

IN WORD AND IN CONFESSION

by Jacob Quast

In the fall of 2011, President Robert Bugbee of Lutheran Church–Canada heralded an ambitious plan for our Synod by encouraging every member of every congregation to do something radical: read the Bible. And many did. Over the course of two years, many of our congregations across Canada dedicated time and effort to read the Holy Scriptures as a group—as the body of Christ. Those who were blessed to participate in this activity know well the fruit it bears. Faith was deepened and strengthened, and new appreciation for God's Word was created as the Holy Spirit worked through the living Word to teach us about Jesus.

My own joint parish was greatly edified through the undertaking of this devotional practise. As a pastor it filled my heart with joy to see the people in my parish opening the Scriptures and talking to each other about what they had read. Questions were asked (and mostly answered by their pastor) and fruitful discussion was held. I am certain that my congregations' experience was not unique.

I hope and pray that many have continued in this discipline of daily Bible reading. It is a lifelong pursuit, to be sure. Why not build on that solid foundation with another book that can also be of great benefit to us in our Christian faith and life? I am talking about the book that makes Lutherans *Lutheran*: the Book of Concord.

I know what you're thinking: "That book is for pastors and other church workers, not the average lay person!" Not so. The confessions were themselves signed not just by theologians but also by laymen. And in the not-so-distant past, almost every Lutheran owned and read a copy of this foundational book of Lutheranism, which teaches about Christ and His Word of hope and life.

With the rapid approach of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation we have an incredible opportunity to once again take up this book and reacquaint ourselves with the foundational teachings of Lutheranism, which are themselves drawn directly from Holy Scripture. In a

world in which we are tempted to be blown to and fro by every wind of doctrine, the Book of Concord serves as an anchor to keep us in the truth of what the Bible actually says.

We are ideally situated as Lutherans to proclaim with boldness and vigour the whole counsel of God to those who are searching for answers to difficult questions. As we read through the Book of Concord, we may very well be taken aback by the timeless way in which it addresses certain issues—issues which we still struggle with today. This is because the foundation of the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord is the Word of God itself—a Word which is everlasting and for all people in all places.

Beginning this Reformation Sunday, my parish will begin reading through the Book of Concord in one year. A simple schedule of readings can be found in every copy of *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions - A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*, available from Concordia Publishing House. You can also find the same schedule of readings printed in *The Canadian Lutheran* throughout the next year, beginning

with this issue (see page 41).

Throughout the year my parish will be meeting to discuss what we have read with one another. I encourage you to start a discussion group like that where you live too. And be sure to invite those outside your church who are hungering for the deep, Gospel-rich theology found in confessional Lutheranism.

Please take the time to approach your pastor and ask him about studying the Book of Concord for the coming year. What joy we will have as Lutherans—as Christians—reading about what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. Because that's what the Reformation always was about and what it still is about: Jesus.

Rev. Jacob Quast is pastor of Church of the Lutheran Hour in Fort Frances, Ontario.

