

Glossary of Terms for Lutheran Catechesis

drawn from the Bible, Confessions, and Life of the Church

compiled by Matthew Christians

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Milan WI
and
St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Edgar WI



Note: this is not a dictionary. Exhaustive definitions are not given. Terms are defined in the context of how they are used in the Church, particularly how they are used in the Orthodox Lutheran Church.

Aaron

The brother of Moses who later became his spokesman and assistant. He was the first (and head) of the Levitical priesthood.

Aaronic Benediction see "Benediction."

Abel

The second-born son of Adam and Eve who was a man of faith in God. He was killed by his jealous brother Cain when his offering was received the Lord and his brother's offering was rejected.

Abortion

Killing a child in the womb of his/her mother.

Abraham (see Abram)

Abram

The Old Testament man who was called out of the Land of Ur to worship the true God and to be the father of God's chosen people. His name is Hebrew for "exalted father." Later God changes his name to "Abraham," meaning "father of nations."

Absolution

An announcement of forgiveness usually spoken by the pastor. Following the confession of sins, the Absolution pronounces God's forgiveness either in a direct form ("I absolve/forgive you") or in a declarative form ("God forgives you all yours sins"). The word comes from the Latin, *absolvere*, which means "to loosen, set free, or absolve" (John 20:23); it is the assurance given to someone who repents of his sins that they are forgiven because of Jesus Christ's perfect life and death as a payment for all sin.

Adam

The name of the first human being God created. The man Adam was created out of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). The name Adam is a Hebrew word meaning "man" and "dust." Through this man's disobedience sin entered the world was passed on to all people.

Adultery

Giving the physical, emotional, and spiritual devotion that rightly belongs to your spouse to someone (or something) else; breaking the marriage vows of lifelong faithfulness; having voluntary sexual relations with someone who is not your spouse.

Advent

The first season of the church year, Advent serves to prepare us for the coming celebration of Christ's birth. The word comes from the Latin, *advenire*, which means "to come." Advent themes include not only Christ's coming at Bethlehem but also his coming now in Word and Sacrament and his final coming in glory.

Agnus Dei Hymn (AHG-noose DAY-ee)

Latin for "Lamb of God," this hymn in the communion liturgy draws on the words of John the Baptist who pointed his disciples to Jesus, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). In the communion liturgy, we are praying to Christ who is there present in his body and blood to have mercy on us and grant us peace. See also "Lamb of God."

Alb

This white "robe-like" garment is the standard vestment for pastors, especially at the Divine Service. The name comes from the Latin word for white, *alba*. The white alb covers the pastor head to toe, signifying how the righteousness of Christ covers over all our sinfulness.

All Saints' Day

An ancient observance on November 1 that originally commemorated the martyrs of the church (those who had died for the faith). It has since been expanded to include all who die in the faith. Because all who belong to Christ are saints, the festival also rightly emphasizes our unity with all believers, both living and dead. This festival is typically celebrated by the Church whenever November 1st falls on a Sunday.

All nations

A Biblical term meaning "everywhere, to all people." Jesus directed his disciples to bring "repentance and forgiveness of sins... to all nations" (Luke 24:47).

Alleluia

The Greek way of spelling the Hebrew word "Hallelujah." It means "praise the Lord." It is a word of joy and gladness. An ancient custom, which Lutherans continue, is to refrain from using Alleluia during Lent in order to distinguish the penitential nature of this season from the joyful exuberance of the Easter season that follows.

Almighty

All-powerful, having all might. An attribute of God. When the Old Testament words "Lord" and "Yahweh" occur together, most English translations say "LORD Almighty."

Altar

A table, usually made of marble or wood placed in the center of the chancel. Together with the baptismal font and pulpit, the altar is the chief focal point of the church building. In the Old Testament, sacrifices were made on the altar. New Testament altars remind us of Christ's sacrifice of himself for us. This is the place from which the elements of the Lord's Supper are distributed—here, then, heaven and earth are united as the body and blood of Jesus are given under the elements of bread and wine for our forgiveness.

Amen

A Hebrew word meaning, "yes, it is true." It is spoken at the conclusion of a prayer or blessing as an affirmation. In the Small Catechism, Luther explained Amen with: "Yes, yes, it shall be so."

Angel

A powerful invisible spiritual being created by God. The word "angel" is a Hebrew word meaning "messenger." Angels are used throughout the Bible to announce important events in God's work of salvation.

Annunciation

A church festival celebrated on March 25, nine months before Christmas. Annunciation is the day we remember the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would give birth to the Son of God (Luke 1:26-38).

Antiphon (AN-tih-fonn)

A verse of Scripture repeated at the beginning and end of a psalm or Introit. Antiphons function much like a refrain does in music, sometimes even being interspersed within a psalm.

Apostle (uh-POSS-uhl)

One who is sent. A term applied to the twelve disciples (students) of Christ who were selected by him for special training in preparation for their mission of spreading the Gospel. The term was also applied to Paul who was converted by Jesus from a persecutor of Christians into a bold preacher of the Gospel. He was given the title since one of the qualifications for an apostle was to be an eye-witness of Christ, and Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus.

Apostles' Creed

One of the three ecumenical (universally accepted) creeds, the Apostles' Creed was not written by the apostles. It is so-named because the Apostles' Creed faithfully summarizes the apostolic teaching of Holy Scripture. Its origins date back to the second century where it developed as a statement of faith used in Holy Baptism. In most churches it is still used at every baptism since it confesses the historic Christian and apostolic faith in simple language. See also "Creed."

Aramaic (air-uh-MAY-ick)

An ancient language spoken in Israel, very similar to Hebrew. Parts of the Old Testament Book of Daniel are written in Aramaic. Our Lord Jesus almost certainly spoke and used Aramaic in his daily life.

Art

In the Lord's prayer, an archaic way of saying "is, are," as in "Our Father who is in heaven."

Ascension

Observed on the 40th day of Easter (always a Thursday), the Ascension commemorates Jesus' final appearance to his disciples before ascending to the Father (Acts 1:1-11).

Ash Wednesday

This day, which marks the beginning of Lent, is 40 days before Easter. (Sundays are not included in the count). The theme of the day is repentance, which in some churches is visually depicted by the placing of ashes on the forehead while the words of Genesis 3:19 are spoken: "from dust you came and to dust you shall return."

Athanasian Creed

One of the three ecumenical (universally accepted) creeds, it probably originated around A.D. 500. Though it is named after Athanasius (a fourth century defender of the orthodox faith), it was certainly not written by him. This creed is a grand expression of the Trinitarian faith. It is often used in Churches on Trinity Sunday (the first Sunday after Pentecost).

Atonement

Making amends for a wrong. Describes Christ's perfect life and innocent death in our place to reconcile us with God. "...God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2Corinthians 5:19). Sometimes called "vicarious" atonement or "substitutionary" atonement, indicating that Christ suffered in our place.

Authorities

All those whom God has placed in positions to rule, govern, and guide others in the home and society. Common authorities include parents, government and its officials, teachers, pastors, police, etc.

Baptism

A "washing." Christian baptism refers to the "washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26) which forgives sin, drowns the sinful nature, creates faith in Jesus, bestows the gift of the Holy spirit, and names us the children of God and heirs of the kingdom. Baptism is a one-time sacrament and means of grace in which God's word is spoken and water is applied to a person for the forgiveness of sins. The words used are from Matthew 28:19 "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Baptismal Garment

The baptism service provides the option of laying a white cloth on the newly baptized, symbolizing the righteousness (purity) of Christ with which they have now been clothed (Galatians 3:27). This practice is reminiscent of an ancient practice of clothing the newly baptized in a white garment. A vestige of this tradition is the use of a christening gown which is often handed down from generation to generation. (See also Revelation 7:9-17.)

Baptismal font

Baptismal fonts come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. The baptismal font serves as a place for baptizing infants and adults into the faith using the words, "I baptized you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). It also serves as a constant remembrance of our baptism, of the wonders of God's grace.

Barabbas (Bar-AB-iss)

The guilty man who was released in the place of Jesus, an innocent man. Barabbas was a thief and insurgent against the Romans who Pilate released at the Passover.

Barren

Unable to conceive and bear children.

Bathsheeba (Bath-shee-bah)

The wife of Uriah the Hittite who committed adultery with King David. The mother of Solomon.

Beatitudes (Bee-AT-ih-tudes)

The statements Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapter 5-6) in which Jesus declares the blessedness of Christ which Christians receive and share in through faith in him. From the Latin for "blessedness."

Beelzebub see "Satan."

Begotten

Jesus Christ was not "created" by the Father; he was begotten. This means that the Father shared his divine essence with the Son. Jesus is often called the "only-begotten" to indicate the eternal, unique, one of a kind aspect of his being begotten of the Father from eternity.

Benedicamus (Beh-neh-dih-KAH-moose).

Latin for "bless we [the Lord]."

Benediction

A blessing from the Lord, spoken by the pastor at the end of the service. The "Aaronic Benediction" is the familiar blessing that begins, "The Lord bless you and keep you." It is given the name "Aaronic" because it is the blessing God commanded Moses to give to his brother Aaron to speak to the people (Num. 6:24-26). The "Apostolic Benediction," from 2 Corinthians 13:14, is given the name "Apostolic" since it is spoken by the Apostle Paul.

Benedictus (Beh-neh-DIK-tuss)

Zechariah's song of praise following the birth and naming of his son, John the Baptist (Lk. 1:68-79). Benedictus is Latin for "blessed be."

Benefit

Something that is good for you, that contributes to your physical and/or spiritual welfare.

Benevolent

Good, kind, desiring the welfare of others. One of the attributes of God.

Bethlehem

A small village five miles south of Jerusalem where King David was born. In fulfillment of the prophecy, Jesus would later be born in Bethlehem to Mary and Joseph.

Betray

To say one thing, but do another; to hurt someone who expects you to help them; to go behind ones' back.

Bishop see "Elder."

Blessedness

A state of having been blessed by God, living in a state of God's favor.

Blessing

A favor or gift from God.

Boast

To brag about something, especially about oneself.

Bodily preparation

Anything which helps discipline the body so that one can concentrate on what's important, namely- the things of God (Colossians 3:1-3).

Boldness

Fearlessness, Bravado.

Bondage

Slavery. Literally, "tied up," "shackled."

Book of Concord (KON-kord)

Compiled in 1580, the Book of Concord contains all the Confessional writings of the Lutheran Church. Orthodox Lutheran pastors, congregations and synods subscribe unconditionally to the doctrinal content of the Book of Concord. Documents included are: The three Ecumenical Creeds, The Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Apology, The Large and Small Catechisms, The Smalcald Articles, Treatise on the Power & Primacy of the Pope, and The Formula of Concord.

Born again see "New Birth."

Bowing

Since early times Christians have bowed as a sign of reverence. Usually a slight inclination of the head or upper body, bowing is often done when approaching the altar and at certain places in the liturgy, like during the voicing of the triune name in the Gloria Patri. As with all customs that are neither commanded nor forbidden, bowing (or not bowing) should not be used as a test of one's faith.

Breaking of the Bread

The New Testament term for the Lord's Supper which is used in the Book of Acts and by the Early Church.

Caesar (see-zurr)

The title for all the Roman emperors after Julius Caesar. The emperors who bore this title during New Testament times are, in order: Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero.

Caiaphas (key-uh-fiss)

The official high priest and head of the Sanhedrin at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. He was the man who unknowingly prophesied, when he said, "It is better for us that one man should die for the people" (John 11:50).

Cain

The first-born son of Adam and Eve. Best-known for murdering his brother Abel.

Calling see "Vocation."

Calvary (CAL-vuh-ree) see "Golgotha."

Canticle

A biblical song, other than a psalm. The most familiar canticles are the songs of Zechariah (the Benedictus; Luke 1:68-79), Mary (the Magnificat; Luke 1:46-55), and Simeon (the Nunc Dimittis; Luke 2:29-32). There are numerous Old Testament canticles, including the songs of Miriam and Hannah and several from the book of Isaiah. The Revelation to St. John also includes several canticles.

Cantor

Alternate spelling: Kantor. One who leads singing, especially that of the congregation. One of Luther's associates, Johann Walter, is considered the first Lutheran cantor. J. S. Bach is probably the most renowned cantor. The term is finding increased use among those who are called to oversee the congregation's music-making and to work with the pastors in service planning.

Capitol Punishment

When a legal government puts to death criminals for the crimes that they commit, such as murder and rape.

Cassock

A full-length, black garment that is worn under other vestments, most often the surplice. During certain special services (Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil), the cassock is sometimes worn by itself.

Catechism

A book of instruction, often in the form of questions and answers. See also "catechumen." Martin Luther is known for having written two Catechisms, the Small Catechism (often used as a Confirmation textbook) and the Large Catechism.

Catechumen

A catechumen is a "learner," one who undergoing "catechesis." In the early church, a catechumen was one who underwent rigorous instruction in preparation for Holy Baptism. The word comes from the Greek and means "to echo" or "sound in the ear." Catechumens were traditionally taught through question and answer, with the answer echoing back what was first taught. See also "Catechesis."

Catechesis

The process of teaching the Word of God and passing on the language of our holy faith, so that the baptized learn how to receive God's gifts in the Divine Service, how to pray, how to confess, and how to live where God has called them- in the freedom of the forgiveness of sins, with faith in Christ and love for neighbor. See also "Catechumen."

Catholic

Universal. In the original versions of the ecumenical creeds, the word "catholic" is used to describe the entire church or the Christian faith. In this context, to call oneself "catholic" is to confess the fullness of the Christian faith without alteration. In order to avoid confusion, it is best to use the full name, Roman Catholic Church, when referring to that church body.

Chalice

Sometimes called "the common cup," the chalice is the cup used to distribute the blood of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar. It comes from the Latin calix, meaning "cup."

Chancel

The (usually raised) section of a church building beyond the altar rail where the altar and pulpit (and often the font and/or choir) are located.

Chanting

A method of singing liturgical texts that are not metered (as in a hymn). Most chant consists of short phrases that are sung responsively between pastor and people. Psalms may also be chanted as well as parts of the liturgy (e.g., the Gloria in excelsis, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 17).

Chaste

To be pure, faithful, modest, and disciplined in your sexual thoughts, words, and deeds toward others.

Cherish

To hold dear, love, treasure.

Christ

A Greek title meaning, "anointed one." It is the title of Jesus. In Old Testament times, anointing with oil (putting oil on someone's head) was often done to officially designate someone as the rightful holder of an office. At his baptism Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit to show his right to the offices of our prophet, priest, and king.

Christian

One who relies on Christ alone to save him from his sin and its eternal consequences.

Christmas

A church festival celebrating the birth of Jesus. Originally celebrated on Epiphany, January 6th (and still on that date in the Eastern Orthodox churches), it was moved to December 25th in the fourth century.

Circumcision

The act of cutting of the male foreskin. This was the sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants. This sign of the ancient promise to Abraham corresponds to the Gospel Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Church Discipline

When a pastor withholds Holy Absolution from an impenitent member of the congregation and forbids him to go to the Lord's Supper until he or she repents and is absolved. See also "Excommunication."

Church Year

The church's calendar, which developed over centuries, provides a yearly rehearsal of the life and teaching of Christ. The first half begins with Advent and continues with Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost. The second half of the year (Sundays after Pentecost) focuses on the ministry of Christ, concluding with an emphasis on the End Times.

Church, The Holy Christian

Sometimes called "the Holy Catholic Church." It is all people everywhere who trust in Christ as their only savior from sin, regardless of church affiliation. The Church in this sense is invisible- it is comprised of those who have faith in Christ.

Ciborium (sih-BOAR-ee-oom)

Similar in shape to a chalice and covered with a lid, the ciborium contains the wafers used in holy communion. Usually the wafers are transferred to a paten (plate) from which they are distributed.

Collect (KOLL-ekt)

A concisely written prayer that "collects" the prayers of the people. The Collect of the Day is prayed toward the beginning of the Divine Service, prior to the reading of Holy Scripture. The collect usually follows a pattern of: address to God, basis for the prayer, petition, desired benefit or result, and Trinitarian end.

Commit

To do something, perform an act.

Communion

The state of being in fellowship with someone. See "Lord's Supper."

Communion of Saints

The "holy fellowship in the forgiveness of sins" in which all believers in Christ participate. The "communion of saints includes all who look to Christ as Lord, both living saints and dead.

Compline (KAHM-plin)

Similar in nature to bedtime prayers, Compline is the last of the daily prayer offices that came into use during the Middle Ages. Prayed during the late evening, the service is simple in nature and includes this appropriate antiphon for use with the Nunc Dimittis: "Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping, that awake we may watch with Christ and asleep we may rest in peace."

Condemned see "Damn."

Confession

The act of admitting your sin, and then receiving forgiveness (often verbally from a pastor). See Martin Luther's Explanation in the Small Catechism. Also used to describe a public statement of faith (for example, Lutheran Confessions). See also "Private Confession."

Confessional

One who subscribing to a confession of faith is confessional. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) is called a confessional church because it publicly states its belief that the Lutheran Confessions as a true statement of what the Bible teaches. Also, the name given by the Roman Catholic Church for a private booth for Individual Confession.

Confidence

Having no doubt, having assurance and sureness in yourself or someone or something.

Contrite see "Contrition."

Contrition

The state of being "contrite." To be "crushed" or "killed" by God's Law so that one can make no more excuses to God. One who is contrite confesses the truth that he/she is a sinner who has sinned against God.

Conversion

The work of the Holy Spirit in turning hearts from the death of unbelief to saving faith in Christ Jesus.

Cornerstone

An important large stone at the outer corner of two intersecting masonry walls on which a building rests. Jesus is called our "chief cornerstone" because our whole faith rests on Jesus Christ and him crucified (Ephesians 2:20).

Covenant

An agreement between two parties. Used to describe the agreements God has made at various times with his people. The "Old Covenant" is the "promise" of the law... whoever does it will live, whoever fails to keep it will die. The "New Covenant" is the promise of the Lord's Supper that the blood of Christ was shed in our place to satisfy God's just demand for the death of sinners.

Covet

The selfish desire to have (or possess) something or someone that is not given to you by God.

Creature

A created being such as animals, humans, and angels.

Creed

From the Latin word "credo" which means "I believe." A creed is a compilation of words of faith confessing the teachings of Holy Scripture. It is the church's unchanging, public, and universal confession of faith that is drawn from the Word of God. The three Ecumenical (universal) Creeds are the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.

Cross

A wooden instrument of execution usually made out of wood. It has one tall horizontal spar to which is attached a horizontal crossbar.

Crucifer

The person who carries a cross in procession. Comes from two Latin words which literally mean "to carry a cross."

Crucifix

A Middle English term derived from the Latin, meaning "fastened to a cross." A crucifix is a cross that bears the image of the crucified Christ, pointing to the reality of the One who came in the flesh to be the Savior of the world.

Crucifixion

A form of execution (used by the Roman Empire and other ancient cultures) in which a person was nailed to a cross and left to die.

Curse

To call down the judgment of God upon someone or something; to condemn. Some include in this category the use of profanities and vulgar speech.

Daily Office

Services of prayer offered at established times each day. Already at the time of Jesus, set times for prayer were customary (Acts 3:1). By the sixth century, eight services of prayer, which included psalms and Scripture readings, were observed in monasteries. Since the Reformation, this schedule has been simplified to three times of prayer: morning (Matins), early evening (Vespers), and close of the day (Compline).

Daily Bread

All the gifts that God provides to sustain us each day in life and faith, including food, clothes, etc.

Damn

A verb meaning "to send to hell."

Damnation

The state of having been "damned" or "condemned." Damnation is suffering the punishment of eternal separation from God in hell. What all sinners deserve by nature and earn with their sinful deeds and thoughts.

Deacon

The New Testament name given to those servants of the church who were appointed to tend to the temporal needs of the congregation so that the apostles could give themselves more fully to the ministry of the Word.

Deceive

To cause someone to believe an untruth. To lead astray.

Declare

To decide by a judicial decision, such as "declaring someone innocent," "declaring a mistrial," etc. Also, to state firmly; make a statement.

Demon

An evil angel who rebelled against God along with Satan.

Descend

To go down. The descent of Christ into hell is the first event in Christ's glorification and exaltation, when he descended bodily to proclaim "to the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19).

Despair

The emotional state of feeling utterly lost, and/or the devastating belief that all hope for God's help and salvation is lost.

Despise

To look with contempt upon something or someone. To scorn.

Devil, The see "Satan."

Also used to describe any demon (evil angel.)

Devout

To be God-fearing, pious. Trusting in God above all things.

Disciple

A student, learner, pupil. Used especially to refer to the followers of Christ during his ministry on earth.

Dishonest

Deceptive, fraudulent.

Divine

Of or relating to God. God is divine; people are not (with the exception of Jesus who was both divine and human).

Divine Service

The name for the regular weekly service that includes the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Derived from the German Gottesdienst ("God's service"), its meaning is dual in nature. In worship, God serves us with his gifts of forgiveness and life, and we respond in service to him through our sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise.

Doctrine

A teaching or set of teachings about the faith.

Doxology

From the Greek for "words of praise." It is an expression of praise to God, usually in a Trinitarian form. The Gloria Patri ("Glory be to the Father and to the Son..."), is a common doxology used to conclude psalms and many canticles. Many hymns conclude with a doxological stanza that praises the Holy Trinity. The most familiar of these stanzas is known as the Common Doxology ("Praise God from whom all blessings flow...")

Easter

The Queen (or Golden Feast) of Church Feasts. Easter is the third day after Good Friday, the day on which our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Also the name of the 50-day season immediately following the day of Easter. The Easter season focuses on Christ's rising from the dead after his death on the cross.

Easter Greeting

The ancient salutation among Christians which celebrates and confesses the resurrection of Christ. Salutation: "The Lord is risen!" Response: "He is risen indeed! Alleluia!"

Easter Vigil

Occurring on the eve of Easter, the structure of this service dates back to the second century, making it one of our most ancient services. The service is constructed in four parts: light, Word, Baptism, and Lord's Supper. The Vigil serves each year as the church's first celebration of the resurrection.

ELCA

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The largest Lutheran denomination in the United States. The LC-MS and WELS both believe the ELCA has departed from the true faith in many areas of their doctrine- namely in their understanding of the authority of Scripture, nature of fellowship, role of women in the Church, human sexuality, and others.

Elder

A common New Testament term for a minister of the Gospel which refers to him as the leader of a church who has spiritual oversight of the preaching, teaching, and sacramental administration in a particular place. The word is used interchangeably with the word "presbyter" and "bishop." Today most often used to signify lay spiritual leaders who work as assistants to the pastor.

Elizabeth

The cousin of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Also the mother of John the Baptist, and the wife of Zechariah.

Emmanuel see "Immanuel."

Emerge

To come out into view, come out from something.

End of the Age

The Last Day of the world, when Christ comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead. See "Second Coming."

Enlightened

To have the light turned on, have one's eyes opened to understand something.

Envy

Bitterness (or resentment) toward another person because of what he/she has or because of what he/she has.

Epiphany

From the Greek, meaning "to appear." Observed on January 6, Epiphany is the church's celebration of the proclamation of Jesus' birth to the Gentiles; hence, the reading of the story of the visit of the Magi from Matthew 2. Originally, and still in the Orthodox churches, Epiphany served as the celebration of Jesus' birth. It wasn't until the fourth century that December 25 was established in the western church for this celebration.

Epistle

Greek for "letter," a written communication from one person to another. The New Testament contains 22 epistles written by Paul, Peter, John, and others, that were addressed to Christian churches scattered throughout the Roman Empire. The second reading in the Divine Service is usually taken from one of these epistles.

ESV

English Standard Version. The translation of the Bible used in the Lutheran Service Book. It is a modern revision/reworking of the Revised Standard Version (RSV) and the King James Version (KJV).

Eternal

Without beginning and without end. One of the attributes of God.

Eucharist (YOU-kahr-ist)

One of the many terms for the Lord's Supper. It comes from the Greek word meaning "thanksgiving." Even as Jesus gave thanks when he instituted the Lord's Supper, so do we give thanks that in this holy meal our Lord gives us his body and blood for forgiveness and life.

Euthanasia

Killing a person under the rationale that you are ending their suffering (putting them out of their misery). Although it is often called "mercy killing," Christians believe there is nothing "merciful" about euthanasia. Euthanasia is murder. God alone created and God alone has the right to give life and take it away.

Evangelical

The original name of the Lutheran Church. "Evangelical" refers to the Evangel, or "Good News" of Christ crucified. An evangelical church is one with a strong emphasis on proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the United States, Lutheran Churches often use both Evangelical and Lutheran in their name to distinguish themselves from modern-day fundamentalist churches that call themselves evangelical.

Evangelism

The work of an evangelist. See "evangelist."

Evangelist

Greek for "gospel preacher." One who shares the "evangel," or "good news" about Christ with people who do not believe in Jesus.

Eve

The first woman, created by God from one of Adam's ribs. Her name is Hebrew for "the mother of all the living." She, along with her husband Adam, disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden and brought sin and death into the world.

Exalt

To be lifted up, glorified. The exaltation of Christ refers to Christ being glorified above all things by the Father for having completed the work of salvation in his incarnation, suffering, and death (Philippians 2:5-11).

Excommunication

When the pastor (with the advice, consent, and approval/direction of the congregation) removes a person from the communion of the Christian church because of persistent impenitence and life of unbelief. This very serious action is a step of last resort and may not be done frivolously, quickly, or without persistent previous attempts to restore such a person to repentance. The purpose of excommunication is to draw a person back to Christ.

Exodus

The second book of the Bible. Also "the Exodus" refers to the Lord's great work for Israel in bringing them out of bondage in Egypt and into the Promised Land.

Exorcism

Casting out Satan and his demons by the Word of Christ. In Holy Baptism, unclean spirits are driven from sinners and the Holy Spirit is given.

Faith

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). As Jesus said to Thomas, "blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Faith is the hearts's reliance upon God, that which receives and clings to God's gifts of grace and mercy.

Faithful

One who keeps his promises and vows. One of the attributes of God.

False Testimony

To lie in any way, or to withhold the truth or remain silent when duty requires us to speak true- such as when our neighbor's reputation is being attacked.

Fasting

Temporarily refraining from food, often used as means of focusing the mind and body on the things of God (Colossians 3:1-3).

Fear

The hearts awe and reverence toward God. Also, the honor and respect that a child is to have for his or her parents. Also, can refer to the terror of the heart caused by the demands of God's Law.

Fellowship

To be in community with one another. The "fellowship of the saints" "fellowship" with one another when they build up one another in Christ through word, song, and deed.

Fidelity

To be faithful to a vow or promise you have made. Especially used in respect to be faithful to one's marriage vows.

Flagon

From a Latin word meaning "bottle" or "flask." A flagon is a large pouring vessel that contains wine for use during distribution of the Lord's Supper. The blood of Christ is poured from the flagon into a chalice.

Flesh

A term often used to describe the sinful nature of humankind. This term can also refer to the sinless human nature of Jesus Christ (see John 1:14).

Font see "Baptismal Font."

Forgiveness

Having a debt erased. The "forgiveness of sins" means that God, for Christ's sake, no longer holds my sins against me (Psalm 103:12).

Fornication

Seeking sexual gratification outside of marriage, including masturbation, premarital sex, pornography, etc.

Foundation

That which holds up a building. In Biblical terms, Christ Jesus is described as the foundation of a Christian and of the Christian Church (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Funeral Pall

A large, white cloth that covers a closed casket during the funeral service. Based on St. John's vision of the saints in heaven (Revelation 7:9), the pall symbolizes the white robe of righteousness given to all believers in Christ. The pall is also a reminder of the white garment sometimes given at the time of Baptism and symbolizes the new life in Christ first given at Baptism and now fully realized in death.

Gabriel

The name of the angel who brought tidings of John the Baptist impending birth and Jesus Christ's impending birth. His name is Hebrew for "man of God."

Genesis

A Greek word meaning "Beginnings." The name given to the first book of the Old Testament.

Gentile (Jenn-tile)

Anyone who was uncircumcised and not a Hebrew of the bloodline of Abraham.

Gethsemane (Geth-SEMM-uh-nee)

The place where Jesus prayed in anguish on Maundy Thursday over his coming death, but where Peter, James and John couldn't stay away. Also, the place where Jesus was betrayed by Jesus with a kiss and arrested by the Jews.

Gloria in Excelsis (GLOW-ree-ah in ex-SHELL-sis)

Also known as the "greater doxology," this is the hymn of praise sung at the beginning of the Divine Service. It originates from the fourth century and has been in regular use for over a thousand years. The hymn begins with the angel's song in Luke 2:14 and then continues with a hymn of praise to the triune God, focusing chiefly on the saving work of Jesus, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." It is often omitted during Advent, in anticipation of the celebration of Jesus' birth at Christmas, and during Lent, a season of penitence.

Gloria Patri (GLOW-ree-ah PAH-tree)

Latin for "glory to the Father." The complete text is: "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen." Also known as the "lesser doxology," this ascription of praise used as a conclusion to psalms and introits.

Glory

A state of high/highest honor. All true glory belongs to God alone (Revelation 19:1).

god

A god (spelled with lowercase letters) denotes a false god, that is- whatever a person trust sin or looks to for hi or her greatest good, help, and comfort in life.

God

The one almighty creator and ruler of the universe. In the Bible, God reveals his one divinity in 3 persons- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

God the Father

The almighty, eternal, first person of the Trinity. Co-majestic and co-equal with the Son and the Spirit. To the Father we ascribe the work of creation.

God the Holy Spirit

The almighty, eternal, third person of the Trinity, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Co-majestic and co-equal with the Father and the Son. To the Holy Spirit we ascribe the work of proclaiming Christ, creating and sustaining faith through the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments.

God the Son

The almighty, eternal, second person of the Trinity, who was begotten of the Father and born of the virgin Mary. Co-majestic and co-equal with the Father and the Spirit. The work of Christ was to become incarnate, suffer, die, and rise again for the forgiveness of our sins.

Godly

Conforming to God's standards. Lives that are lived by faith in the Gospel and which therefore learn to love both God and neighbor.

Golgotha (GOAL-guh-thuh)

"The place of the skull." The hill on which Jesus was crucified in between two thieves. Also sometimes called "Calvary."

Good Friday

The day during Holy Week when Jesus was crucified and finished for us everything that God demanded of him for our salvation.

Gossip

The spreading of information about someone (whether true or false) that one has no God-given right to speak about. Gossiping includes telling rumors, idle talk, and "tattling" about someone. Gossip is often rationalized by Christians as a means of "helping" someone.

Gospel

A Greek word meaning "Good News." The Gospel is the Good News is the saving message of God's grace and forgiveness to sinners in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Also a term used to refer to the four biblical accounts of Jesus' ministry (see Holy Gospel).

Grace, Means of

God has not promised to work through extraordinary means like dreams. Although he sometimes has done so in the past, he now promises to work through means. The Holy Spirit uses three means to affect the hearts of people: the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

Grace

Free gift. The "fatherly, divine goodness and mercy" of God (Small Catechism, Creed, 1st article). The unmerited favor and undeserved love of God.

Gracious

Showing undeserved kindness and/or forgiveness to another. One of the attributes of God.

Gradual

A liturgical response, drawn from the Bible, that follows the Old Testament reading. Traditionally sung between the Epistle and Gospel, the Gradual was moved to its current place when the Church began regularly reading from the Old Testament. The word Gradual is from the Latin for "step," which refers to the step of the lectern from which the Gradual was traditionally sung.

Great Commission

Jesus' command to his disciples in Matthew 28:18-20 to "make disciples of all nations [by] baptizing them in the name of the [Trinity] and teaching them to obey" all that Jesus taught.

Greek

The language of Greece. The New Testament is written almost entirely in Greek, in an ancient form known as Koine. Koine, which means "common" is a simple style of Greek that was derived from the more complex Classical Greek used by Homer, Plato, and the other classical Greek authors.

Hallow (HAL-oh)

An archaic word meaning "to make holy."

Hallowed (HAL-oh-wid)

An archaic word meaning "holy," In the Lord's prayer, "Hallowed by thy name" means "May your name be holy."

Hardness of heart

A Biblical phrase God uses to describe the condition of Pharaoh's heart (and others) who refuse to believe in God or receive the Word that is proclaimed to them.

Heaven

God's dwelling place. Heaven is where all who trust that Jesus died and rose again to save them from their sins will go to live with God and the Lamb. Heaven is where eternal life -without sin, death, disease, sorrow or pain- begins for believers in Christ. Also, refers to the expanse of space above the earth, including the sky and all that it contains... sun, moon, planets, etc.

Hebrew

The language of most of the Old Testament. Biblical Hebrew is written from right to left, and is entirely without vowels. For aid of reading, most modern Hebrew Bibles have vowels added in.

Heir (air)

One who inherits (or stands to inherit) something.

Hell

A place of eternal torment, punishment and separation from God for those who die without trusting in Christ to save them from their sins. Often called "Sheol" in the Old Testament and "Hades" in the New Testament. See the story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31.

Herod the Great

Anything but great, Herod was the evil governor of Judea and king of the Jews at the time of Christ's birth. He was responsible for the slaughter of the innocent male children in Bethlehem soon after Jesus was born there.

Hinder

To impede, get in the way of someone or something.

Historical Books of the Bible

The 12 Old Testament Books (which appear after the Pentateuch) which record the history of God's chosen people Israel.

Holiness

A state of perfection, or total removal from sin. This state of perfection is God's standard for living in harmony with him, "...without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). The only way for us to have holiness is through Jesus Christ, "who has become for us wisdom from God- that is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). See "holy."

Holy

Sinless and hating sin. One of the attributes of God. The attribute of Jesus Christ that is given to all believers in Christ. It is this attribute that makes us saints. See "holiness."

Holy Gospel

Refers to the reading of one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) in the Divine Service. The reading of the words of Jesus is given the highest place of prominence by being read last. At services when the Lord's Supper is celebrated, the congregation stands for the reading. Especially on high festivals like Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, etc., the Gospel may be read from the center of the nave, symbolizing what it means that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The movement to and from this location is referred to as the Gospel Procession.

Holy Innocents

Observed on December 28, this festival commemorates the baby boys of Bethlehem who were executed by King Herod in his attempt to murder the newborn king of the Jews (Matthew 2).

Holy Ministry

The divinely-instituted preaching and teaching office of the Gospel and Sacraments of Christ. See also "Ministry."

Holy Saturday

The time of vigil and prayer, between Good Friday and Easter, in which the faithful await the celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

Holy Week

The most important week in the ministry of our Lord Jesus, beginning with Psalm Sunday, followed by Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and ending with Easter Sunday. This is the week of our salvation, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, and then suffered, died, and then rose again.

Homily

From the Greek for "discourse." A homily is a sermon on a biblical text. There is no difference between a homily and sermon.

Homosexuality

The sexual desire for someone of one's own gender, which is sinful and contrary to God's design.

Honor

To respect, love. In terms of those whom God has placed in authority over us, honoring also means obeying.

Hosanna

From Hebrew, its basic meaning is "to save." It functions as a plea to God our king to have mercy on us and save us from our lost condition.

Humiliation of Christ

In order to save humanity, Jesus "humiliated" himself, that is "lowered himself" to be conceived, born, suffered, and died for sinners.

I AM

The name God gave himself to Moses at the burning bush. This name demonstrates that God is the only true God, the God of creation, and the God of salvation.

Icon

A style of sacred art usually associated with Eastern Orthodox churches. Painted according to strict guidelines, the two-dimensional paintings are intended as windows into heaven and form the basis for a rich devotional piety.

Idolatry

Faith in a false god. "Wrong faith." Typically defined into two classes: coarse and refined idolatry. Coarse idolatry is literal worship of a false god, such as worshiping Allah or Baal. Refined idolatry is simply looking to someone or something other than God for the greatest good, help, and comfort in life.

Immanuel (Ih-MAN-yoo-ell)

"God with us." The Old Testament name for the Son of God (Isaiah 7:14).

Immutable

Unchangeable and unchanging. One of the attributes of God.

Impenitent

One who is unrepentant . A sinner who does not feel for sorry for their sins, refuses to acknowledge their sins, and/or does not trust Christ for forgiveness.

Incarnate

Literally, "enfleshed." Refers to the Son of God who humbled himself to become a human being, taking on our flesh, in order to suffer and die for our sins.

Incarnation

That act of the Son of God taking on human flesh and becoming man, such hat there is a union of the divine person of the Son of God with the human nature. See "incarnate."

Incense

From the Latin word "to set on fire." In Jewish temple worship, incense symbolized prayer rising before God (Psalm 141:2). The same image is used of the prayers of the saints in heaven (Revelation 8:3-5). In use in the Christian Church for over 1,500 years, the sweet smelling aroma engages another of the senses. Its association with prayer recommends it for use at any service, but especially the prayer offices.

Indicate

To be a signal of, point to something, reveal.

Inerrant

"Without error." Orthodox Christians, Lutherans included, believe that the Word of God is just that... God's Word. Because the Bible is God's Word and God cannot make mistakes, we believe that the true text of the Bible contains no errors.

Infallible

Similar to "inerrant." Infallible refers to the understanding that the Bible cannot make mistakes; nor does it mislead humankind.

Iniquity (in-ICK-wi-tee) see "sin."

Inspiration

"Breathed in." Although the Bible was written by human beings using their own language, we believe the words they wrote were not theirs, but God's. God literally "inspired," or "breathed in the Holy spirit" into the apostles and prophets who wrote the Bible. Accordingly, we can trust what the Bible says absolutely.

Institute

To set up, establish.

Introit (in-TROH-it)

Psalm verses sung or spoken at the beginning of the Divine Service. From the Latin, meaning "to enter." Traditionally this was the entrance hymn to the Divine Service, consisting of antiphon, psalm, Gloria Patri, and antiphon repeated. During the Middle Ages it was shortened considerably and lost its function as an entrance hymn.

Invitatory (in-VYE-tah-toe-ree)

An antiphon preceding the Venite in Matins/Morning Prayer, this variable introduction concludes with the invitation, "O come, let us worship Him."

Invocation

From the Latin, "to call upon." The words "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19b) are spoken at the beginning of the service and remind us of our baptism. In Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches, it is usually accompanied by the sign of the cross.

Israel

Hebrews for "he strives with God." The name given by God to Jacob (Abraham's grandson). Later used to refer to the whole "people of Israel," all those God called out to be the nation from which the Christ would come. Today, Israel is the church of true believers in Christ. Also, refers to the northern nation of Israel after it divided from the southern nation of Judah.

Jealousy of God

God's desire that all people be saved through Jesus Christ and not be lost in sin. To this end, God demands in his Law that we all give honor and glory to him alone. Also, the threat of God's law to punish all who transgress his commandments.

Jerusalem (Jah-ROO-Sah-lemm)

The "City of David" that King David made the capitol of the Kingdom of Israel. After the division of the kingdoms into Israel and Judah, Jerusalem continued as the capitol city of Judah. Also the city outside of which Jesus was executed.

Jesse (JEH-see)

The father of King David and the ancestor of our king, our savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus

The name of the Christ, our Savior. In Hebrew, this name means "Yahweh [the LORD] saves." This name was given by God through the angel Gabriel. "...you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Jew

The most common name for a person who was of the bloodline of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was circumcised, and worshiped the true God at the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus was a Jew.

Job (Joe)

Old Testament man who lost his wealth, property, children, health, and reputation, but nevertheless continued to trust in the Lord and hold fast to God's promises of salvation.

John the Baptist

Often called John the Baptizer. The child of Zechariah and Elizabeth who was called to be the forerunner of Christ. His ministry of baptizing for repentance in the Jordan River pointed people and prepared the way for Christ. He was later beheaded by Herod.

Joseph

The name of the favorite son of Jacob who was sold by his brothers into slavery and later became vizier of Egypt, forgave his brothers, and saved his family. Also the name of a carpenter from Nazareth, descended from the house of David, who became the husband of Mary and the stepfather of Jesus.

Judah (Jew-dah)

The tribe of Israel that King David belong to and from which Jesus Christ was born. Also the name of the fourth son of Jacob (Israel) and Leah.

Judas Iscariot (JEW-dahs Iss-KARE-ee-ott)

The disciple who fell away from Christ and betrayed him to the Jews for 30 pieces of silver. He committed suicide by hanging himself.

Judea (Jew-DEE-ah)

The southernmost region of Palestine. After the division the United Kingdom of David and Solomon, the name of the southern kingdom. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethany, and Emmaus are all in Judea.

Just

Fair and impartial, correct in applying the Law. One of the attributes of God.

Just War

When a nation goes to war to defend its and its citizens against foreign aggression.

Justification

To be declared not guilty. Describes the result of Christ's death and rising from the dead on our behalf. "He [Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

Justified

The act of being declared just, or righteous. See "justification."

Kantor see "Cantor."

Keys see "Office of the Keys."

Kingdom

The area ruled by a king or other ruler.

Kingdom of glory

Those saints and angels in heaven, where God's glory is fully revealed.

Kingdom of God

The reign of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, in the hearts and lives of his people.

Kingdom of grace

Those people who have been redeemed by God's grace and look to Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

Kingdom of power

The area of God's kingdom where he rules in power- that is, all of creation. All people live in God's kingdom of power, irregardless of whether they acknowledge God's lordship.

Kyrie Eleison (KEE-ree-ay ay-LAY-ee-zon)

From the Greek, it is a direct address to God, meaning "Lord, have mercy." The ten lepers, blind man Bartimaeus, and others addressed Jesus with these words (Mark 10:47). The Kyrie appears early in the Divine Service. It is not part of the confession of sins but a cry to God to have mercy on us and all humanity.

Lamb of God

Sometimes seen written in Latin, "Agnus Dei." A title that names Jesus (John 1:29) as the sacrifice for all sin, who shed his blood to satisfy God's wrath. This title shows he is the sin bearer for the whole world, the true Passover Lamb, and the one to whom all the bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament point. See "Agnus Dei Hymn."

Last Day

The Last Day of the world, when Christ comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead. See "Second Coming."

Law

What God wants us to do, and what God wants us not to do; and since we cannot keep the Law, also that which condemns and accuses every sinner. Without this Word of God, we would have no knowledge of our sin or of the need for the Gospel of Christ. Sometimes used to refer also the Old Testament civil and ceremonial laws (which are no longer in force for us today); the term "Law" is also used to refer to portions of the Old Testament section of the Bible, especially the first five books Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

LC-MS

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. A confessional Lutheran Synod, founded in 1847, of which Bethlehem and St. John are members.

Lectern

The lectern is the reading stand from which the Word of God is usually read. In some churches it is highly ornamented, though usually less ornately than the pulpit.

Lectionary

A schedule of appointed readings from Holy Scripture for the Sundays, festivals, and occasions of the Church Year. The lectionary is a three-year series that covers the vast majority of the Holy Bible.

Lent

The penitential period of preparation before the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. Its 40-day duration (not counting the Sundays in Lent) begins on Ash Wednesday. In the early church, Lent developed as a time of intense instruction for those who would be baptized at the Easter Vigil. The name comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for "spring" and the Old English word for "lengthen," as in the lengthening of days with the approach of spring.

Levitical Priesthood

The Old Testament priesthood, drawn from members of the Tribe of Levi (one of the 12 sons of Jacob). They stood between the people of Israel and God as go-betweens. In New Testament times, we no longer have need for a special priesthood, for Jesus Christ stands for us as our own high priest (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Litany

A structured form of prayer for all conditions of humanity, consisting of a series of petitions and responses. In the Divine Service, the Kyrie is sometimes in the form of a litany, with the congregation responding to each petition with the words, "Lord, have mercy."

Liturgy

From a Greek word meaning "public service." In the Lutheran Confessions, liturgy is defined as "public service" in the sense that the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments is God's service done on behalf of his people. See also "Divine Service."

Lord

Master, ruler. The name for God which indicates that he has saved me and has dominion over me and all things. To call God "Lord" is to confess "you are my God, I belong to you." See also "LORD."

LORD

How many modern translations render the Old Testament name "Yahweh." Sometimes called the Tetragrammaton (meaning "4-letters"), the name Yahweh is comprised of four letters, transliterated as YHWH.

Lord's Day

Sunday. Revelation 1:10 is commonly understood as referring to the first day of the week. Since the earliest days of the Church, the first day of the week -the day of Christ's resurrection from the dead- has been the day of rest and worship for Christians. The Lord's Day is also the Day Holy Communion is always offered.

Lord's Supper

The Sacrament of the Altar. Synonymous with "Eucharist," and "Holy Communion." The Lord's Supper speaks of it as the food which Christ gives to the Christian to strengthen and preserve us in Christ and in truth faith to life everlasting.

Love

Caring for someone else above your own welfare. One of the attributes of God. In terms of love toward God, (first commandment), to love is to desire the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37).

Lowly

Humble, of inferior status.

Lucifer (Loos-I-fur)

A Greek name meaning "Bearer of Light." See "Satan."

Magi (MAY-jeye) see "Wise Men."

Magnificat (mahg-NIF-ih-kaht)

Latin for "magnify, praise" from the Son of Mary (Luke 1:46-55) which begins "My soul magnifies the Lord." This New Testament canticle has been sung at the daily service of Vespers (Evening Prayer) for some 1,500 years.

Manservant/Maidservant

An male or female household employee.

Marriage

The institution established by God for the union of one man and one women in one flesh, holy matrimony. In marriage, the man and the woman are called to love, honor, and be faithful to each other until death. It is entered into by the public exchange of promises.

Martyr (Marr-tur)

A person who is put to death because of his or her confession of faith in Christ. This word is the Greek word "witness," and refers to someone who bears witness to Christ by their own death.

Mary, the mother of our Lord

Mary was a young virgin, betrothed to be married who gave birth to Jesus, the Son of God. She is different from other Marys mentioned in the Bible who were followers of Jesus.

Mary Magdalene (MAGG-duh-linn)

The woman out of whom Jesus cast seven demons. She became a follower of Christ and was the first person to see the resurrected Lord.

Mass

One of the names for the service of Word and Sacrament. The term is used this way in the Lutheran Confessions, though in his later years, Martin Luther used it less frequently. More common terms among Lutherans are Divine Service, the Lord's Supper, and the Sacrament of the Altar.

Matins

The first of eight daily prayer services that developed during the Middle Ages for use in the monasteries. At the time of the Reformation, these services were reduced to two: Matins in the morning and Vespers in the evening. Matins is a Middle English word that comes from Latin for "of the morning."

Maundy Thursday

The Thursday during Holy Week. From the Latin word *mandatum*, which means "command." The reference is to the Holy Gospel appointed for the day from John 13:34, "A new command I give you: Love one another."

Means of Grace

The "vehicles" or "channels" through which the Holy Spirit gives Christ to us with all his gifts of grace. See "Communion," "Baptism," and "Word of God."

Melchizedek (MeII-KEZ-ih-deck)

The king of Salem during the time of Abraham who was a priest of God Most High. Melchizedek's priesthood corresponds to the unchangeable priesthood of Christ (Hebrews 5:6).

Members

People who belong to an organization, congregation, club, etc. Also, used in the Small Catechism to refer to one's arms and legs.

Mercy

The kindness and grace of God that does not hold our sin against us, but freely forgives us for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Merciful

Full of mercy. One of the attributes of God. See "mercy."

Merit

Having earned something through one's own efforts. Lutherans reject any idea of merit when it comes to salvation. As a result of our original sin, all human beings are totally without merit and reliant upon God's grace in Christ to gain salvation.

Messiah

Hebrew for "anointed." Equivalent to the Greek term 'Christ'. See Christ.

Minister

Both a noun and a verb. The noun is a title meaning "servant" and is often used as a title for pastors. The verb refers to the action of serving some one.

Missionary

One who goes out to carry out the "Mission of God," seeking and saving the lost. Used especially of someone who proclaims the Gospel in foreign countries.

Moses

The greatest of the Old Testament prophets, who was called by God at the Burning Bush to speak his Word and lead Israel out of slavery in Egypt.

Mount of Olives

Sometimes called "Olivet." The famous mile-long ridge to east of Jerusalem which includes Gethsemane, Bethphage, and Bethany on its slopes.

Murder

Literally, "to kill." The Bible and Catechism define murder as harboring anger, hatred, or grudges against someone. Also killing a human life (not in self-defense, just war, or legal execution), examples include: abortion, euthanasia, and unjust wars.

Narthex

Greek for "enclosure." The narthex is an entryway or gathering room that leads into a church.

Nave

From the Latin *navis*, which means ship. The nave is the main section of a church where the worshipers are gathered. The term may have derived from the ship-like appearance of early naves or from the early church understanding of the church as the ark of salvation.

Nazarene

A person from Nazareth. Jesus was often called "the Nazarene," owing to his hometown.

Nazareth

A town in Galilee where Joseph raised Jesus and his brothers and worked as a carpenter. Jesus was often called "Jesus of Nazareth," to distinguish him from other men named Jesus.

Nebuchadnezzar (Neh-boo-kad-nezz-uhr)

The Babylonian king who conquered Judah and Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and destroyed Solomon's temple. He carried off Daniel, his three companions, and many other Jews to captivity. It was Nebuchadnezzar who cast Daniel's friends into the fiery furnace for failing to worship the golden image.

Neighbor

In the Christian sense, a neighbor is anyone in need whom God has placed in your path. Your neighbor may be a friend or an enemy, a believer or an unbeliever.

New Birth

A common New Testament synonym for Baptism, which gives us new life in Christ. To be "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5), "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). One who has received the new birth is called a "new man" and has been "born again."

New Man see "New Birth."

New Testament

The 27 books of the Bible written after Jesus Christ was born, died, and ascended into heaven. Consisting primarily of Gospel accounts testifying to Jesus Christ, and letters written by the apostles to various people and congregations. Written originally in Greek.

Nicene Creed (nye-SEEN)

Composed in A.D. 325 at a council of bishops (pastors) in Nicaea as a defense against the false teaching that Jesus was not true God. The creed was expanded to its present form at the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381. It has been used in the Divine Service as a corporate confession of the faith for centuries.

NIV

New International Version. The Bible translation used frequently in worship services and Bible classes in the LC-MS.

Noah

The man who believed in God, built the ark, and became the father of the human race after the flood. He and his family were spared God's wrath because they trusted in the Lord and relied on his mercy.

Nunc Dimittis (noonk di-MIH-tuss)

Latin for "now [let your servant] depart," from the Song of Simeon. These are the words spoken by Simeon as he held the 40-day-old Jesus in his arms (Luke 2:25-35). The Nunc Dimittis was traditionally used in the daily service of Compline and as an alternate to the Magnificat in Vespers. In the Lutheran Church it is also appointed for use following the distribution of the Lord's Supper.

O Antiphons

Refrains that developed during the eighth century for use with the Magnificat at Vespers on the days leading up to Christmas (Dec. 17-23). Each antiphon is addressed to Christ, using an Old Testament image (O Wisdom, O Adonai, O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Dayspring, O King of the Nations, O Emmanuel). The antiphons are also reflected in the seven stanzas of "Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel."

Office of the Keys

The power to open or shut the door to heaven. The door is opened (unlocked) and a penitent sinner restored to communion with God through the Word of forgiveness. The door is shut (locked) by withholding forgiveness from the impenitent. This authority is given to the Church by Christ himself and is normally exercised in his stead by her pastors.

Old Adam

The rebel "unbeliever" which still exists in the sinful flesh of Christians. The Old Adam is an enemy of God, a child of the devil, totally sinful and corrupt, completely self-centered, and a hater of God and all that is good.

Old Testament

The 39 books of the Bible written before the Son of God became incarnate, that is- before he was begotten by the Father and born of the virgin Mary. The books of the Old Testament look forward to, anticipate, and prepare the world for the coming of Christ. Written originally in Hebrew and Aramaic.

Omnipotent (ahm-NIPP-oh-tint)

All powerful, almighty. One of the attributes of God.

Omnipresent (ahm-nee-PRES-int)

Present everywhere, living/existing everywhere. One of the attributes of God.

Omniscient (ahm-NISH-int)

All-knowing, knowing everything. One of the attributes of God.

One Flesh

The union created between a man and a woman through sexual intercourse.

Ordinary

Those parts of the service that remain constant from week to week. For centuries the ordinary of the weekly communion service were the Kyrie, Gloria in Excelsis, Nicene Creed, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. Countless composers have written complete musical settings using these texts. The parts of the service that change from week to week (such as readings, psalms, prayers, etc.) are called the propers.

Ordination

The "holy orders" given to a person being placed into the Office of the Holy Ministry, to tend, keep, and defend the Holy Gospel of Christ and his congregation. Such a person is called to preach and teach the Word of God faithfully, to judge doctrine, to remit and retain sin, and to administer the Sacraments according to their institution.

Ordo

Latin for "order." The term is used to refer to an order of service.

Original Sin

The sin each person is born with, which has passed down to him from Adam and Eve because of their sin in the Garden of Eden (Genesis, Chapter 3). Because of original sin, we are all sinners... that is, we have a sinful nature, are spiritually dead, and are the enemies of God.

Palm Sunday see "Passion Sunday"

Parable

Rich stories, full of imagery, which Jesus told to hide and reveal mysteries about the kingdom of God.

Paraments

This is the general term given to all of the liturgical cloths that are placed on the altar, pulpit, and lectern. The paraments are usually fashioned in various colors for use during specific seasons and days of the church year.

Passover

The feast that celebrates God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt when the blood of the lamb was smeared upon the doorposts of their homes, so that the Angel of Death would pass over them. This Old Testament feast corresponds to (and is fulfilled in) the gospel Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The various aspects of the feast all point unerringly to the death of Christ and our salvation in him.

Paschal (PASS-keI)

Of, or relating to the Passover Lamb. See "Passover."

Paschal Candle (PASS-keI)

A large candle that has special significance during the Easter Vigil. It is also used at baptisms and funerals. Ordinarily it is located near the font. During the Fifty Days of Easter (Easter through Pentecost) it is placed near the altar, and at funerals it stands near the casket. Paschal comes from the Greek work for Passover and refers specifically to the celebration of Christ's resurrection.

Passion Sunday

In the three-year lectionary, the Sunday before Easter. Traditionally referred to as Palm Sunday, the day commemorates the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem but then shifts focus toward the suffering that Jesus endured on our behalf.

Paten (PATT-en)

Latin for "dish." A paten is a plate, usually made of a precious metal like silver, from which the body of Christ is distributed.

Pastor

Latin for "shepherd," one is called into the Office of Holy Ministry.

Paul

The persecutor of the Church who was converted by Christ on the road to Damascus and became the foremost apostle to the Gentiles. He wrote the largest number of the New Testament apostles. Before his conversion, his name was Saul.

Pax Domini (POX DOE-mee-nee)

Latin for "peace of the Lord" (John 20:19). Prior to the distribution of the Lord's body and blood, the pastor blesses the people with the words, "The peace of the Lord be with you always."

Penitent

To be "repentant." One who is sorry for their sins (see "Contrite"), confesses their sins, and looks to Christ alone for forgiveness and life.

Pentateuch

Greek for "the five [books of the] Law." The first five books of the Bible (which tradition says Moses wrote). They are the foundation for all of Scripture. They are often simply called "The Law," or "The Law of Moses."

Pentecost

From the Greek for "fiftieth day." Pentecost is the liturgical celebration of that 50th day of Easter when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, marking the birth of the church. Liturgically, Pentecost is not the beginning of a new season, but the culmination of Easter.

Pericope (per-IK-oh-pee)

From the Greek, meaning to "cut around." A pericope is a section of Holy Scripture that is read in a service. Since the eighth century, pericopes have been gathered together in lectionaries in which readings are appointed for each Sunday or festival.

Peter

One of the earliest disciples of Jesus whose original name was Cephas. The name "Peter," which means "rock," was given him by Jesus. Peter is known for his confession "You are the Christ the Son of the Living God (Matthew 16:16), for his denial of Jesus in the courtyard outside Jesus' trial, and for his great resurrection sermons in Acts.

Petition

A request to someone in authority. The Lord's Prayer is traditionally divided into seven petitions.

Pharisee (FAIR-uh-see)

A member of a lay sect (regular people, not priests) who were "experts" in the Law and trusted in their own righteousness for salvation. The name means "separated" because they did not associate with people "beneath" them." Considered to be morally and spiritually superior to the rest of society because of their strict adherence to the Law of Moses and the traditions of the Jews, they were held up as examples to emulate.

Phos Hilaron (FOHS HILL-uh-rah-n)

Greek for "joyous light." It is the name of the Song of Light used at the beginning of the Service of "Evening Prayer." The name is derived from the song's first two words.

Physical

In the flesh, as opposed to spiritual.

Pierce

To penetrate with a sharp object, make a hole in. Jesus was "pierced/wounded for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5) when he was nailed to the cross.

Pillars of Cloud and Fire

The signs in which the Lord appeared to the people of Israel to lead them through the wilderness to the Promised Land. The Pillar of Fire appeared by day and the Pillar of Fire appeared at night.

Poetical Books of the Bible

The five books of the Old Testament which are written primarily in poetic verse (poetry). They include the Old Testament hymn book, "Psalms."

Pontius Pilate

The Roman governor of the province of Judea at the time of Jesus' ministry. It was his order that had Jesus executed on the cross.

Praise

To express approval about someone; to say good things about someone. The Christian's praise to God is a Spirit-led response to his loving faithfulness toward us.

Pray

To call upon God, asking for his help and blessing, according to the promises of his Word. Christians pray for themselves, for others, for the church, and for the world.

Prayer of the Church

The central prayer in the Divine Service in which the baptized people of God give thanks for all his gifts and pray for the church, the nations, those in need, the congregation, etc.

Preach

To proclaim the Word of God. That is, to call sinners to repentance and faith in Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

Preface

The opening dialogue between pastor and people that begins the liturgy of Holy Communion. These words, dating from the second century, are the most ancient part of the Divine Service and consist of versicles and responses. The unchanging Preface is followed by the Proper Preface, which changes from season to season.

Presbyter (PRESS-bi-tur) see "Elder."

Priest

One who serves the Lord on behalf of others. In the Old Testament, priests were called to pray, teach, and make the temple sacrifices to God on behalf of God's people.

Priesthood of Believers

The word that describes the baptized people of God as we live as "priests" for one another by listening to the Word of God, praying for one another, confessing, teaching, etc.

Private Confession

To confess one's sins privately to the pastor, in order to hear Christ's own words to you: "I forgive you all your sins." The purpose of private confession is to receive the comfort of Christ's forgiveness spoken directly and personally to you (and for you).

Profane

To violate the sacred character of something. To treat something as if it were "not holy."

Promised Land

All of the good land which the Lord promised to give to Abraham and his descendants, from the Jordan River west to the Mediterranean Sea (Genesis 13:14-15).

Proper Preface (see Preface)

Propers

Those parts of the service that change from week to week, including the Introit, Collect, Gradual, readings, hymns, etc. The changing propers give shape and direction to the church year calendar.

Prophet

Those persons through whom God reveals his Word. Old Testament prophets like Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah wrote down for us the literal Word of God. The act of speaking God's Word is called prophesy.

Providence

The gracious activity of God by which he preserves, upholds, directs, and governs his creation.

Psalm (sawlm)

A Biblical poem written to be chanted or sung during worship. The 150 psalms in the Bible are collectively referred to as "the book of Psalms."

Purity

Innocence, sinlessness. All baptized children of God are made pure by the blood of the lamb (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Rabbi

Hebrew for "my master." It was the title of respect and honor given to teachers. Jesus was called rabbi by many of his disciples.

Rainbow

The sign to which God has attached his promise that he will never again destroy the earth with a flood.

Reason

One's god-given ability to think and use the rational intellect.

Redeem

To buy back. Describes what Jesus did for all people by coming to earth, living a perfect life to fulfill God's demands of all people, and dying on the cross for the sins of all people of all time. "You are not your own; you were bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). Christ's work of redeeming from the sin, death, and the power of the devil is our "redemption."

Redeemer

One who redeems. Jesus Christ is our redeemer. See "Redeem."

Redemption see "redeem."

Regeneration

To be brought back to spiritual life by the Holy spirit. One who is regenerated is brought to life by faith in Christ, usually through the waters of Holy Baptism.

Reign

To rule, govern, have dominion over.

Remit

When the pastor frees a penitent sinner from his/her sins by forgiving him/her for Christ's sake. Also called "untying" or "loosing" one's sins. See "Office of the Keys."

Repent

To change one's mind. Used to describe turning away from sin and resolving to rely on God to amend one's life.

Repentance

The knowledge of your sin and corruption which leads one to be turned away from his/her sins and toward faith in Christ. Repentance takes place through the preaching of the Law and Gospel. See "repent."

Reproaches

Part of the Good Friday liturgy, these responses between pastor and congregation are drawn from Micah 6:3-4. Three times the question is asked: "What have I done to you, O My people," and in response, the congregation responds with a plea for God's mercy.

Reputation

What others think about you.

Responsory

Scripture verses sung or spoken after the reading of Scripture in the Daily Offices of Matins, Vespers, and Compline.

Resurrection

Rising from the dead with an immortal body. Jesus was the first one to be resurrected; he is the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). On the last day, the bodies of all the dead will rise and be reunited with their souls... with unbelievers going to condemnation in hell and believers going to immortality with Christ.

Retain

When the Word of forgiveness is withheld from an impenitent sinner. Sometimes called "binding" the sins of an impenitent person (Matthew 18:18). See "Office of the Keys."

Right hand of God

Jesus' position of authority from the Father to reign over all things for the sake of his church.

Righteousness

Thoughts, words, and actions that are in accordance with God's will. All such acts ultimately come from God, working through the believer. All people are sinful (not righteous) by nature, but through baptism, believers in Christ are given the righteousness of Christ (see Romans 5:17).

Rite

An order of service, often used to refer to occasional services like the rite of Confirmation, Marriage or Ordination.

Rubrics (ROO-brik)

From the Latin *ruber* which means "red." Directions or instructions on how to conduct the service. Rubrics are often printed in red to distinguish them from the text of the service.

Sabaoth (SAH-bay-oath)

Hebrew for "heavenly hosts," including "angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven."

Sabbath

Hebrew for "day of rest." God named the seventh day of creation the Sabbath because on that day he rested (stopped) creating. For Christians today, the word refers to the "rest" and "peace" which God gives through the hearing of his Holy Word and the receiving of his Sacraments.

Sacrament

From the Latin, meaning "a sacred act." The Sacraments are the "mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1) instituted by Jesus Christ to bring us grace. Lutherans define Sacraments further to mean those acts instituted by Jesus which combine a visible element with God's word to bring the forgiveness of sins. The two Sacraments are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Some consider Absolution to be a Sacrament, as well.

Sacred

Something which is holy; something which is declared holy and set apart for holy purposes, such as a cross, chalice, font, etc.

Sacristy (SACK-riss-tee)

From the Latin *sacristia*, meaning "holy things." The room where the communion vessels and paraments are kept. The vestments for pastor and liturgical assistants may also be kept here or in a separate room, the vestry.

Sadducee

A small, elite group of Jewish clergy who rejected the supernatural aspect of the Law of Moses, and only accepted Moses' general teaching. They were skeptical about things like the resurrection, life after death, and the existence of angels.

Saint

From the Latin, meaning "holy one." A term for believers in Jesus Christ, which indicates the fact that they are sinless in God's sight because of their faith in Christ.

Salutation (SAL-you-tae-shun)

From the Latin *salutatio*, meaning "a greeting." A liturgical greeting by which the pastor blesses the people: "The Lord be with you" (2 Timothy 4:22). The traditional response, "and with your spirit," (or "And also with you") acknowledges that this blessing is spoken by the Lord's servant.

Salvation

From the Latin *salvare*, meaning "to rescue." Salvation is being rescued from the power and penalty of sin, from death, Stan, and the condemnation of hell. It means being given eternal life for Christ's sake. Describes Jesus work on our behalf.

Samaria (Suh-MARE-ee-uh)

The area of Palestine between the southern region of Judea and the northern region of Galilee. This region was not Jewish, but a people of mixed Jewish/Babylonian/Syrians ancestry who were strongly dislike by the Jews (and vice-versa). A person from Samaria is called a Samaritan.

Samaritan (Suh-MARE-I-tun)

A person from Samaria. See "Samaria."

Samuel

The last judge of Israel and a great prophet of the Lord during the reign of Saul. He was the one who anointed both Saul and David as kings over Israel.

Sanctification

The process of conforming to God's will in our thoughts, words, and deeds. This process is a result of the Holy Spirit working in our heart. Also sometimes used to refer to the Holy Spirit's work of conversion, making us from sinners into saints.

Sanctify (SANK-ti-fye)

To make holy. See "Saint" and "Sanctification."

Sanctuary (SANK-shoo-air-ee)

From the Latin *sanctuarium*, meaning "a holy place." Refers to the area surrounding the altar, which is often enclosed by a communion rail, setting it off from the nave, the place where the people are seated.

Sanctus (SAHNK-tus)

A Latin word meaning "holy." The Sanctus is the liturgical song sung at the beginning of the communion liturgy. It is drawn from the song of the angels in Isaiah 6:3. The concluding text, "blessed is He who comes..." is from Psalm 118:26 and Mark 11:9-10.

Sanhedrin (san-HEH-drin)

The supreme council of the Jewish nation- comprised of priests, elders, and scribes and presided over by the high priest.

Sarah see "Sarai."

Sarai (SARE-eye)

The name of Abram's wife before the Lord gave her a new name (Sarah) and promised her a child in her old age.

Satan

A Hebrew name meaning "Accuser." The evil one. The head of the fallen angels who rebelled against God and was cast down. He desires to ruin the faith of every Christian and to derive people away from the one true God. Genesis 3:15 predicts his defeat. Also called "the devil," Lucifer, "Beelzebub."

Satanic arts

Satanic arts, or witchcraft is anything that involves the occult or the seeking of knowledge, information, guidance, or peace from spirits other than God. This includes astrology, fortune-telling, horoscopes, Tarot, séances, palm reading, Ouija boards.

Saul

Israel's first king. His unlawful sacrifice at Gilgal marked the beginning of his idolatry and caused the Lord to take his kingdom from him and give it to David.

Save

To rescue. See "salvation."

Scheme

To devise a system to get something. To lay an elaborate plan.

Scripture

From the Latin word meaning "writings." Christians often refer to the Holy Bible, God's Word, as simply "Scripture." Sometimes called "Holy Scripture."

Second Coming

The day when Christ will come again to earth in the same way he left (Acts 1:11). When Christ comes again, he will judge the living and the dead. He will put sin, death, the devil, death and all his enemies under his feet. He will also take to himself his bride the Church.

Seed

Genesis 3:15 promises that the woman Eve's "seed" would one day defeat Satan and destroy death. Jesus, as one of her descendants through the virgin Mary, would one day be born of her seed, in fulfillment of God's promise.

Sexuality

The gift of being either male or female for the expression of love in marriage. It is through the gift of sexuality, when it is God's will, that children are given.

Shed

To lose something. Jesus literally "lost" his blood when he spilled his blood on the cross.

Sign of the Cross

An ancient custom of the Church, in the Small Catechism Luther encouraged that the sign of the cross be made each morning and evening as a reminder of one's Baptism. The cross is signed by touching the fingers first to the forehead, then to the heart, then to one shoulder and finally to the other. Appropriate points in the Divine Service to make the sign of the cross include the Invocation, Absolution, conclusion of the Creed, upon reception of Holy Communion, and the Benediction.

Sin

Disobedience to God, or Rebellion against God; either by failing to do something demanded or by doing something forbidden by God. Any turning away from his Word, unbelief, and every thought, word, and deed which is against God's Law.

Sinful nature see "original sin."

Slander

A mean-spirited statement that is intended to hurt someone's good name or reputation. It includes the failure to defend a neighbor from the attacks of others by not "putting the best construction on everything" or by not "explaining everything in the kindest way."

Soul

The invisible part (essence) of a person which continues to exist after the body dies.

Stanza

The designation given to the major divisions of a hymn. Often used interchangeably with the term "verse" (although "verse" is more properly used to designate divisions within a psalm).

Steal

To take for yourself what God has not given or provided. Examples of stealing include: cheating on taxes, shoplifting, neglecting to give charity to those in need.

Stewardship

The proper use of all that you are and all that you have in service to God and to your neighbor.

Stole

A scarf-like fabric usually crafted in the color of the day or season, often bearing symbols appropriate to the day or season. It is worn over the shoulders of those ordained to the pastoral office.

Stripping of the Altar

A ceremony that often concludes the Maundy Thursday service in which the altar is "stripped" of all its appointments (candles, vessels, linens, etc.). Other ornaments may also be removed from the sanctuary. The ceremony symbolizes the stripping of Jesus by his captors (both of his clothing and his honor) as well as the abandonment by his disciples. Usually Psalm 22 is prayed and/or chanted while the altar is stripped.

Substitutionary Atonement see "Atonement."

Suffrages (SUFF-ruh-jez)

"Petitions" of prayer to God.

Superstition

The belief that God's help can be obtained through means other than those to which God himself has attached his Word and promise. Superstition includes things like "white," or good magic, luck charms, the seeking of signs, etc.

Supplication

A prayer asking for God's help; a humble request/plea for help.

Surplice (SIR-pliss)

A flowing, white vestment worn over a cassock (a fitted vestment usually in black). The cassock/surplice combination is frequently worn at the daily offices (Matins, Vespers, etc.). It is also the vestment frequently worn by other assistants (e.g., acolytes) and by choir members.

Swear

To take an oath, especially calling upon your good name or God's name as a witness.

Synagogue (SIN-a-gogg)

The place of worship for Jews, much like a church building today. The word is Greek for "Led together." The people were to be "led together" in this place through the preaching of the Law and the Prophets.

Te Deum (tay DAY-oom)

Short for Te Deum Laudamus," which is Latin for "You, God, we praise." The opening words of an ancient hymn of praise sung at Matins. The author is unknown, though liturgical legend holds that it was composed spontaneously by Ambrose and Augustine as Ambrose baptized Augustine in the late fourth century.

Tempt

An attempt to lead someone away from God and entrap them in sin and unbelief. The devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh are common sources of temptation.

Temptation see "tempt."

Tenebrae (TEN-uh-bray)

A Good Friday Evening service, though originally observed earlier in Holy Week. Candles are extinguished following a series of readings and/or psalms.

Test

To undergo trial, or check the worth of something. Although God never tempts us, he does test us... that "may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:7).

Testament

As in "Last Will and Testament." It is like a will. It is an expression of an individual's intentions for children and heirs. A testament is often a written document to convey what's most important in life. The Old and New Testaments are God's written will, his purpose and plan of salvation for the whole world. See also "covenant."

Testimony

An assertion made about the facts. Witnesses are called to give testimony in a trial. Christians are called to give testimony to Christ by proclaiming the Word of God.

Thanksgiving

The act of thanking someone. Christians give thanksgiving to God as a gracious response to God's work on our behalf.

Theology

The study of God. Any student of the Bible is a theologian.

Theology of the Cross

The Biblical teaching which says that God accomplishes his greatest good in the midst of suffering and when human reason is contradicted. The theology of the cross can only be received by faith and centers in the death of Christ for sinful humanity. "When God makes alive he does it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he exalts to heaven he does it by bringing down to hell" (Luther's Words, AE, vol. 33, pg. 62).

Theology of Power

That non-Biblical teaching which looks to God's wonders, miracles, healings, and/or power for salvation instead of looking to the suffering Christ. A theology of power looks for God in success, not in suffering.

Transfiguration of Our Lord

The commemoration of Moses and Elijah appearing in a cloud with Jesus on a mountaintop. At that time, the glory of Jesus' shone "like the sun" through his flesh and God the Father spoke from heaven, saying "this is beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5).

Transgression

Literally "to go across." To break one of God's commands by overstepping the bounds; that is, doing something God forbids or by not doing something he commands. Jesus I the one who "redeems us from [our] transgressions" (Hebrews 9:15). See also "sin."

Tree of Knowledge

The tree in the Garden of Eden which God promised would bring death if eaten. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's Word and ate of its fruit, sin was born and death came into the world.

Tree of Life

The tree in the Garden of Eden to which God attached his word of promise: if anyone ate of its fruit he would live forever.

Trespases

An archaic term (still commonly used by Christians in praying the Lord's Prayer) for sins against God or another person.

Triduum (TRID-ooH-um)

Latin for "three days," namely, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. The Triduum celebrates the saving work of Jesus' death and resurrection. It culminates with the Easter Vigil on Saturday evening.

Triune (trinity)

Three in One and One in Three. A made-up word used to express how God reveals himself in the Bible -one God in three unique persons- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This doctrine is explored in depth in the Athanasian Creed.

Trust

To have faith in, rely upon.

Truth

Something which is not false, or has been proven to be right/correct. God's Word reveals an objective, literal truth.

Unrepentant see "Impenitent."

Venite (veh-NEE-tay)

Latin for "oh, come." The title for the song of praise taken from Psalm 95 that is sung at the beginning of Matins/Morning Prayer. The first line reads, "Oh, come, let us sing to the Lord."

Verba see "Words of Institution."

Verbal

An adjective referring to "words." In the doctrine of verbal inspiration attests to the Christian belief that the words of the Bible are inspired by God.

Verse

A biblical text sung prior to (and in anticipation of) the Holy Gospel. Except during Lent, the Verse is preceded and followed by the singing of alleluias. Individual proper Verses are appointed for each Sunday and festival; a general Verse is provided for use throughout the year.

Versicle

From the Latin versiculus, meaning "little verse." One or more verses, usually from a psalm, read responsively. Versicles often appear at the beginning of services such as Matins, Vespers, special rites of dedication, etc.

Vespers

From the Latin, meaning "evening." An evening service of psalms, readings, and prayers, it was originally one of eight daily offices prayed during the Middle Ages. Sometimes also referred to as Evening Prayer.

Vestments

From the Latin vestimentum, meaning "garment." Vestments are worn by the pastor and other liturgical assistants. Among their many purposes is the fact that they identify the person vested as a servant of the church and cover any individuality of clothing style which may be a distraction in the service of God's Word.

Vicarious Atonement see "Atonement."

Vice

A sinful habit or continual action.

Virgin

A man or woman who has never had sexual intercourse.

Virgin Birth

Born of a virgin mother. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary's flesh without the aid of a man. For this reason, Jesus is like us in every way, except without sin.

Vocation

A Calling, or that position in life into which God has placed us. Examples of vocation are: husband, father, wife, mother, son, daughter, employer, employee, student, etc. Vocation includes both your life's work and the responsibility you have been given by God toward others.

WELS

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. A confessional Lutheran Synod similar to the LC-MS. We differ doctrinally in our understanding of the nature of fellowship and in the Biblical teaching on the role of women in the Church.

Wicked

Evil, bad. One who is willfully disobedient to God.

Will

One's desire or volition. The "Will of God" is his desire to save the lost and preserve his people in the one truth faith against all the attacks of the devil the world, and their own sinful flesh.

Wise Men

Often called "Magi." The Gentile priests (possibly astronomers) from the East who were led by a star and came to worship the infant Christ.

Witness

One who has seen something and can testify to it. The New Testament witnesses were those who had seen the resurrected Lord and could give testimony that he was risen from the dead.

Word of God

God's revelation to humanity through the apostles and prophets. Through this revelation, God tells us about himself, shows us our sins, and brings us to faith in Jesus Christ our only Savior. The prophets and apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit to record in it in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (the Bible). Also, the name of the Son of God from eternity.

Words of Our Lord see "Words of Institution."

Words of Institution

Sometimes called "the Words of Our Lord," these are words of Jesus, spoken by the pastor over the bread and wine in the Service of the Sacrament, by which the body and blood of Christ are truly present, distributed, and received.

Works

Deeds. Good works are important in the faith life of a Christian and flow out from saving faith. Good works, however, are the inevitable result of salvation... not a cause of it.

Worship

To receive from God all the good things he gives in his Word and Sacraments, and to return to him all glory, honor, thanksgiving, and praise.

Worthy

In terms of being "worthy" for Holy Communion, it means being eligible to receive the Lord's Supper at that time and place.

Wrath

God's just anger against sin and sinners.

Zechariah (ZACK-uh-rye-uh)

A priest who received a message from the angel Gabriel (while officiating in the temple) that God had heard his prayer for the redemption of Israel... his wife Elizabeth would give birth to the forerunner of the Christ. He was the father of John the Baptist/Baptizer.