

**First Lutheran Church of Venice**  
**Foundations Class – Fall 2013**  
**Introduction**

**Opening Prayer**

**Goals**

1. Faith in Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:7-11), created and sustained by God’s Word (Rom. 10:17)
2. Instruction in the core teachings of the Christian faith as believed and practiced at First Lutheran Church
3. Growth in the “doing” of things which will continue to be part of the life of faith after this class is ended, namely:
  - a. The ongoing reception of the gifts of God in worship
  - b. The daily prayer and devotional life
  - c. The confession of one’s faith in the world
  - d. The confession of one’s sins to God or another brother or sister
  - e. Forgiving the sins of those who have sinned against him
  - f. Living “concretely” by faith in Christ in the vocations to which God has assigned you
4. Preparation for baptism and/or membership at First Lutheran Church for those who desire it

**Class Schedule (Tentative)**

Classes will begin at 9:50 am each Sunday in the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, 8:30 service time permitting.

<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Topic</u>
September 8	Introduction
September 15	Blueprint of Human Life: The 10 Commandments
September 22	The Story That Shapes Us: Apostles Creed I – God the Creator
September 29	The Story That Shapes Us: Apostles Creed II – Jesus Christ
October 6	The Story That Shapes Us: Apostles Creed II – Jesus Christ 2
October 13	The Story That Shapes Us: Apostles Creed III – The Holy Spirit
October 20	The Life of Prayer
October 27	Our Receptive Life: Baptism
November 3	Our Receptive Life: Confession
November 10	Our Receptive Life: The Lord’s Supper
November 17	Full-Time Christianity: Vocation
November 24	Life Together at First Lutheran Church of Venice (tentative)

## Resources Needed

1. Primary Text – Bible, any translation (recommended: ESV, NIV, NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
2. Secondary Texts
  - a. *The Small Catechism* by Martin Luther (handout, also found in *Lutheran Service Book* p. 321ff., on-line at <http://www.cph.org/t-topic-catechism.aspx>, or as an app for Android or iPhone)
  - b. Handouts – will be posted on the church website ([www.flvenice.org](http://www.flvenice.org)) after each session
3. Your attendance and participation

## Introductions / My contact info

1. E-mail: [cspelbring09@aol.com](mailto:cspelbring09@aol.com)
2. Office phone: 310-821-2740
3. Cell phone: 310-387-6040

## Introduction Part 1: Why Join a Church?

1. Read Acts 2:41-47
2. To be joined to Christ is to be joined to His Body, the Church (1 Cor. 12:13, 27; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 5:25,29–30)
3. I am provided with a community to support and encourage me (Rom. 12:9-21; Gal. 6:1-2; Heb. 10:24-25)
4. The church is where God's gifts are received!
5. It makes a public statement about my commitments

When we are thinking of joining a church, we should be satisfied that its teachings and practices are consistent with what God has spoken in His Word. As Scripture warns us in several places, we are to avoid churches which lead us away from Jesus Christ (e.g., Gal. 1:6-9).

## Introduction Part 2: Hearing the Word of the Lord

### The Bible

Read Luke 24:13-48.

The Bible (also known as the Holy Scripture) is the most important book for Christians and the Church, and therefore will serve as our primary text in this course. The Bible is actually not one book, but sixty-six books written by many different people over the course of many centuries. It was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic (OT), and Greek (NT).

1. Lutherans confess that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, as it was preached and written by the prophets and apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the revelation of God's will and His plan of salvation. The Holy Spirit uses this Word to create, feed and sustain faith (2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:16-21).
  - a. Note: The Bible did not drop out of the sky as a finished book, but was brought together through history. There are many excellent resources that address questions of canonicity (which books are in/out) and the reliability of the Old and New Testament documents. Accessible overviews of these issues are found in Lutheran Hour Ministries video studies, *The Bible on Trial*, *How We Got the Bible*, and *Lost Books?* They are all available to watch free online at <http://www.lhmmen.com/studies.asp>.
2. It is not simply the written Word that creates faith, but also (and primarily) the spoken and preached Word (Rom. 10:17).
3. This written and spoken Word is inseparable Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh (Jn. 1:1-14; Jn. 5:39; Jn. 6:63).
4. Jesus Christ is the heart and center of the Holy Scripture and therefore the key to its true meaning (Lk. 24:13-48).
5. The Bible delivers this theme in two distinct and opposite teachings: the Law and the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17, Rom. 3:19-26). They have two distinct and opposite effects on the hearer (1 Sam. 2:6). The Law focuses on what I must do. The Gospel focuses on what God does for me. We will discuss these teachings in the following sessions.
6. The purpose of this word is to bring us to faith in Christ (Gal. 2:19-20).

### The Catechism

The Small Catechism serves as a "user's guide" or "road map" to the Holy Scriptures. It is NOT a substitute for the Bible, but rather a summary of the essential teachings of the Bible. "It contains those components of the Scriptures that the church has at all times and in all places identified as formative texts for shaping Christian identity and shaping a Christian life."<sup>1</sup> These texts are short and memorable so that they might be internalized, learned by heart, and used for the rest of our lives.

Martin Luther wrote our Small Catechism in 1529. In His day, the Scriptures could only be understood by those who could speak or read Latin. In addition, clergy were poorly educated in the basics of the faith. To remedy this situation, Luther prepared this *Small Catechism* to

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Arand, *Rooted in the Faith: Preparation for Church Membership* (St. Louis: CPH, 2010).

instruct the laity (especially parents as they taught children), and a *Large Catechism* to instruct pastors and teachers.

Even today, the Small Catechism is a valuable tool for the Christian. The texts are short and memorable so that they might be internalized, learned by heart, and used for their rest of our lives.

The Texts and Structure of the Small Catechism:

1. The Ten Commandments (Law: our need for faith)
2. The Apostles' Creed (Gospel: the gift of faith)
3. Lord's Prayer (the cry of faith)
4. Means of Grace – Baptism, Absolution, Lord's Supper (sustaining our faith from cradle to grave)
5. Prayers and Table of Responsibilities (the daily disciplines of the baptized believer in Christ)

### Christian Worship

Much of what we learn about what a Church believes comes from the way in which the Church worships. As a result, we will have many opportunities to reflect upon Christian worship as we move through this class.

In worship (what Lutherans often call "Divine Service), our Lord serves us. God speaks to us in His Word. He washes us in Baptism. He forgives us in Absolution. He feeds us in the Lord's Supper. These are all done within an ordered framework called the liturgy.

Of course, there is a rhythm to worship. He speaks to us, and we speak back to Him. He gives His gifts to us, and then we receive and acknowledge them with our prayer and praise. We are then sent out into the world with our Lord's blessing, where His gifts bear fruit.

Music and art are pressed into God's service in the liturgy. We are neither rigidly bound to the past nor are we enslaved to the contemporary. We gladly receive the praise that God's Word has prompted throughout the centuries before us, and we add to it the very best of our own. The liturgy is a living heritage. Cloth, color, symbols, banners, architecture and all manner of art serve to adorn the gifts of our gracious God and to teach us of His goodness.

**Closing Prayer: Luther's Morning Prayer (p. 21)**

*For Next Week:* Read p. 3-6 of Luther's Small Catechism, "The Ten Commandments"