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Lord, Have Mercy:  
The Order of Confession and Forgiveness, Mystagogical Preaching,  
and the “Southern Way of Life”

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## **Abstract**

Lord, Have Mercy:  
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and the “Southern Way of Life”  
By Allison S. Parvin

For five hundred years, the traditional Lutheran worship service has begun with an Order of Confession and Forgiveness. Ostensibly, the practice of Confession and Forgiveness contains within it the renewing power of Baptism, as the grace and mercy of God wash away the revealed sin. Genuine, daily repentance leads to renewal, which over time, forms faithful believers. Mystagogical preaching is an intentional method of preaching the mysteries of the faith, a sustained reflection of the mysteries of Baptism and Holy Communion, to open the deeper meaning of the rituals of the faith. Mystagogical preaching is not a form of education, but one of formation in the ways believers live out the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Southern rural culture is anchored deeply in the local church. The rural church reflects many Christlike practices such as sharing extra produce from the garden, serving meals to grieving families, and praying for the sick in the community. From time to time, however, less generous practices crop up in form of racist attitudes, an unwillingness to help a neighbor in need, or resistance to a reinterpretation of deeply held religious beliefs. The myth of a God-ordained separation and hierarchy of the races is commonly coded, the “Southern Way of Life.” Mystagogical preaching, specifically on the Order of Confession and Forgiveness, is an effective tool for addressing and possibly changing thoughts, words and deeds shaped by the “Southern Way of Life” into those that honor God, neighbor, and self.

Lord, Have Mercy:  
The Order of Confession and Forgiveness, Mystagogical Preaching,  
and the “Southern Way of Life”

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LORD, HAVE MERCY:  
THE ORDER OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS, MYSTAGOGICAL PREACHING,  
AND THE “SOUTHERN WAY OF LIFE”

*Introduction*

Like most Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America, Beth-Eden Lutheran Church begins every worship service with The Order of Confession and Forgiveness:<sup>1</sup>

P In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen**

P Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Amen**

P If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

P Most merciful God,

C **we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart: we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have**

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<sup>1</sup> Lutheran Church in America, American Lutheran Church (1961-1987), Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, and Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. *Lutheran Book of Worship*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 56.

**mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen**

P Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit, you are forgiven.

C **AMEN.**

Does what one says to God in church impact one's words and actions after church? The practice of the Lutheran Order for Confession and Forgiveness does not appear to free some of the congregants of Beth-Eden Lutheran Church from their bondage to certain sins, such as sins of racism, the central concern of this study.<sup>2</sup> One cannot assume that if one prays this confession, even regularly, one's behavior will immediately be changed. The relationship of confession to genuine repentance and restitution is more complicated than that. Even so, is there a way for a pastor to lend understanding of what is offered in this regular practice? Within the worship service, is there a way to address the difference in what we say to God in worship and "our thoughts, words and deeds" after worship. Our history, as Lutherans and as Beth-Eden Lutheran Church, shapes how we worship but does our worship shape how we live?

Mystagogical preaching, an intentional way of preaching the Scriptures to open the meaning of the rituals of the church, offers a key to open a parishioner's understanding of the transformative power in the Order of Confession and Forgiveness. Lutherans intentionally use the term "bondage to sin, and we cannot free ourselves"<sup>3</sup> to allow the participant to imagine their

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<sup>2</sup> For the sake of this paper, sin is defined as selfish thoughts, words or deeds that appear to honor oneself more than God, thereby going against the Great Commandment to love God, neighbor and self.

<sup>3</sup> Philip H. Pfatteicher and Carlos R. Messerli, *Manual on the Liturgy: Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), 18.

own sin and the weight of the bondage. Would preaching specifically on the liberating power of the Order of Confession and Forgiveness ignite the parishioner's imagination and loosen the grip of sin so that they can confess, repent and be freed to love their neighbors as themselves?

### Statement of the Problem

Southern rural culture is anchored deeply in the local church. Congregations reflect local customs, and congregations are often instrumental in defending local customs against change from the outside. Often rural communities are described as “behind the times.”<sup>4</sup> Southern Protestant church communities intentionally choose their way of life as a result of deliberate changes being made over long periods of time. The rural church reflects many Christlike practices such as sharing extra produce from the garden, serving meals to grieving families, and praying for the sick in the community. From time to time, however, less generous practices crop up in the form of racist attitudes, an unwillingness to help a neighbor in need, or resistance to a reinterpretation of deeply held religious beliefs. This poses a monumental dilemma to pastors. It is the burden of this paper to examine the nature of this dilemma in one such case in rural Mississippi, analyze the effects of introducing mystagogical preaching as one tool for addressing the problem, and offer immediate and long-term implications of this project on the congregation and her pastor.

The first section of this paper contains the backstory of Beth-Eden Lutheran Church, a small, rural church located in Winston County, Mississippi, the influence of the “southern way of life” on churches in the rural south, and examples of “thoughts, words, and deeds” that indicate that some in the congregation are still in bondage to certain sinful attitudes. The second section

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<sup>4</sup> “Perceptions of Rural America,” W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Last modified December 9, 2002, accessed August 3, 2017, <http://www.wkkf.org/resource-directory/resource/2002/12/perceptions-of-rural-america>.



focuses on the theology and theory of the project, namely, investigating the specific Order of Confession and Forgiveness, as well as the ministerial skill of mystagogical preaching. The section on theology and theory is followed by an analysis of the interjection of mystagogical preaching, explicitly preaching about the practice of confession and forgiveness, on the congregation of Beth-Eden Lutheran Church. The paper concludes with examples of people being “forgiven and freed,” and future implications of this project.

### *The Backstories*

Beth-Eden Lutheran Church: “Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid...”

Driving west along the newest scenic byway in east central Mississippi, Beth-Eden Lutheran Church appears on the left, a white clapboard church, with a rich history to tell and future with hope to live into faithfully. Seeing the abandoned schoolhouse in ruins on the right and passing only four houses in six miles from the highway, might cause one to wonder about the community that was once here.

The name Beth-Eden derives from Hebrew roots and literally translates, “house of delight” or “house of paradise.” The founding families from Beth-Eden Lutheran Church in Newberry, South Carolina, reached Winston County, Mississippi on December 11, 1852. They decided to stay because of the “many good springs of water” and “beautiful rolling hills which reminded them of Beth-Eden in South Carolina.”<sup>5</sup> The current families of Beth-Eden Lutheran Church believe without a doubt that the name means “beautiful gardens,” as evidenced in all their historical documents.

The Beth-Eden community grew up around the Methodist, Lutheran and Universalist churches. Most of the original settlers were farmers and loggers with a few potters thrown in.

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<sup>5</sup> Dorothy Sloan, “History of Beth-Eden Community” (unpublished document, 1996), 11.

Robinson Road, built in 1821 on an old Choctaw trail, became the main mail and stagecoach road encouraging more settlers to build homes in the area. Pastor Thomas A. Glenn, the third and fifth pastor of Beth-Eden Lutheran Church, was a large property owner, which included slaves.

By the 1930's, the Beth-Eden Community was self-sustaining with stores, three doctors, a sawmill, two churches, and a school. Then the United States Government enacted the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act of 1936 to claim land in Winston, Oktibbeha, Noxubee & Choctaw counties for a federal game reserve. The United States Government told all sorts of outlandish lies inferring that there would be nothing left, no roads, no schools, no roads, no mail. As if that weren't enough, people were told that a fence would be put up all around the reserve and wild animals would be released inside it. If they didn't sell their land, they would be fenced in with the wild animals.<sup>6</sup>

The government use of eminent domain to "take their land" was a life-changing and community changing event. What had been a flourishing community was reduced to a few families who refused to leave. What had been a caring community was dispersed, creating a mistrust of the government with the distance between neighbors creating isolation and self-interest.

In the earlier days, when the school bell was rung, it could be heard in seventy-five homes in the immediate area with an estimated population of around 300 in the Beth-Eden community. When the school bell rang, the people would leave "their fields, stores, or jobs to help a neighbor, truly an act of love."<sup>7</sup> This same bell, housed in the attic of Beth-Eden Lutheran

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<sup>6</sup> Jennie Newsom Hoffman, *A History of Winston County* (Louisville, Mississippi: Taunton Publishers, 1995), 47.

<sup>7</sup> Sloan, 13.

Church, is rung to begin and end worship today. The toll of the bell is heard in only six homes with a known population of fifteen.

Finding five-hundred-year-old high church confessional and creedal liturgy in and among the more primitive worship of singing, praying and preaching is like finding one of the fresh springs the church founders discovered. At its height, with a pastor who was quiet about prohibition, Beth-Eden Lutheran Church grew to 150 members. By 1964, with the reduction in population following the government's claim of eminent domain, combined with a pastor who was vocal about the sin of segregation, its membership was reduced to 28 faithful worshippers, some of whom drove 50 miles just to worship.<sup>8</sup>

Martin W. Marty suggests, "A huge element in retention of loyalty and acquisition of new church members can be summarized in a very simple phrase: a choice of a way of life."<sup>9</sup> The fluctuation in membership numbers based on maintaining a certain "way of life" supports Marty's theory. Since the 1960's, the membership has remained between 18-25 people. In the last 24 months, average attendance in worship has been 38. All of the regular worshippers and members are white, but on the high holy days when extended families come to worship, a few black people come with their multi-racial children in tow<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> White Christians in Mississippi were opposed to the "social gospel" that called for integration of churches. Dr. Crespino states, "They deeply resented liberal Protestant ministers who headed national church bodies that issued antisegregationist statements or who came to Mississippi to participate in marches and protests. For most white Mississippians, these ministers adhered to a theology that threatened to tear Christian churches apart over social and political issues and that distracted Christians from their central mission of winning souls for Christ."

Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>9</sup> Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 173.

<sup>10</sup> Anecdotal from a visual recollection of the congregation on Christmas Eve, Easter, Memorial Sunday and Reformation Days.

A distinction of rural life is the convergence of its particular history, society, and culture. Socialization is the process of learning the expected norms and customs of a group by way of social interactions. Socialization is how we learn what we learn. The accepted customs and values done over and over become the *habitus*. “*Habitus* is acquired, and therefore it has a history; it carries an entire past with it.”<sup>11</sup> The past that Beth-Eden Lutheran Church carries with it includes the powerful and good story of their founding, but also the powerful and tough story of the United States Government taking the land to create a federal game reserve. The decrease in members, as well as the geographical distance between members and neighbors, created a tendency to stay isolated and stay out of each other’s business. The chances to practice “loving [their] neighbor’ radically decreased when the people dispersed.

Beth-Eden Lutheran Church uses the “green book,” the *Lutheran Book of Worship [LBW]* from 1978.<sup>12</sup> This *LBW* begins, “Corporate worship expresses the unity of the people of God and their continuity with Christians across the ages. In the liturgical tradition are the gestures, songs, and words by which Christians have identified themselves and each other.”<sup>13</sup> James K. A. Smith, working with the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, describes this as *habitus*, “a communal, collective disposition that gets inscribed in me...something that endures over time and is communicable, able to be shared and passed on...that comes to me from outside me.”<sup>14</sup>

Lutherans are known to be a confessional and creedal church; these are the liturgical practices that distinguish their worship from the mostly Southern Baptist churches that surround

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<sup>11</sup> Smith, 83.

<sup>12</sup> This *Lutheran Book of Worship [LBW]* is not the most current one, but it is the one that guides our worship and shapes our faith every week.

<sup>13</sup> *LBW*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 81.

Beth-Eden Lutheran Church. If “a practice is an action performed repeatedly so that it cultivates a particular disposition,” what worship practices need to be “deliberately chosen because of the effect it will produce,”<sup>15</sup> so that the desired effect is “thoughts, words, and deeds” that are more in keeping with those of Jesus the Christ found in the gospel?

The local and Christian history of Lutherans shapes how they worship, but some of the people’s words and actions outside of worship do not set them apart as Christian at all. Given some of their behaviors after church, it seems clear that the *habitus* of the rural South, including racial bias and continued segregated ways of living, has shaped them in more powerful ways than the Gospel believed and confessed in the Lutheran faith and practice.

Southern Way of Life: “If we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us...”

One of the oldest stories the South carries with it is the God-ordained separation and hierarchy of the races.<sup>16</sup> In the 1960’s Southerners perceived John F. Kennedy’s work for civil rights to be an abomination to God’s mandate of the created order. This myth is commonly coded as “the Southern way of life.” In 1960, John Satterfield, a prominent lawyer and advisor to Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett pled the case for Methodists to “stand solidly for the southern way of life” in the Methodist magazine, *The Advocate*:

I feel that all we lack is an understanding of the facts by our brethren in other areas of the country and a realization by them that the maintenance of the integrity of the two great races in our churches, our schools, and our homes, is not only consistent with the principles of Jesus Christ but also permits the rendition of service within each race to a far greater degree than would integration.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ellen Ott Marshall, *Choosing Peace through Daily Practices*, ed. Ellen Ott Marshall (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005), 8-9.

<sup>16</sup> Carleton Putnam, *Race and Reason: A Yankee View* (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1961), 67.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph T. Reiff, *Born of Conviction: White Methodists and Mississippi’s Closed Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 26.

Protecting the “southern way of life” is evidenced across Christian denominations. Rev. T. Robert Ingraham, an Episcopal priest, called integration “the organized attack of the forces of Hell upon God’s order in nature and in human society.”<sup>18</sup> Ingraham believed that God wrote the law of segregation. A Baptist pastor, Rev. Dr. E. K. Oldham argued, “God...has authorized a distinction of positions and functions among the races in social, civil and religious life” thereby legitimating Jim Crow laws. Former Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett insisted that “God was the original segregationist.” This heresy was supported by Dr. W.M. Caskey, on the faculty at Mississippi College, a college of the Southern Baptist Convention, who stated, “Our Southern segregation way is the Christian way. We are not racists, but we believe that this Bible teaches Thou wast the original segregationist.”<sup>19</sup> A Mississippi legislator from that same era believed that when integration came, “it would enter through the front door of the churches.”<sup>20</sup>

There are customs and values that each rural community holds sacrosanct. Often in rural settings, self-imposed segregation of the races is one of the customs that regulate social life. There are explicit and implicit racial and doctrinal biases that exist within the church that continue to segregate and divide people. Students from historically black colleges and universities, like Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, led the intentional effort to integrate white churches in the 1960’s. Crossing racial lines remains a fresh memory for many and sparks both positive and negative reactions, even in what should be the sacred space of God’s church.

Initially, when a pastor is appointed to a new church, regardless of where they are from, they are an outsider, suspect to the local people. Local customs are not readily told or visible.

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<sup>18</sup> Crespino, 67.

<sup>19</sup> Crespino, 69.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 64.

When a pastor violates the local customs, the reaction can be swift. Take, for example, the story of Robert S. Graetz. In 1955, Rev. Graetz, a white Lutheran pastor from West Virginia, came fresh from seminary and ordination to Montgomery, Alabama to pastor a Lutheran church that was African American. Rev. Graetz stated, “It seemed that just about everything we did in those days was either illegal or contrary to Southern customs.”<sup>21</sup>

After Graetz participated in the Montgomery bus boycotts, local white barbers refused to cut his hair. But, if he went to a black barber, he made the barber nervous someone would catch them breaking the law against racial mixing. Graetz enjoyed working in his yard, but found that local white citizens thought he wasn’t behaving like a “proper Southerner” as “normal decent white people were not supposed to do yard work.”<sup>22</sup> Six times, his home was bombed with his family inside.

Addressing the sin of racism in the 1960’s, especially in practical ways in daily life, was fraught with danger. These racial attitudes are yet pervasive in rural Mississippi in the late 2010’s. If the *habitus* of congregations include practices that are contrary to the gospel, how does the pastor intervene and remind the people, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”? Despite the regular practice of Confession and Forgiveness, which includes and presumes repentance, some sinful attitudes stubbornly remain. When pointed out that something done is contrary to the gospel, a common response is, “Well, Jesus is going to have to forgive me on that.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Robert S. Graetz, *A White Preacher’s Memoir: The Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Montgomery, Alabama: Black Belt Press, 1998), 30.

<sup>22</sup> Graetz, 31.

<sup>23</sup> A colloquialism commonly heard in Winston County, Mississippi when someone says or does something that they know to be sinful. This was said to me on November 12, 2017, after I addressed a parishioner who refused the “Peace of Christ” when offered to him by an African American visitor in worship.

Bondage to Sin: “We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed...”

I came to serve as pastor of Beth-Eden Lutheran Church boldly proclaiming my theology, and therefore my ministry was grounded in the Great Commandment, “to love God with all my heart, mind, soul and strength and to love my neighbor as myself.”<sup>24</sup> After twenty years in ministry, I am continually shocked at the different ways this commandment can be interpreted by wonderful Christian people who would be shocked to find out what they think might be contrary to what Jesus meant. I was encouraged that The Letter of Call I received from Beth-Eden Lutheran Church defined my ministry as such, “. . .to lead us in worship; to proclaim the forgiveness of sins; to provide pastoral care; to speak for justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed. . .to equip us for witness and service, and guide us in proclaiming God’s love through word and deed.”<sup>25</sup>

How to guide the congregation to reclaim, God’s love through word and deed is a pastoral challenge. For instance, when I was told that Mr. Fuller,<sup>26</sup> one of the white neighbors was having a liver transplant, I asked several of the members how we would care for him when he got home. One responded, “He doesn’t go to our church, so he’s not our responsibility.” And another stated, “He’s a no-good Fuller.” That is a stark contrast to the story about the neighbors dropping everything to see what they could do to help when a neighbor was in need.

“Proclaiming God’s love through word and deed,” is quite contentious when it comes to race relations in the community. The Beth-Eden Volunteer Fire Department is the only place in this community of Winston County where black and white people come together and work

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew 22:26-40.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Bruesehoff et al., *Pastor and People: Making Mutual Ministry Work* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>26</sup> \*Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of persons.



together to ensure the safety of all neighbors. Three of the people who serve on the Beth-Eden Volunteer Fire Department tragically lost their parents when their house burned to the ground. I went and prayed with the family and neighbors among the ashes.

When I asked Beth-Eden Lutheran Church how we would respond, they surprised me a generous check to help cover the funeral expenses. That day, we “practiced what we confessed,”<sup>27</sup> and then more. Another person suggested we take up a special offering, almost unheard of in this church, and over two hundred dollars was given to them in cash, along with the check to the funeral home. And, yet, despite this act of congregational generosity, a family who had worshipped there for over seventy years left the church because the family the church helped was African-American.

When I was installed as the pastor of Beth-Eden Lutheran Church, I promised to “love, serve and pray for God’s people, to nourish them with the Word and Holy Sacraments, to lead them by my own example in the use of the means of grace, in faithful service, and holy living.”<sup>28</sup> If a church is afraid and focused on preserving its building and heritage, how does a pastor continue to encourage and lead a beloved community to become a fuller, more alive Body of Christ? Gordon Lathrop poses, “We, as leaders, have to struggle with the true understanding of conversion or becoming something more. In the middle of a conversion, people are frightened, bewildered and call everything into question.”<sup>29</sup> With my appointment there, we had been thrown

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<sup>27</sup> Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 18.

<sup>28</sup>Lutheran Church in America, American Lutheran Church (1961-1987), Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, and Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. *Occasional Services: A Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 225.

<sup>29</sup> Dr. Luther Smith, lecture, January 5, 2017.

into a conversion<sup>30</sup> experience, both personally and corporately, as God began to do a new thing that no one could quite perceive.<sup>31</sup>

During communion, I see people struggle with the “new thing” happening as they “forget” or “ignore” their claim in desiring this holy meal and refuse to come partake if “certain” people are partaking in this meal. In the *Small Catechism*, Martin Luther asked those preparing to receive the Sacrament, “*Finally, why do you wish to go to the Sacrament?* Our claim and response should be, “That I may learn to believe that Christ, out of great love, died for my sin, and also learn from Him to love God and my neighbor.”<sup>32</sup> The Order of Confession and Forgiveness names “not loving our neighbor as ourselves” as sin. By ignoring these confessional and conformational vows, a few in the congregation ignore “the Christian hope that God’s transformational power is not just another name for our own status quo.”<sup>33</sup>

Melanie Ross writes, “Among other things, good worship is formative, expressive, grounded in Trinitarian theology, responsive to the needs of the local assembly, and concerned with outreach into the wider world.”<sup>34</sup> When present, these elements ostensibly create an inherent transformational power that can shape the people into something that is distinct from the world. The rituals of worship and the patterns of daily life shape the way we see the world. James K.A. Smith claims,

The rhythms and routines of an environment shape my habitual orientation toward and perception of the world in no small part because they form the neural maps that govern

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<sup>30</sup> For the purposes of this paper, conversion is defined as changed behavior in response to confession and forgiveness.

<sup>31</sup> Isaiah 43:19.

<sup>32</sup> The “Christian Questions with Their Answers,” designating Luther as the author, first appeared in an edition of the *Small Catechism* in 1551, five years after Luther’s death.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 13.

<sup>34</sup> Melanie Ross, “Evangelical Versus Liturgical? Defying a Dichotomy,” *Liturgy, The Journal of the Liturgical Conference* 29, no. 2 (2014): 17.

that perception of the world. Those rhythms and routines and rituals that constitute “regularities” in my environment—that are experienced as normal and dominant—will determine what counts as primary repertoire.<sup>35</sup>

The *habitus* of worship, what is professed and embodied, should inform daily life outside of worship. Instead, it often appears that the *habitus* of daily life, the local customs, and values of the community, holds more power to shape the words and actions of some people outside of worship.

In *The Big Sort: Why The Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart*, Bill Bishop discovered, “As Americans have moved over the last three decades, they have clustered in communities of sameness, among people with similar ways of life, beliefs, and in the end, politics.”<sup>36</sup> Bishop goes on to state, “Now people go to a church not for how it might change their beliefs, but for how their precepts will be reconfirmed.”<sup>37</sup> If a mission of the church is to transform people into the people of God, and people construct their lives around people who “live, think, and vote as we do,” how does worship continue to shape the “thoughts, words, and deeds” outside of worship? Can the long-established practices of worship, shape or change the long-established practices that regulate the lives of the congregants?

#### *Theology and Theory:*

##### Confession and Forgiveness: “Most merciful God,”

From the earliest glimpses of worship in the Scriptures, we see a pattern of confession and forgiveness. Psalm 32, one of the six penitential Psalms, contains this pattern of confession and forgiveness in verse 5:

Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity;

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<sup>35</sup> Smith, 115.

<sup>36</sup> Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008),5.

<sup>37</sup> Bishop, 180.

I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,'  
And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, Jesus, too, offered a pattern of confession and forgiveness in The Lord's Prayer:

And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us."<sup>38</sup>  
Jesus' instructions undergird the relationship between God, neighbor, and self. Just as God forgives us, we must forgive others.

Over the centuries, the Christian Church began to include Confession of Sin in worship.

Confession acknowledges sin and any impact sin has on others. Confession invites parishioners to repent, to turn away from sinful thoughts, words and deeds and to respond, to turn towards those that honor God, neighbor, and self. Confession is necessary because sin distorted the image of God in humanity and humans cannot restore themselves. The practice of confession of sin includes an *absolution* when forgiveness is declared over all participating in it. Absolution calls for genuine repentance.

Martin Luther felt so strongly about the power of Confession and Forgiveness that it was named as the third sacrament in Article XIII of the Apology to the Augsburg Confession- "Absolution, which is the Sacrament of Repentance."<sup>39</sup> In the Lutheran Church, three opportunities for Confession and Forgiveness are offered: corporate confession, individual confession, and confession immediately before receiving Holy Communion. Regardless of which rite one is participating in, it must be titled "Confession and Forgiveness" for each is the other side of the same coin.<sup>40</sup> Various purposes of the Order include:

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<sup>38</sup> Luke 11:4.

<sup>39</sup> Philip Melancton, the author of the Apology written in 1530, called it "Absolution, which is the Sacrament of Repentance."

<sup>40</sup> Pfatteicher and Messerli, 189.

- As individuals in the context of corporate worship as a regular discipline to deepen the spiritual life;
- The reconciliation of those who are estranged from each other, such as families or factions within the congregation;
- The acknowledgment of sharing in corporate wrongs and corporate guilt, such as participating in repressive actions toward outcasts, lack of openness to strangers in the community, supporting industries that destroy the environment or supporting dictatorial governments.<sup>41</sup>

Confession of sin is deeply embedded in the Lutheran worship and the core of being “freed in Christ.”

For five hundred years, the traditional Lutheran worship service has begun with an Order of Confession and Forgiveness. Ostensibly, the practice of Confession and Forgiveness contains within it the renewing power of Baptism, as the grace and mercy of God wash away the revealed sin. The sign of the cross<sup>42</sup> made by the pastor connects Baptism, one’s entrance into the Body of Christ, to the confession of sin. In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther states, “Repentance, therefore is nothing else than a return and an approach to Baptism, that we repeat and practise what we began before, but abandoned.”<sup>43</sup> Therefore, the practice of Confession and Forgiveness contains within itself, confession, repentance, and absolution of sin. Absolution calls for repentance. Genuine repentance demands a response, a return to the ways of God, which offers the renewal or the new life in Christ.

In the 1940’s, Dietrich Bonhoeffer claimed we share “life together under the Word.” Bonhoeffer goes on to point out that the Word is not something to be personally defined or chosen, but “the Word of God in Jesus Christ, which assures him [or her] salvation and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 188.

<sup>42</sup> In Baptism, we are washed in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and “marked with the cross of Christ forever”.

<sup>43</sup> Pfatteicher and Messerli, 151.

righteousness.”<sup>44</sup> Corporate confession serves to remind worshipers that no one can define or claim a private salvation or declare righteousness, but God alone who forgives. Raphael Warnock states it this way, “Indeed, how a church conceives the work of salvation and consequently the nature of its vocation as salvation’s instrument will determine the character of its witness and depth of its involvement in the hard and elusive work of social transformation.”<sup>45</sup> The logic of corporate confession of sin includes the people around us, a visual reminder that nothing is done in isolation, but in “life together under the Word.”

The word “liturgy” means “the work of the people,”<sup>46</sup> therefore, the congregation has work to do, but not to earn absolution, for that would be works righteousness. One of the mysteries of faith is that God most certainly offers forgiveness, but is it received unless there is repentance, or turning from the sin confessed? Repentance includes confession, forgiveness, and response. Does repentance create the space for forgiveness to be received? Confession and Forgiveness is practiced weekly, with or without Holy Communion to deepen its meaning for worshipers. What does it mean to practice Confession and Forgiveness if one does not fully understand and engage in the work of repentance?

Mystagogical Preaching: “Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his son to die for us, and for his sake, forgives us all our sins.”

As stated earlier, there is not a direct correlation between prayer and changed behavior. Edward Phillips posits, “performing a ritual does not guarantee that a worshipper will understand

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<sup>44</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 23.

<sup>45</sup> Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 28.

<sup>46</sup> Pfatteicher and Messerli, 9.

or adopt the ethics which are enacted.”<sup>47</sup> Do the words we pray in worship impact our words and actions outside after worship? Theodore Jennings agrees that the rituals “generate meanings which form or pattern action and meaning outside liturgical space and time.”<sup>48</sup> Can preaching explicitly on the Order for Confession and Forgiveness loosen the grip of sin so that worshipers are freed to love their neighbors as themselves? Could acquiring the skill of mystagogical preaching serve to release the power of the Confession and Forgiveness so that social tenets transform into “thoughts, words, and deeds” that are more in line with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

The Early Church employed mystagogical preaching to help new disciples comprehend the sacraments and the sacramental life they had been initiated into with their Baptism. Craig Satterlee, a Lutheran liturgical scholar, posits, “Mystagogical preaching is distinct from other types of preaching in that it draws the hearers into the mysteries, moving them to enter spiritually and intellectually into the rites in which they have previously participated but may have only understood in terms of sense-perception.”<sup>49</sup> Mystagogical preaching was not a form of education, but one of formation in the ways they would live out the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This formation involves reflection upon the ritual they are participating in to find deeper meaning in what they are doing. For instance, Baptism (should) occur once in a person’s life, but the understanding of dying to self and being raised to new life in Christ can be applied to one’s actions every day. Daily genuine repentance leads to renewal, which, over time, forms faithful believers who “proclaim God’s love in word and deed.”

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<sup>47</sup> Edward Phillips, “Liturgy and Ethics,” in *Liturgy in Dialogue: Essays in Memory of Ronald Jasper*, ed. Claud Dudley, Paul F. Bradshaw, and Bryan D. Spinks (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993), 91.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>49</sup> Craig A. Satterlee, *Ambrose of Milan’s Method of Mystagogical Preaching* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2002), 1.

The mystagogical sermon has a bent towards a realized eschatology that gives listeners a vision for what it means to “delight in [God’s] will and walk in [God’s] ways.” Within the reflection is an invitation to be changed by the “mysteries of faith” as well as to change their thoughts, words, and deeds into those that honor God, neighbor and self.<sup>50</sup> Mystagogical preaching offers time for meditating on the ritual, as well as its’ meaning in the listener’s life in such a way that a life in Christ is formed.

*The Interjection of Mystagogical Preaching*

Corporate Confession and Repentance:  
 “For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.”

On June 17, 2015, a white member of a Lutheran church, Dylan Roof, shot and killed nine members of Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Bishop Elizabeth Eaton of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America called us to enter a day of Confession and Repentance. To begin worship that Sunday, I spoke her words:

It has been a long season of disquiet in our country. From Ferguson to Baltimore, simmering racial tensions have boiled over into violence. But this, the fatal shooting of nine African Americans in a church is a stark, raw manifestation of the sin that is racism. We need to be honest about the reality of racism within us and around us. We need to talk, we need to listen, but we also need to act. No stereotype or racial slur is justified. Speak out against inequity. Look with newly opened eyes at the many subtle and overt ways that we and our communities see people of color as being of less worth. Above all pray – for insight, for forgiveness, for courage.<sup>51</sup>

Her words were followed by five minutes of silence to reflect upon this tragic act of violence, as well as the difference our faith in Jesus Christ would have on our response.

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<sup>50</sup> Due to the brevity of this paper, the exploration of mystagogical preaching is limited to this overview and examples.

<sup>51</sup> “ELCA Leaders Express Grief over Shooting in South Carolina,” last modified June 18, 2015, accessed February 22, 2018, <http://elca.org/News-and-Events/7753>.



Worship was one of those times when our liturgy had “a shape that is more than text,”<sup>52</sup> and our practice of communal confession was powerful and helped us examine those prejudiced and racist places in our own hearts. Care was taken not to manipulate people into a false repentance, but to encourage them to deepen their understanding of the bond we share as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Worship offered an invitation for parishioners to change sinful thoughts and words about this horrific event into those that honor God, neighbor, and self.

Later in the service, I preached this:

If only Dylan had heard Jesus speak, “Peace. Be still.” To the storms of hatred raging inside him. If only Dylan had realized that he was made in the image of God and that made his life priceless. If only Dylan had the eyes of Christ to see Jesus in everyone and to see that all are made in the image of God. If only Dylan had reached out and touched the hem of Jesus’ cloak in order to be healed of this hemorrhage that caused all the compassion to pour out of his heart...if only...

When we use a phrase like “if only” we usually mean we regret something we’ve done in the past...but it can also mean a desire or wish for the present or the future....

Since we cannot do anything about the past, let us reflect on what our hearts look like, confess our sins in the light of what we wish our hearts looked like so that from this day forward we will live lives worthy of Jesus who lives in us. So that, as we read in the gospel of Mark, we can proclaim Christ, confident that he sets free all held captive behind walls of hostility...including us.

I called the congregation into reflection for five minutes of silence. Then concluded:

We are all broken & beautiful all at the same time; we are all saint & sinner all at the same time because we all have prejudices that have worked their way into our hearts. We reflect and repent so that Jesus can calm the fears in us before they overwhelm us and take us down with them. We confess, repent and are forgiven so that our lives are changed into lives that honor God, neighbor, and self.”

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<sup>52</sup> Lathrop, 151.

## Reformation and Racism

On Reformation Sunday, October 30, 2016, I began my sermon with the words:

*Ecclesia Reformata, Semper Reformanda!* The Church Reformed, always, Reforming!" The Church has been reformed many times, and the church must always be reforming so as to move closer to becoming the Body of Christ we profess to be, the Beloved Community God calls us to be.

The sermon continued reciting the familiar story of Martin Luther nailing his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church with the explanation that the door served as a bulletin board of sorts for people wishing to enter a deeper conversation about a topic. I invited the congregation to enter a deeper conversation about the non-compatibility of white supremacy and Christianity using a story that had stretched across thirty years of my life:

One day, I asked my dad if I could invite a friend to spend the night with me. Dad said yes. I was so excited that Monica's parents said yes, too. We were playing in my room when I heard a knock at the door. A man I recognized from the church was very angry, and I heard him say to my father, "not in this neighborhood." My dad escorted him out. Dad told us everything was ok and to go back to playing. We did.

After Monica left the next day, my dad tried to explain what had happened. Tears streamed down his face as he tried to explain that a neighbor did not think Monica should spend the night at our house. Monica was the only girl to speak to me at school, the only girl to play with me at recess. Monica was black.

Twenty-eight years later, I was appointed to be the Associate Pastor at my parents' church. That same neighbor knocked on the door of my office and said, "I don't know if you remember, but..." I said, "I remember." My neighbor confessed, "I still struggle with racism."

We entered a deep three-year conversation about the "Southern Way of Life."<sup>53</sup> The Southern Way of Life centers on a myth that God-ordained a hierarchy of the races with

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<sup>53</sup> For the purposes of this paper, "The Southern Way of Life" is simply defined as the belief that God ordained the hierarchy of the races with white people being superior to the people of color which justifies a continued way of segregated living. For some, this deeply held religious belief holds more authority than Scriptures that reveal that all are created in the image of God, as well as the Constitution, that clearly states, "All [men] are created equal."

Also see:

David Billings, *Deep Denial: The Persistence of White Supremacy in United States History and Life* (Roselle, New Jersey: Crandall, Dostie & Douglass Books, Inc., 2016), 194.

Margaret Just Butcher, *The Negro in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1956), 245.

white people being on top.<sup>54</sup> Our conversation slowly moved towards the belief that if we think our racial identity is better than anyone else's we are committing a sin.<sup>55</sup>

One day, thirty-one years after my neighbor knocked angrily on my door at my house, he knocked timidly on my office door at church and came in. With tears streaming down his face, he proclaimed, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so, red and yellow, black and white, we are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world."

He was freed from the bondage of his sin of racism. My neighbor named his struggle with racism which suggests that he knew all those years that it was a sin. Did naming his sin take away some of the power it held over him? Did naming it racism and owning it as his sin give him the power to confess, repent, and receive forgiveness?

We begin each worship service with the Order of Confession and Forgiveness. Within this rite, we are reminded of our Baptism, that we are the Beloved daughters and sons of God, which means we live marked with the cross of Christ, and that gives us the power to live differently in this world. Within this rite is the power of confession, repentance, and absolution, the complete cleansing of sin, which frees us.

Every day, we live in the rhythms of confession and forgiveness. When we confess our sins, we confess the harm we have done in thought, word, or deed. Repentance is translated in Hebrew as return- a change of direction, a redirecting of one's course. If we confess, we should repent or return to God's ways. It is only the grace of God that can turn us around from whatever has captured us.

The instant we confess our sin, our destructive ways give way to new life, we die with Christ and are raised with Christ, our bondage to sin is broken, and we are freed in Christ.

I called the congregation into reflection for five minutes of silence. I concluded the sermon with these words:

We are saved by grace, or as Paul wrote in our passage from Romans, "There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift." Pure gift. A gift that we will never deserve, but so gratefully receive, even if it takes more than thirty years to confess and prepare a place to receive all that mercy. Forgiveness sets us free because in giving it, God forgives our sin and remembers them no more.

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Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 12.

<sup>55</sup> For the sake of this paper, I begin with the assumption that racism is a sin. I will not define or defend racism.

In confession and forgiveness, we are reformed into people who live and love more like Jesus, and that is the truth that sets us free from anything that has enslaved us. Our hearts, like the church, must always be reforming, our whole life long. Amen.

*Analysis of the intersection of confession and forgiveness and mystagogical preaching  
at Beth-Eden Lutheran Church*

” In the name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit, you are forgiven.”

Alongside the troubling examples of sinful ways, there are signs of hope, evidence that hearts and lives are being transformed. After we had corporately confessed our sin of racism after the Dylan Roof shooting, Mr. Fuller had his liver transplant. A meal sign-up sheet was put in the back of the sanctuary. During announcements, I told them I met a new person who said, “Oh, you’re the pastor of that church that loves children!” Next, I stated how proud I was to be the pastor of a church that loved their neighbor in real ways. I invited them to sign up for a night and to take their signature dishes to the Fullers. The sheet filled up and the Fullers were surprised by all the delicious meals.

The next spring when a God’s Work, Our Hands day approached, a parishioner suggested that we landscape the Fuller’s yard since Mr. Fuller had not been able to keep up with the yardwork since his transplant. An enjoyable day was had pressure washing his house, weeding the yard and planting flowers. The next fall when Mr. Fuller was in a wheelchair, another person suggested that we have a day of service and build him a ramp so that he could get into his house easier. Another great day was spent with members of the church where Mr. Fuller attends<sup>56</sup>, a ramp built, and accessibility given to a more independent life. I have no idea if the mystagogical preaching was what softened the people’s hearts to love their neighbor as themselves, but the Holy Spirit certainly moved through the congregation opening their eyes to see a neighbor in need, as well as a compassionate way to care for him.

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<sup>56</sup> These two churches had never collaborated on anything else before this day.

The Sunday after preaching the Reformation Day sermon on racism, including specific teachings on the transformational power contained in confession, repentance, and forgiveness, I ran into direct resistance to a deeply held religious belief: a God-ordained hierarchy of the races. I approached Jack\* and asked how he was doing, and he responded with, “I am still mad at you for that sermon last week.” I stated, “I set the sermon up as an invitation to a deeper conversation about racism. Would you like to have a deeper conversation about the sermon, racism, or your response to it?” Jack shot back, “You have no idea what my experience has been.” I replied, “You are right, but I would appreciate the chance to hear your experience. Please let me know if and when you’re ready to talk more.” Jack said, “I will text you when I’m ready.” I said, “Thank you. As always, you and your family are in my heart and prayers.”

On November 8, 2016, Jack\* and I ended up being the only ones painting the fellowship hall. He offered, “I guess this would be a good place and time to talk about your sermon.” I said, “Sure.” I have found that having something to do with our hands often invites people to a deeper conversation. Jack started off attacking my claim that there is white privilege because he still had debt. The one-sided conversation quickly moved to three experiences he’d had growing up in south Mississippi. One was where some African American kids had protected him from a bully, one was when an African American boy had stolen something from him, and another was when some African Americans had bullied him. Other than those two times, all Jack’s experiences with black people had been positive.

Jack said, “It’s interesting how your one experience shaped your whole understanding of Jesus. I’m not sure why I let those two bad experiences shape the way I see black people. I certainly had been bullied by white kids and didn’t stop being friends with all white people. I

sent my kids to the Academy<sup>57</sup> in hopes of protecting them from bad experiences with black kids, and yet they're being bullied by white kids who think they are better than them." Jack was silenced by his own revelation.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer suggests that we can love one another, but only with the help of Jesus Christ who came not to be served, but to serve.<sup>58</sup> When Jack seemed ready, I asked him if he wanted to pray together. He grabbed my hands and said, "please." We prayed to the One who unites us, who made room for all of us in his Body. We both confessed our prejudices, prayed to be set free from the bondage those prejudices create so that we might be reconciled with God and each other. Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, stood among us and set us free.

*Conclusion*  
"Amen."

Rural culture is anchored in local institutions, and principle among these institutions is the local church. Embodied within the church are the customs and values of the larger community. Preaching Christ in a rural southern culture that is resistant to change comes with blessings and curses. If these customs or practices reflect the gospel of Jesus Christ, they become gifts of the church to share freely. If these customs or practices are contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the pastor is faced with a dilemma: accepting the contrary practice and losing their soul or addressing the contrary practice and losing their ministry appointment.

A 2001 study done on rural America by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation found that there is a "perception of rural individualism combined with a sense of tightly knit rural communities."<sup>59</sup> This project revealed that the people of Beth-Eden Lutheran Church were certainly self-

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<sup>57</sup> The local private, Christian academy.

<sup>58</sup> Bonhoeffer, 24.

<sup>59</sup> Kellogg, "Perceptions of Rural America."

sufficient, but they did not seem to be tightly knit. The people knew everyone, but even understanding themselves to be Christian, some did not feel compelled to love their neighbor until that commandment was taught and preached. The influence of the “southern way of life” reached inside the church, and some people seemed surprised to learn that there is no God ordained hierarchy of the races, but instead, an equality found in the Body of Christ where all sinners are welcome.

This project is relevant to pastors and congregations of the mainline Protestant churches today. A Hartford Institute for Religion Research study showed that 59% of churches in the United States have 7-99 members. In the Rural South, the percentage of small membership churches rises to 70.5%.<sup>60</sup> The National Congregational Study (NCS) shows that from 1998 to 2012, the number of small membership churches has grown from 37.8% to 42.7%.<sup>61</sup> These numbers can only be expected to rise with the decline of memberships across mainline Protestant church. As churches become smaller, the members tend to cling more tightly to long-held traditions, creating a dangerous cycle as pastors try to preach Christ in life-changing ways.

Immediate effects of this project have been identified, and it will serve more as a long-term catalyst to change my ministry rather than to produce specific results in the congregation. Learning the new ministerial skill of mystagogical preaching has offered a key to open and deepen the understanding of the congregation to what they are participating in so that transformative power is released. The practice of confession and forgiveness has certainly shaped my ministry in the four years I have been serving Beth-Eden Lutheran Church. As I

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<sup>60</sup> “What is the size of U.S. Churches?,” Hartford Institute for Religion Research, last modified December 17, 2015, accessed February 28, 2018, [http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast\\_facts.html#sizecong](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#sizecong).

<sup>61</sup> “Size of Congregation by Year of Survey,” The Association of Religion Data Archives, last modified March 9, 2018, accessed February 28, 2018, [http://www.thearda.com/ConQS/qs\\_295.asp](http://www.thearda.com/ConQS/qs_295.asp).

consider the formation that happens in history, worship, and individual lives that spans the centuries, I am reminded that it is I who enter the “long, slow work of God.”<sup>62</sup>

Although a direct causal connection cannot be drawn between words we say to God in worship and our words and actions towards others after worship, there is evidence of lives being changed. I hear confession and forgiveness making a difference in the personal lives of the people as they apply to their own sins. One person realized that she doesn’t have to “keep asking for forgiveness for the same thing.” Another offered, “I can’t cover that sh\*\* up, but I can name it, and I’m forgiven.” A new Lutheran interjected, “But you have to have remorse, you have to try not to do it again. Remember, Pastor Allison told us the more guilt you feel does not make it a better repentance. But a tiny change in the right direction gives God something to work with.” Others described confession and forgiveness as “peace,” “relief,” and “being set free.”<sup>63</sup> It is not clear whether this application came as a result of preaching specifically on confession and forgiveness. The people appreciated the opportunity to ask questions and talk about their understanding of confession, repentance, and forgiveness.

As I cultivate deeper relationships and conversations, the sufferings that shaped the people are revealed, as well as God’s investment in their healing and redemption. Ellen Ott Marshall implores us to look back and forth at what makes us “grieve, shout and resist the limitations of and losses of life” and what offers us “possibilities for growth, love, and freedom.”<sup>64</sup> When I can hold these two contradictory visions of what is and what can be together, I am freed to join God where God is already active in their lives. It is then that I possess

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<sup>62</sup> Rev. Carole Cotton Winn uses this phrase often when preaching and teaching on ministry.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with ecumenical Bible study group on January 23, 2018.

<sup>64</sup> Ellen Ott Marshall, introduction to *Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), xx.



what Martin Luther hoped that all pastors would have, “compassion for all entrusted in [my] care.”<sup>65</sup>

Beth-Eden Lutheran Church is full of good, faithful people, and simultaneously unfaithful people, some of whom follow the Southern Way of Life more closely than following the way of Jesus. Their pastor is called to meet them where they are in life. No formula of liturgy and life can be constructed and replicated to ensure that the words people pray in worship shape their words and actions after church lets out, for this is the holy work of God alone, a true “mystery of the faith.” Nonetheless, continuing to practice confession and forgiveness, continuing to teach and mystagogically preach the meaning of the rites of Lutheran worship, and continuing to cast an eschatological vision of what it means to “do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8) will continue to let God “forgive, renew, and lead us so that we may delight in [God’s] will and walk in [God’s] ways, to the glory of [God’s] holy name. Amen.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> “Preface to the Small Catechism,” Luther’s Small Catechism, last modified February 26, 2018, accessed February 14, 2018, <http://catechism.cph.org/index.html>.

<sup>66</sup> *LBW*, 56.

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