995 workplace, the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia. Ash Wednesday is our due date back home.

Today’s posting is from the same source as was ThTh 82 a couple weeks ago, namely, the newsletter of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mukwonago, Wisconsin. Tucked back among the inside pages of THE OLIVE LEAF (January 2000) we found this buried treasure, a sample of Pastor Steve Kuhl’s curriculum for New Members and Inquirers. Here Steve seeks to do law/promise theology in parish education without fudging. See for yourself.

Peace & Joy! Ed

GOSPEL BASICS FOR ADULTS

Course II – LIVING ROOTS: A BASIC SUMMARY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

“Gospel Basics” is the name of the four-course curriculum we developed for our New Member and Inquirer class. But it’s not for new members only. Everyone is invited! On Thursday, December

2, we finished Course I, "Jesus: The New Way." In that seven-session course, participants received an overview of the life and mission of Jesus as the Messiah in light of its historical setting and in response to our skeptical age.

Course II, "Living Roots," is a seven-session course that will be held on Thursday nights in January and February. The aim of the course is to give a basic summary of the Christian faith, organized around the Apostles' Creed and informed by Luther's Large and Small Catechisms. The breakdown of the sessions is as follows:

1. What's It All About? Focusing on Genesis 1-2 (the two creation stories) and Luther's explanation of the First Article of the Creed, we will begin to develop the basic world view of the Christian faith, the world as God "intended" it to be. Here we will explore what it means to say that God is the Creator and ruler of the world and Humankind is God's steward, created in the Image of God.
2. What Went Wrong? Part I. The world as God "intended" it, however, is not the world we live in. Something went wrong, and any honest description of Creation must take this state of affairs into account. Therefore, by focusing on Genesis 3 and Luther's explanation of the Ten Commandments, we will further develop our basic Christian world view by identifying life as we know it as a "life under God's judgment" or a "life under law." The reality of human sin and God's judgment upon it radically alters what it means to live in a world created by God and our calling to be God's stewards.
3. What Went Wrong? Part II. A continuation of the previous session, focusing primarily on the meaning of the Ten Commandments as a symbolic description of how the various relationships in which we live are all lived under God's judgment.

4. What's the Alternative? (Two Sessions) The heart of the Christian Faith is that God has provided an alternative to "life under law," namely, a "life under mercy" through faith in Jesus Christ. Drawing on Biblical materials (especially II Cor. 3:4-18) and Luther's Large Catechism explanation of the Second Article of the Creed, we will show how this "alternative life-style," (the new covenant, the new creation) first promised to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ, became a live option for all.
5. What a Difference!!! These two sessions will focus on how "what-Christ-accomplished-once-and-for-all" becomes ours personally and concretely, namely, the work of the Holy Spirit. Drawing on Biblical materials and Luther's Large Catechism explanation of the Third Article of the Creed, we will see how the church, the word and sacraments, faith, the forgiveness of sins, the Christian life, and our final hope, are all bound up together as the work of the Spirit among us.