REFORMATION 2017:
A LUTHERAN ART INVITATIONAL
CELEBRATING 500 YEARS
OF THE REFORMATION
Reformation 2017:
A Lutheran Art Invitational celebrating 500 years of the Reformation

Bethany Lutheran College
Mankato, Minnesota

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INTRODUCTION

We can be honest with ourselves: Our Lutheran Church does not have the most storied history, nor do we possess a very impressive body of work, in regard to the visual arts. We might consider the works of Cranach or late Dürer, as the high points of Lutheran art. But how do these compare to the likes of Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, Bernini, Caravaggio, and countless other masters, who have produced works for Roman Catholicism? Even since the Reformation period it seems, generally speaking, that the visual arts within the Lutheran church have been found lacking in quantity and quality. Is this because the Lutheran Church has not been supportive of the visual arts?

There are different factors that give insight to why our visual heritage is found lacking. First of all, Martin Luther himself had a greater passion and natural ability for music than for the visual arts. He and other reformers felt that God’s Word could be more clearly and powerfully proclaimed through music and song than through the use of the visual arts. And so, within Lutheranism, the visual arts have been overshadowed by the musical arts. Greater value and appreciation has been assigned to the great Lutheran chorales than to the great Lutheran masterpieces. This is due in part to practicality. It took less time to write a hymn than to paint a masterpiece, and a hymn could be mass produced and widely distributed—uniting people across the land—whereas an altarpiece, no matter how beautiful, or powerful its message was, would affect only those who came to see it. Also, there is the issue of paying for the work. Roman Catholicism had sources of income that the Lutherans had rejected—such as indulgences and the sale of masses. Instead of painting the wealthy patrons into the wings, Lutheran artists painted the common people into their work. They did this for the sake of the message rather than for the sake of money.

So, has the Lutheran Church been a hostile environment to the visual arts and to Lutherans who desire to produce visual art? One might argue that it is not a helpful environment. On the other hand, one might also argue that because of Luther, and especially his emphasis on the doctrine of vocation, Lutheran artists have been freed to produce more and varied work (which is demonstrated by the wide variety that is found within this show).

A “Lutheran Art Show” does not need to only include liturgical art (for the specific purpose of promoting and sharing the Word of God)—though such work will be found here. But an artist who is Lutheran is free to paint images that are also secular in nature. Certainly, any Christian would want to avoid images that are disrespectful, crude, or sinful; but by producing such work as landscapes, portraits, or even abstract works, the artist is producing art that serves their neighbor. By serving their neighbor in this way, they fulfill their God-given vocation as an artist—regardless of whether the work is religious in nature or not!
The artists participating in this show were invited under this premise. As Lutherans, we understand that even if their work is not explicitly religious in nature, the fact that they are producing their work to the best of their abilities, and to the service of their neighbors, they are thus serving God in their vocation. Can a Lutheran serve in the vocation of “liturgical artist,” while another Lutheran serves in the vocation of “landscape artist” or “portraitist?” We must answer: “YES!” Both are good and pleasing to God!

As you look at the wide variety of work within this show, realize that everyone participating are of the same fellowship (members of the ELS and WELS). We confess the same teachings and beliefs that are drawn from Scripture and confessed in our Lutheran Confessions. We come to the table with similar worldviews and yet, the work that you see varies greatly! This is designed to force the viewer to be challenged and will lead you to ask questions—important questions that are worth discussing: “What is a ‘Lutheran Artist’?” “What makes this art ‘Christian’ in nature?” “How can we as Lutherans support those among us who are artists—who by their work and influence are helping to ‘sanctify the arts and culture’?” “How might we, as Lutherans, moving forward into the next 500 years, better support the visual arts in our midst?”

It is our hope and prayer that this unique show, at the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, might inspire us to appreciate—and encourage us to better support—the visual arts within Lutheranism.

Soli Deo Gloria

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Luke Ulrich serves as Pastor at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church and School in Mankato, Minnesota. Having studied Art History at Bethany Lutheran College, and taking an interest specifically in the visual arts of the Lutheran tradition, Pr. Ulrich has produced a series of articles featured in the Lutheran Sentinel titled: “Visualizing the Reformation.”

He enjoys spending time with his wife, Rachel, and three children. Other interests include bicycling, cooking, and traveling to places with great art museums.
Martin Luther rightly argued from Scripture that all earthly vocations are equally God-pleasing because all vocations are gifts from God and because vocations are God’s good work in us to serve our neighbors. As a conceptual framework, much of the doctrine of vocation is relatively easy to understand. As they are practiced, the applications of vocation are often more elaborate.

For example, it is easy enough to tell an art student she has a vocation, but more explanation is required to tell her what her vocation means. It is easy enough to assure the Christian artist he has a vocation, but questions persist about his obligations and his vocation’s earthly meaningfulness.

The topics of this presentation cluster around the Lutheran doctrine of vocation, with appropriate emphasis on what vocation means in 2017. Five hundred years after the Lutheran Reformation, the situation of Christian artist—students and professionals—is filled with tension and anxiety, both internally and externally. But 500 years after the Lutheran Reformation, the treasure that is the doctrine of vocation can become especially valuable to Christian artists.

This presentation will have four parts: what does it mean to be an art student; what does it mean to be a Christian artist; how is a Christian artist to measure freedom and wisdom; and, is being a Christian artist a leap of faith? This presentation is informed by my lifetime’s experience in vocations of art student, artist, educator, administrator, layperson, father, and citizen. Its aim is to be more advisory and less scholarly.

-Paul Burmeister
Many today might still be surprised to learn that Martin Luther (1483–1546) did not share the iconoclastic (Greek, “image breaker”) tendencies of the Reformed and Radicals. Even if this myth has started to fade, does not Luther’s stress on the preached Word of God and his theology of the cross preclude a positive view of the plastic arts (painting, sculpture, and film), not to mention any real theological aesthetics? Luther provides a preliminary response to this question in his 1525 Against the Heavenly Prophets.

I have myself seen and heard the iconoclasts read out of my German Bible…. Now there are a great many pictures in those books, both of God, the angels, men and animals, especially in the Revelation of John and in Moses and Joshua. So now we would kindly beg them to permit us to do what they themselves do. Pictures contained in these books we would paint on walls for the sake of remembrance and better understandings, since they do no more harm on walls than in books. It is to be sure better to paint pictures on walls of how God created the world, how Noah built the ark, and whatever other good stories there may be than to paint shameless worldly things. Yes, would to God that I could persuade the rich and the mighty that they would permit the whole Bible to be painted in houses, on the inside and the outside, so that all can see it. That would be a Christian work. 2

This essay maintains that Luther not only has more to say about the plastic arts than was once surmised, but that he has some important thoughts about theological aesthetics as well. 3

Luther’s contributions to music and poetics are already well known. They are greater than his artistic contributions because of his own deep familiarity with them. Since music was a part of the medieval educational system (quadrivium), Luther learned it early on and came to excel in it. In addition to singing in choirs and playing the lute, he penned famous tunes and settings for hymns and the Lutheran mass. At university, Luther was exposed to Renaissance humanism, a new educational approach and methodology, which furthered honed his philological, poetic, and historical skills. The fact that Luther would bring nothing into the friary except his Virgil and Plautus is a sign of its early impact on him. Luther’s own poetic talents are evidenced in his hymns, translations, and edition of Aesop’s Fables. But his true artistic masterpiece was the German Bible. It translated God’s Word into eloquent and accessible German that endeared it to the people and fundamentally shaped the German language for generations to come.

Luther’s criticisms of images and statues are generally found in his early polemics against the false doctrines and abuses of the late medieval Latin Church. The medieval church had fostered the notion that the veneration of images and the funding of their creation was a good work that merited a reduced stay in purgatory. Since Luther
rejected the pagan notion that God’s fallen creature (man) had anything to offer his perfect creator, Luther opposed the work-righteous use of images and statues, but not images and statues themselves. Reflecting on Romans 1:17, Luther eventually rediscovered that only the imputation of Christ’s passive righteousness (i.e., the crediting of Christ’s holiness to the believer in justification) could recreate man’s lost relationship with God. Had not Christ stated that a bad tree cannot become a good tree by trying harder to bear good fruit? The true purpose of active righteousness (i.e., good works), conversely, was to thank God by serving one’s neighbor and caring for the creation through vocations in the home, church, and society/state. This new relationship with God, Luther further rediscovered, was only re-created through God’s very same Word that once had the power to bring the universe into being and the same Word that assumes oral, written, and sacramental forms today.

However, the Radicals and Reformed did not think Luther went far enough. Appealing to the prohibition against making graven images (Exodus 20:4), they began to destroy icons and statues as idolatry. Eventually they would also assert the so-called regulative principle of worship, namely that anything not commanded in the Bible must be forbidden in worship. Recognizing that idolatry was really a matter of the heart, Luther would challenge these iconoclastic ideas on exegetical, hermeneutical, and incarnational grounds. Much like John of Damascus (ca. 675–ca. 750), Luther showed that God had at times actually commanded the making of religious images (e.g. Cherubim Mercy Seat of God on the Ark of the Covenant) as well as the making of images of God himself (e.g. Bronze Serpent that foreshowed Christ), albeit as God veiled himself in Scripture (e.g. Holy Spirit as a Dove). Drawing on the hermeneutics of St. Paul, Luther distinguished between proscription and description in the Bible. He then argued that where God does not proscribe, the Christian has Christian freedom. In contradistinction to the Gnostic tendencies of the Radicals and Reformed, Luther reasserted the goodness of God’s creation. He pointed out that God often masks his providential care in the vocations of Christians and the civil righteousness of unbelievers. Luther insisted that God saves mankind through material signs like the letters on the page of a Bible, water, wine, and bread. He encouraged the use of religious art as a means of teaching the Word of God as indicated above. That said, images always remained adiaphoron for Luther (i.e., they were neither required nor forbidden). 4

It is certainly true that Protestantism as a whole changed the Divine Service from a multi-sensory encounter with God’s grace to a strictly auditory event. This is not true of Lutheranism despite Luther’s stress on the church being a “mouth house.” 5 Luther not only cherished the sacraments, but he recognized the power of iconography and sculpture for conveying the faith. Furthermore, Luther’s focus on the preached Word of God was not so much a marginalization of iconography, as a call to fully recognize the power of the manifold images evoked by God’s performative Word. God cannot be “seen” apart from the Word. Thus, Luther recognized that language is embodied in images which the mind and heart in turn process. After all, what else is a letter, but an image? Luther writes,
But it is impossible for me to hear and bear [the works of God] in mind without forming mental images of it in my heart. For whether I will to or not, when I hear of Christ, an image of a man hanging on a cross takes form in my heart, just as the reflection of my face naturally appears in the water when I look into it. If it is not a sin but good to have the image of Christ on my heart, why should it be a sin to have it in my eyes?  

On the other hand, Luther did not approve of some of the pronouncements of the VII Ecumenical Council (787) that laid out the medieval theology of icons. He had little time for the Platonism that undergirded the theology of icons. The council’s attempt to distinguish the veneration given to images from the adoration offered only to God was so often blurred in practice. Still Luther insisted with the council that anyone who denies that Christ can be depicted is de facto denying the incarnation itself. What is more, God’s Word does not just take oral, written, and sacramental forms for Luther, but even mental and visual forms as well. He even suggests that a crucifix could convey God’s grace insofar as it is a visual form of God’s Word.

Thus I believe that our dear Lord preserved many of our forefathers in the gross darkness of the Papacy. In that blindness and darkness so much still remained that a crucifix was held before the eyes of the dying and that some laymen would urge them: “Behold Jesus, who died for you on the Cross!” This induced many a dying man to turn again to Christ, though previously he, too, believed the lying wonders and was given to idolatry.

In his Martin Luther’s Theology of Beauty: A Reappraisal, Mark Mattes argues that Luther did not embrace the classical Neo-Platonic aesthetics of the medieval theologians. Luther did not determine beauty on the basis of proportion, light or color, and integrity or perfection (much less a Kantian notion of the sublime). The medieval theologians tended to think about beauty in terms of metaphysical degrees of closeness to God. Instead Mattes shows that Luther articulates a Biblical conception of beauty grounded in the goodness of the created order and the grace of God. God’s proper work (Gospel) is beautiful; beauty is a received beauty. In the Heidelberg Disputation, Luther writes, “The love of God does not find, but creates that which is pleasing to it…. Therefore, sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive.” With this in mind, even the contorted, diseased, and crucified Christ, portrayed in the famous Isenheim Altarpiece, becomes a thing of beauty. The altarpiece, which originally hung in a monastery of a religious order focused on care of the sick, depicts a twisted Christ who quite literally takes on man’s infirmities to heal him. Still the painting is beautiful because it reflects the unmerited grace of God to the human race in spite of man’s loss of proportion, light, and integrity with God.

Luther’s views on art were given concrete expression in the work of one of his closest friends Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553), the Electoral Saxon court painter and Wittenberg entrepreneur. The friendship proved mutually beneficial. Luther affirmed the value of art. Cranach used his political connections and art to advance the Lutheran Reformation. Cranach shaped the image of Luther in his portraits so effectively that his workshop could hardly keep up with the demand for pictures of
the Reformer. He ensured that German Lutheranism and the German Renaissance would be anything but visually stunted. Cranach illumined and explicated Luther’s pamphlets, prayer books, Bible, and catechisms with striking pictures. Above all else, he captured the theology of the Reformation in visual form. His *Law and the Gospel* (1529) concretized the fundamental Lutheran hermeneutic of the Bible. The goodness of creation, vocations, and human sexuality are affirmed in his domestic themes and nudes. Long before Lutherans attempted to confess the Augsburg Confession in art, the *Wittenberg Altarpiece* (1547) confessed in a much more aesthetically pleasing fashion the centrality of Christ Crucified as well as the sole recreative power of God’s Word in all its forms.

To be sure, a few incidents of iconoclasm did occur among some poorly informed Lutherans. Pietism tended to downplay the arts as well. Truth be told, Lutherans preserved much of the medieval and renaissance visual art of Northern Europe. They even created a new Lutheran iconography and continued to cultivate the plastic arts in their lands. Sad to say, some of that art was destroyed in wars, but much of it still remains to be experienced.

Clearly the old myth that Luther had little positive to say about the plastic arts has been sufficiently put to rest. Hopefully, this essay has also sparked the reader’s interest in further exploring Luther’s theological aesthetics, which largely remains unexplored. With that, Luther himself will have the last word, “Nor am I of the opinion that the gospel should destroy and blight all the arts, as some of the pseudo-religious claim. But I would like all the arts, especially music in the service of Him who gave and made them.”

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1 Rev. Timothy R. Schmeling is Professor of Exegetical and Historical Theology at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota.
3 For a fuller discussion of this topic, see Mark Mattes, *Martin Luther’s Theology of Beauty: A Reappraisal* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017). This essay is especially indebted to the seminal work of Mark Mattes and the authors listed in the further reading section below.
4 Luther, “Eight Sermons at Wittenberg, (1522),” LW, 81–86 especially; Luther, “Against the Heavenly Prophets, (1525),” in LW 40:146–47.
7 Luther, St. L., XIII:2575, quoted in Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, trans John Theodore Mueller (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950–57), 3:106n9. Pieper adds, “Furthermore, the Gospel is such a means of grace in every form in which it reaches men, whether it be preached (Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:47), or printed (John 20:31; I John 1:3–4), or pictured in symbols or types (John 3:14–15), or pondered in the heart (Rom. 10:8), and so forth.”
8 Luther, LW, 31:57.
9 Luther, “Preface to the Wittenberg Hymnal (1524),” in LW, 53:316.
The Rev. Dr. Timothy R. Schmeling is an ordained Lutheran clergyman in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Professor of Exegetical and Historical Theology at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota. He received his Doctor of Philosophy from the Graduate School of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, Master of Divinity from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota, and Bachelor of Arts from Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota. He is currently pursuing additional graduate work at Saint John’s University, Collegeville, Minnesota, and has done other academic work at the Luthерisches Theologisches Seminar in Leipzig, Germany. Dr. Schmeling is the editor of Lives and Writing of the Great Fathers of the Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2016). He has published articles and presented papers in the United States and Germany. Prof. Schmeling has served as a guest lecturer at the Luthерisches Theologisches Seminar in Leipzig, Germany, as well. His research focuses on the Old Testament and European Lutheranism. His wife Annette (née Habben) grew up in Japan. She is a registered nurse who has worked in Minnesota, California, Missouri, and Florida. They and their two children Sophia and Andreas reside in Mankato, Minnesota. Dr. Schmeling’s essay explores a Lutheran understanding of art.
Ein feste burg ist unser Gott

ANNO 1517 ~ ANNO 20
A Mankato, Minnesota, native, I attended Bethany Lutheran College and graduated in 2003 with a Bachelor of Arts degree with a concentration in art.

One of the things that I enjoy about art is crafting a meaningful image. I enjoy the depth of story telling you can inject into a piece of art using composition, placement and color of the image. Symbolism is something that interests me as well. Using objects to represent other things and help tell a story is a powerful tool, whether obvious or subtle.

The piece for the exhibition includes imagery inspired by Martin Luther’s life and teachings. It is in ink as homage to the printing press which helped Luther to spread his teachings to many people. The central objects come from Luther’s hymn “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” in which the rest of the opening line compares God to a “trusty shield and weapon.” The portraits in the bottom corners are of Luther and Pope Leo X. Leo X was the pope during Luther’s time—they are shown in opposite corners because of their conflict. They are also at the same level to show that the pope is not above the common man.
Since birth, the beliefs, culture, and environment of the confessional Lutheran church have impacted every aspect of my life—certainly my faith, but also my mannerisms, priorities, and ways of thinking and seeing people and the world around me. Still a practicing Lutheran, I see my faith and my church continue to impact my studio practice today. My work focuses on the human condition, and as a Lutheran, a Christian, I’m essentially contemplating the sinner/saint paradox. I focus on specific individuals and mere moments in time—individuals and moments that I believe merit hours of attention through my painting process, though they may be otherwise overlooked. Since painting is the language I feel most honest communicating in, the studio is where I have the best opportunity to practice honesty and empathy. The work I create ultimately prepares me to love more fully, more deeply, as Christ asks of us, in my everyday life.

The subjects I paint seem as though the complexities and perplexities of the sinner/saint paradox have just begun to affect them. This particular subject alludes to an offshoot of the sinner/saint paradox: the roles/callings paradox of women in the church. While the Reformation of 500 years ago spurred the restoration of grace alone - faith alone - scripture alone and religious populism, only the beginnings of respect among all those of the Church—from the priest to the pilgrim—were sparked. The Church has a responsibility to be in a constant mode of reform, and that includes the practice of encouraging all—men and women—to use their gifts fully to spread the amazing grace the Church proclaims.
It was a rewarding experience to produce this documentary about Professor Bukowski’s apse painting at the historic Lutheran church, celebrating their 150th anniversary this year. It was a chance to get a behind-the-scenes look at his process of recreating the giant 1940 mural from the ground up. It was also the chance to tell the story of this unique countryside congregation commissioning this project as a statement of their faith and their commitment to the next generation of Christians. My experiences with Lutheran religious art documentaries began with one about the making of Bukowski’s Creation Fresco and his Trinity Chapel Life of Christ altarpiece. All three of these films were deeply personal, creative and spiritual projects for me to be a part of. In all three films, not only is the process shown, but also the faith is proclaimed as depicted in the paintings.

See the documentary: https://vimeo.com/236776374
William Bukowski has been a professor of Art at Bethany Lutheran College since 1980. He teaches painting, drawing and art history and serves as the Chair of the Art Department and Exhibition Coordinator of the YFAC gallery. Bukowski is a founding member of the Christ in Media Institute that serves Bethany and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Bukowski received his MA and MFA at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and studied fresco at the Academy Caerite in Ceri, Italy. He painted the *Life of Christ* altarpiece in Trinity Chapel in 1996 and the *Creation Fresco* in Marvin G. Meyer Hall of Science and Mathematics in 2002. His paintings are in many public and private collections throughout the Midwest, including Minneapolis Children's Hospital, the Madison Art Center, Fairview Hospitals, the University of Minnesota and Pathstone Living. Bukowski has participated in more than 180 art exhibitions across the country.

Bill and his wife, Sherri, have been married for 41 years. They have three children, all Bethany graduates, and four grandchildren.

**LUTHERAN CONTEXT**

This painting is a commissioned work for Resurrection Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota. This will be an image that everyone will see coming into a service or even into the building. It should act to prepare the congregation for participation in the service. The Resurrection is the image that asserts Christ’s victory over death, and the true Son of God.

As a Lutheran artist, I always wanted to be ready and able to complete Christian art for the church. It is a great joy for the artist to use one’s gifts to enhance worship.

I was never going to limit myself to only doing liturgical artwork since there is a conservative attitude toward the use of art in the culture of the Evangelical and Wisconsin Luther Synods.

The tradition of the use of liturgical art in the Lutheran Church needs to be restored and renewed as we go forward after 500 years.
BIOGRAPHY

Paul Burmeister is a Minnesota-born artist and educator. He paints in acrylic on a variety of supports and explores a variety of themes. He teaches design and illustration courses at Wisconsin Lutheran College and has previously taught at three institutions of higher education. Burmeister’s intellectual interests include the doctrine of vocation and concepts of time. He may have the world’s best collection of Elvin Jones recordings. He and his wife live in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

As long as the artist is making art to serve his neighbor and glorify God, his vocation does not require justification in the eyes of the world—being an artist is as noble as being a doctor. As long as the artist makes art that exercises her Christian freedom, then the issue is whether her art demonstrates an appropriate wisdom—creating images of still life, for example, is as worthy as creating Bible story images, especially if the artist’s gifts are better served by still life.

I have submitted two images: the first speaks directly to the vocation of an artist in midlife, and the second is a reworking of my favorite Bible story (I have tried this one several times over the years). The vocation of a Lutheran artist should not necessarily look any different than a non-Lutheran artist, so my vocation’s obligation is to serve my neighbor by painting a picture as well as my imperfect gifts allow, no matter the theme. So in the first image the artist character struggles in time to finish a painting of a downed fighter, showing that many of his creative efforts crash ingloriously to earth. And in the second image (as it might appear on a billboard), the church on earth is tossed about by a terrible storm; one believer reacts in terror, another looks inside himself, and another turns to the Lord. My opinion is that the life of the church, throughout history, usually appears to be like what the disciples experienced in the stormy sea on that night when Jesus slept at back of the boat (Mt 8:23-27 and Mk 4:35-41).

Titles left to right

Punch Paints a Picture
Acrylic
11.5” x 9”

Reformation Disegno
Acrylic
10.5” x 18”
CHARIS CARMICHAEL BRAUN

BIOGRAPHY

Charis grew up in New Ulm, Minnesota, and earned her MFA from the New York Academy of Art. She received a Juror’s Award for her work in *Representational Art in the 21st Century*, University of Hawaii at Hilo, Hawaii, in 2015 and was chosen as a Sing For Hope Piano Artistin 2016. She has been published in *PoetsArtists*, *The Huffington Post*, and *LINEA: The Artist’s Voice*. With her woodworker husband, Charis lives and works in New York.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

I am drawn to contrasts. My work is rooted in the theme of two opposite things existing simultaneously (e.g. dead + alive, sinner + saint). Consequently, I blend what I consider to be opposing contrasts in a painted image where it is difficult to see where one begins and another ends.

My subject matter is found in the familiar (my husband, myself). With anxious compulsion, I apply layers of oil paint again and again on the canvas. Passages of acute focus buttressing less-developed space embodies tension throughout the image. Researching, redrawing through spirited color and active brushwork, I obsessively build up the human form while allowing the environment to disintegrate.

Perhaps ironically—when considering Luther’s egalitarian views of vocation—under the surface I have always felt conflicted about wanting to be an artist. I tell myself over and over that art is not useful, and is selfishly self-indulgent. But each day, I justify my artistic practice to myself because I feel impelled to speak using visual language. This conversation in my head often sounds like the memorized explanation of Baptism in Luther’s Small Catechism: to “daily drown with sorrow and repentance, and daily arise to live before God.”

**Indecision**

Acrylic and oil on canvas

44” x 62”
That truth is considered something nebulous, plastic, indefinite is nothing new. After all, it was many centuries ago that Pilate, when faced with the Truth, uttered the infamous question, “What is truth?” The question still hangs in the air, but rather than struggle to define the term objectively, popular thought favors a more comfortable, easy, immediate definition instead. Truth, the world says, is personal; it is unique to the individual. Is it any wonder, then, that proper, healthy discourse has become so difficult, that confusion and strife increase? And though society crumbles, it is proud of its great achievements of science and engineering, of its deep knowledge and masterful reason. It is in these finite things that society places its trust and confidence.

What of the Christian in all this? By the grace of God, the Christian knows the Truth, knows Jesus as Savior from sin, and knows how desperately the world needs the Truth. Luther’s legacy emphasizes the importance of education and personal study, a pursuit of the Truth found in scripture. The Christian today, beleaguered by the world’s notion of truth and otherwise lulled by the comforts—especially in the West—of security and relative peace, must ask, “Am I living my faith? How capable am I of sharing that faith? How well do I know the Truth?”

**The Whisper**
Acrylic
24” x 36”
Kristin Gjerdset is associate professor of art at Wisconsin Lutheran College where she teaches painting, drawing, and art history. She coordinates national and international trips to foster awareness of God’s gift of the natural world and the importance of continued stewardship to it. She has been selected as the artist in residence at five national parks with her work focusing on insects, revealing their beauty and how each has a role on this earth.

**Millipede In Pink**
Acrylic on Wood
24” x 24”

**Field Day (Rocky Mountain National Park)**
Acrylic on Wood
16” x 16”
Annette Hartzell

Biography and Lutheran Context

After being a professional wildlife and floral artist for 30 years, my husband Lance received a call to teach art at Martin Luther College. Art had always been the way I made a living, but as time passed I began to think more about why God gave me this talent and how I might use it to His glory. That’s when I decided to do larger paintings on canvas, that could be hung in the front of the church just like traditional cloth banners. The Lord gave me artistic abilities and now I am giving them back to Him.

My Savior
Oil and acrylic on canvas
24” x 48”

Paid
Oil on canvas
24” x 48”

Titles left to right
LANCE HARTZELL

BIOGRAPHY AND LUTHERAN CONTEXT

Lutherans have an evangelical spirit. Mission work is close to our hearts. Lutheran churches have been reaching out to the lost almost from the beginning of the 500 years we are celebrating this year.

I am a Lutheran artist who grew up in a Lutheran mission field. From Grade three through high school practically all of my classmates were Apache Indians at East Fork Lutheran Mission in eastern Arizona. We were there to spread the Gospel, but we were influenced and affected by the people and place we lived in also. Perhaps in my pottery you can see some of the influence of the native people groups of the Southwest on my art.

Black on Black
Ceramic

Seven Mile Red
Ceramic

Black on Black
Ceramic
I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL.
I believe that Lutherans have the goods theologically. We inherit an insistence on grace, faith, scripture, and a constantly renewing focus on Jesus the Christ. Law and Gospel courses through our worship life and gets applied in our daily vocations. Every day is blessed by our patient, loving, problem-solving God. As adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, we have reason to live graciously.

I believe that we are also witnessing a creative rebirth among Lutherans. Through the efforts of a few strong creatives over the past decades, we have seen the emergence of more Lutheran creatives. This is an encouraging development as Martin Luther himself was a productive creator and appreciator of the arts. The human impulse to shape experience is paired with a proper stewardship of God-given talents in the Lutheran artist. Whether explicitly theological or not, Lutheran artists’ work shines a point of light in a darkening culture.

Lutherans also inherit the sense that God can use an individual to effect enormous changes for the good of His kingdom. Encourage your creative brothers and sisters in Christ. Take their work seriously. They testify with works that speak of the Word often times without words. They create for slow deliberation in an era of snap judgement. They bear witness to what they have not seen, but believed to this skeptical, visual generation. They create a heritage that may tell future generations what you and I believed in our time.

Jason Jaspersen has been working steadily on a studio practice while teaching at Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School since 2001. He works with a wide range of media including bronze monuments, woodblock printing, digital illustration, and sand animation. He has deep roots in New Ulm, Minnesota, where he lives with his wife, two children, and studio cat.

See more at jjjaspersen.com

**Not Ashamed**
Woodblock Print
16” x 20”

**Not Ashamed**
Terra Cotta
12” high

**Luther’s Seal**
Woodblock Print
9” x 9”
BIOGRAPHY

At a very early age, I began drawing. I was influenced by both my father, a photographer and my grandfather, an engraver. I earned my undergrad degrees from Bethany Lutheran College and Augustana University, specializing in printmaking. Directly following these achievements, I attended Kansas State University and earned my MFA in Printmaking. I started my professional career in Kansas and Nebraska. I currently teach at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

This artwork is a drawing created using only one brown ink and with only one quill pen point. It reminds me of Galatians 3:26-28 addressing the message that we are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Correlated to this unity of Gospel and fine art this drawing appears to be created with many inks, however by application and usage, the appearance of multiple colors create the illusion of space, details, and subject changes. I hope you enjoy the work and find all the small differences within the work, build an invariant pattern of design elements, colors, and objects that serve a greater whole.

Landscapes Unity
Ink
10.5” x 13.5”
KARYN LUKASEK

BIOGRAPHY

Karyn E. Lukasek resides in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and received her BA in studio art from Bethany Lutheran College in 2009, with an emphasis on oil painting and illustrating. She has illustrated several confessional Lutheran children’s books: Where Did the World Come From? (Concordia Publishing House, 2011, text also), Color the Catechism (According to Your Word, 2011), Color the Liturgy (ATYW, 2014), The Christmas Connection (CPH, 2016, text also), and a forthcoming board book, Lord, Keep Us Steadfast In Your Word (Kloria Publishing, 2017). She also illustrated and did book layout and design for two historical books written or compiled by the late Peter T. Harstad: We Saw the Elephant (Jackpine Press, 2010), and Store Per (JP, 2011). In addition, from 2014-2017, Karyn created custom gravestone sketches for a monument company, but she recently relinquished this job up to spend more time with her husband and their three young boys.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

The goal of my artwork is to bring glory to God for all that He has accomplished for us through Christ. Pointing children to their Savior by means of book illustrations is especially meaningful to me as an artist. Bold colors, silhouetted shapes, visual statements, and realism are four artistic mechanisms that I employ while keeping the focus on Jesus, our Savior from sin, death, and hell.

Not With Gold or Silver
Oil on canvas
18” x 14”

Portrait of a Hymnwriter
Torn paper collage
8” x 10”
Ben Lundsten is a photographer based in Mankato, Minnesota. Prior to starting his career in photography, Ben studied at Bethany Lutheran College and graduated with a degree in film and design. After graduation he took every opportunity he could, either online or working with a professional, to learn the craft of photography. Currently, he is working at Fun.com as their lead photographer and is responsible for shooting all their lifestyle and product imagery. Along with his full-time job, Ben has been traveling abroad for world mission organizations shooting both photography and film for the non-profits. Sharing the stories of brothers and sisters in Christ is where Ben feels his gifts are best suited and he plans to continue that work.

Ben has always had an interest in the global mission work being done by our synods and his camera has allowed him to visit a few in Southeast Asia. While there he was overwhelmed by the love and connections he felt with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. It can be hard to remember that the people who need our help are more like us than we think. They are parents, grandparents, brothers, and sisters who share the same innate desires, concerns, and hopes as their counterparts back in the States. His goal with the work he does there is to narrow the divide between our home congregations and our congregations abroad and to encourage giving through compassion and love, not shame and guilt.

Romans 12:4-5

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Lutheran school students reacting to a Bible story.
Kupang, Indonesia, 2016
White base metal print
16” x 24”

A church elder in the jungle.
Timor-Leste, Indonesia, 2016
White base metal print
16” x 24”

Seminary student reading his Bible.
Soe, Indonesia, 2016
White base metal print
16” x 24”

A mother and her child wait for a medical checkup.
Phu Chi Fa, Thailand, 2017
White base metal print
16” x 24”

(titles left to right)
Matthew 16:18  
*And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*

I began this still life with my mother’s Bible; she was raised in the Danish Lutheran tradition. From there I let the story unfold as the image progressed through personal and symbolic elements.

I have long been interested in church architecture and art and the minimalist use of art in Lutheran churches versus the abundance in Catholic buildings.

At the time of Luther and the Reformation the entire notion of the church as a building and its art changed. In addition to many scriptural problems, art was being mis-used and abused. The iconoclasts in response destroyed many churches, smashing the windows and sculptures. Luther took a varying stance on religious art. In his lectures from 1516 he stated, “to build churches, to adorn them with images, … all these are shadows of things worthy of children.”

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Luther had argued that “Practical and clear sermons hold an audience. The real adornment of the church is godly, practical, and clear teaching, the godly use of the sacraments, ardent prayer, and the like. Candles, golden vessels, and ornaments like that are fitting, but they are not the peculiar adornment of the church.”


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*Upon This Rock*  
Hand colored sepia tone  
16” x 20”
Jonathan Mayer is an artist-educator and native of Nebraska. A 2007 graduate of Bethany in studio art, he went on to receive his MFA in illustration from Savannah College of Art and Design. Since 2011 he has worked under the pseudonym Scapegoat Studio as a liturgical artist and designer. He taught Art History and Fundamentals at Concordia University, Nebraska, and teaches art courses through Wittenberg Academy, an online-only Lutheran high school. He lives in Seward, Nebraska, with his wife and four children.

**But for us fights the Valiant One**
Oil on canvas
36” x 48”

**Lutheran Context**
As a child, my favorite subject in school was Bible history. I loved hearing those stories, and as far back as I can remember, I loved illustrating them. Art and faith went hand-in-hand for me. I had no experience with churches that were artistically adorned, so I was mainly influenced by illustrated books. It is not surprising, then, that narrative was always a part of my artistic consciousness. I was completely enthralled, then, to discover that artistic symbols and narratives have adorned Christian worship spaces since the catacombs and house churches of the second century AD. Frescos, mosaics, stained glass, and altarpieces have told the story of salvation to Christians gathering around Word and Sacrament for two millennia.

A key component of the Reformation was a restoration of the sacred: preaching the gospel, administering the Sacraments, and removing anything that obscured Christ from those who felt the weight of their sin. One of the Lutheran church’s greatest achievements was to bring back the lost treasure of congregational song. Luther’s hymns demonstrated how music could not only offer fitting praise to our Savior, but also be a powerful tool for catechesis. Likewise, it is fitting for us to look at the value of liturgical art in not only offering worship to Christ, but also in teaching the faith to young and old.

Two or three generations of Lutherans have grown up widely thinking that liturgical art is, by definition, “too Catholic.” But it is my hope to demonstrate that the visual arts can be fitting in the context of Lutheran worship, as well, and in fact are sorely needed. A Lutheran artistic tradition would dispense with the mystical experiences and romanticism often found in Catholic art, and focus on biblical narratives and symbolism. It would be an art that is solid and tangible, avoids needless abstraction, and seeks to embody beautify in form. It would place high importance on excellence and craft, and above all, it would keep Christ at the center.
Donald Moldstad is a graduate of Bethany Lutheran College in 1978. He has a BFA degree from Minnesota State University, Mankato, with an emphasis in watercolor painting. Don then graduated from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary (ELS) in 1985. As an ordained Lutheran pastor he has served congregations in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Naples, Florida, and Mankato, Minnesota. He has served as the campus pastor (Chaplain) at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato for the past twelve years, where he also teaches religion. He and his wife, Gina, were blessed with two children and are currently waiting for their fifth grandchild to be born. Don prefers to work plein air with watercolors painting landscapes, but also works in pen and ink.

As one of the oldest cities in the United States, Charleston, South Carolina, was often called the Holy City, because two hundred years ago, the numerous church steeples guided ships to her port. The majority of the churches in my drawing belong to the various protestant denominations that followed Martin Luther’s lead in his break from the Roman Church. The gothic Lutheran church (far left) represents Luther’s influence on these church bodies.
The tether that holds me to the world was not designed to last.
Eric Ouren is an Associate Professor of Art at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota, where he has taught Foundations, Sculpture, Ceramics, Art History and Art Theory and Criticism since 2000. Ouren received a BFA from the University of Minnesota in 1990 and an MFA from the University of Iowa in 1998. He has also taught as an adjunct at the University of Iowa, Bethel University, the University of Minnesota, and Minnesota State University, Mankato. His work includes sculpture, collage, photography, and a variety of musical instruments; primarily the open-back banjo.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

I have been paying more attention to the pathos and humor involved with living a finite existence in this world. I am poignantly reminded of the passing of time, and rather than be morose that my end will come, I prefer some humor to lighten my journey.

I am interested in what we leave behind for others to see and make sense of, and also in the idea of image decay or image degradation where the images I have appropriated have been removed from their own time and space reality several times. The living subject becomes the photographed object, becomes print media, passes through time, and then becomes collage.

Working in collage and mixed media gives me the ability to juxtapose disparate images taken from old magazines, Xeroxes, and personal photography, along with drawing, to create images that comment on art, art history, my own religious worldview, literature, and other ideas that are part of our cultural life.

**Tether**
Mixed media and collage
17” x 18”

**No Sound (Bradbury’s Lament)**
Mixed media and collage
12” x 24”
BIOGRAPHY

Andy has been on the faculty of Bethany Lutheran College teaching illustration and graphic design since 1997. He and his family live in Madison Lake, Minnesota. He received his AA from Bethany in 1984, his BS from the University of Wisconsin in Madison in 1986, and his MFA in illustration from the Savannah College of Art and Design in 1991.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

In her book *Saving Leonardo*, Nancy Pearcey states that Christianity is the only worldview that resolves the dualistic, two-tiered (fact/value; materialist/rationalist) view of reality, providing a unified and coherent view of the world and our place in it.

Christianity reveals that truth, beauty, and free will (and therefore creativity) really do exist. We are purposefully created with the senses, rationality, and potential to create artwork that can be genuinely meaningful. Christian artists are therefore uniquely qualified to produce work that may actually deliver legitimate truth claims.

In *God at Work*, Gene Edward Veith discusses the Lutheran concept of vocation, where each of us serves as part of the mechanism that carries out God’s plan in the world and society. He even provides us with the talent, temperament, and pathway that leads us to the things He would like us to do. “The heart of a man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps” (Proverbs 16:9).

Christians therefore have the license and obligation to learn about art, and participate in its production where possible.

My contributions to this exhibition are personal and experimental, involving family experiences and relationships. They enabled the development of techniques and media that were unfamiliar beforehand.

The hiking concept is one of wilderness and potential danger, implying the need for commensurate levels of trust. The struggle to stay on the path is what matters. “Failures will be forgiven. It is acquiescence that is fatal” (C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*).
KURT SHRADER

BIOGRAPHY

Kurt Shrader holds a Master of Arts in Film & Television Production from the Savannah College of Art & Design and has spent most of his career creating corporate and commercial works. Today Kurt enjoys facilitating the application of live action motion media by churches and other Christian organizations and is interested in telling stories that reflect the Christian world view.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”
-Deuteronomy 6:5-7

What a terrifying thought! How can I do this? The law of God, here so plain, frightened me even more than my first thoughts when I realized I would become a father. What I didn't know then was what a joy it is to be a parent! We love because God loves us, and as His own children He holds as closer and more dear than any of us holds our own children, and as a parent sustains a child Christ also sustains us by His hand alone. What a comfort this is! This thing called fatherhood, it is an analog of God's love for us and an image of how God teaches us. The child's trust, it is an analog of how we must apprehend God's love. Resting secure in the Gospel I am learning to use this passage as a guide for how I can joyfully love and grow in my calling as a father to raise my daughter in the knowledge of Christ.

Vocation: Fatherhood
Video still
I began painting in 1984 while attending Bethany Lutheran College. My love for art history, especially American art and artists of the 19th and early 20th century, has been very influential in shaping my artistic style and subject matter. My oil paintings have been exhibited in three solo venues and dozens of juried shows over the past 30 years.

**Lutheran Still Life**
Oil on linen
36” x 24”

**Summer on the Minnesota River**
Oil on canvas
24” x 36”

Between the mid 1860s when CFW Walther served as President of the Missouri Synod, and the WWI era when the Evangelical Lutheran Synod was founded, the most popular form of still life painting in the United States was the hanging Trompe l’oeil still life. Literally translated from French as, “Fool the Eye”, Trompe l’oeil still life paintings were seldom regarded as Academy quality art at the time. Today, however, they are revered for their historical perspective, mastery of illusion, and witty, tongue in cheek humor (e.g. the “Papal Bull” in my painting). Hanging still lifes were most often commissioned by businesses and hung there to advertise and attract clients to their establishment. General Stores or saloons were the most common consumers of this particular form of artwork. As this time frame was a particularly vibrant time for American Lutheranism, I have chosen to celebrate the Reformation and American Lutheranism in this art form.
JOEY STEINBACH

BIOGRAPHY

Joey Steinbach is an sculptor and potter hailing from New Ulm, Minnesota, and is currently operating in Northeast Minneapolis. A Bethany alumnus, Joey studied studio art with an emphasis in 3D design as well as art history and sociology. Since graduating in 2014, he has acquired several artists grants and has been employed in a variety of fields of art, including non-profit management, studio production, and worked with fellow Bethany graduate and accomplished artist Jason Jaspersen as a sculptor.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

Lutheran art within the context of pottery was both fascinating and unexpectedly difficult to tackle conceptually. This set of thrown vessels, “The Rock, the Rose, the Fortress”, attempts to represent Lutheran themes through form, texture, negative space, and color, rather than through more literal iconography.

“The Rock” vessel (left) is a stout, dense, and visually heavy piece signifying the foundation upon which our collective faith is based. “The Rose” vessel (center) references the Luther Seal, with vine-like forms at its center and earthy, floral tones throughout. “The Fortress” vessel (right) is an homage to one of Luther’s most well known hymns. The walls are thick, the surface is weathered, and yet it stands stalwart.

These works were made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

The Rock, the Rose, the Fortress
Ceramic
BIOGRAPHY

Paul Trapp has an MFA in painting from Illinois State University. He has work in the permanent collections at Penang State Museum and Art Gallery in Malaysia and at Bethany Lutheran College. He is represented by the Untitled 2.0 gallery in Grants Pass Oregon, and has had paintings featured in HGTV’s House Hunters. He currently teaches at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon, where he lives with his wife, son, and their Guide Dogs for the Blind puppy in training.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT

I am an artist, and I am a Lutheran. I believe God has given us an amazing world to observe and experience visually. I love to draw from life, and my paintings are derived from observing my surroundings. God has given us an imagination to visually translate our experiences in order that others can experience this world anew. As an example, visual experiences can be viewed as a deck of cards; reinterpreting those experiences is how we shuffle and regroup the cards.

To create an experience, I shuffle the observed spaces and objects, and redistribute them. These redistributions, or distortions, are intended to activate a viewer’s perception; to create moments where the mind has to sort out what the eyes are seeing. I believe when we see something familiar yet inconsistent with reality we cease to be passive observers, and begin to be active interpreters. These moments allow us to break from our daily routine and experience this world in new ways. These visual distortions can help us remember that although objects and places may appear to be mundane and ordinary, they are not. Our experience of them can be unique, magical, and filled with the wonder of God’s creation.

Shadow City
Acrylic on Panel
20" x 29"

Ocean View
Acrylic on Panel
20" x 29"
Isaiah 55:6-11

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them.
Alicia Ulm (nee Wierschke) received her BA in art from Wisconsin Lutheran College and her MFA in printmaking from Kendall College of Art and Design.

Isaiah 55:6-11 describes how we see God’s Word and the Holy Spirit’s work throughout history and to this day. We may not understand God’s plan, yet we see the Gospel’s power as it spreads across the lives of those around us to the far corners of the world.

Isaiah 55: 6-11
Linocut
30.5” x 12”
Melissa Vandermause is the owner and artist behind Galleria Vivid Portrait Art. Melissa has been a photographic artist since she graduated Bethany Lutheran College in 2005. She started her own business in 2007 in Bristol, Connecticut, and has since moved back to Mankato with her husband Greg (Studio Manager at BLC) and two children, Brevinn and Vera. One of her joys in her business has been creating her own backdrops with acrylic paint and canvas.

As an artist, I enjoy innovating familiar ideas and concepts by turning them into lively modern canvases. I enjoy playing with rough outlines and intense texture to resemble imagery. These pieces photograph well as backgrounds for a portrait subject because of the many lines and colors that are exemplified in one piece. When I photograph a subject in front of these canvases in a natural light, the lines of the canvas and the subject play together in a most interesting and conceptual way, as if they were one. One of my favorite pieces was inspired by the colors and theme of Disney’s Frozen movie. For the Luther exhibit, I knew right away I would like to create a “modern art” version of Luther’s seal. The work Luther did in his lifetime is inspiring, so I wanted to give life to his seal, the way he gave life to the Christian church.

Souls and Beaches
Metallic print
30" x 40"

Brevinn Cheese Ball
Photographic print on wood
8" x 8"

Velsa In Theme
Photographic print on wood
8" x 10"
Anne Wendland is a figurative ceramic artist residing in St. Paul, Minnesota. In 2006, she earned her BA from Wisconsin Lutheran College. She continued her ceramics education as a post-baccalaureate student of Southern Illinois University in 2011 and the following year was an artist-in-residence at the Ceramics Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Currently, Anne is an art programmer at Silverwood Park in St. Anthony where she teaches classes that integrate art and nature.

Throughout the history of the Christian church, there has been conflicting opinions of the role and purpose of visual art. The Byzantine era is of particular interest to me as it ushered in prescribed rules of subject matter, rendering, and composition. Flat, stiffly posed and gilded renderings of biblical figures floating in empty backgrounds were meant to emphasize the other-worldly and spiritual ideal. Artists did not try to depict biblical subject matter in the way that it might have actually looked but rather as a supernatural event. Icons of Christ, Mary and the saints became objects of worship. Worry over the veneration of these images led iconoclasts to destroy much of the artwork previously produced and to forbid images of the Deity to be made. While the production of iconography returned after a period of about 100 years, the Reformation led to another period of church art destruction by the radical wing of the Reformation. Luther, of course, didn’t approve of this behavior and saw the usefulness of all the arts, including the visual arts as a teaching tool for Biblical stories. On the other hand, the Protestant Reformation, following the lead of Zwingli and Calvin, were much more modest in the decoration of their worship spaces.

I’m interested in historical and contemporary Christians/Lutherans grappling with what visual art to include in places of worship. And more specifically, how Lutheran artists, after the Reformation, reflect awareness of the grace we have received in a meaningful way through visual terms. As I view medieval, specifically Byzantine art, I often wonder if church-goers of the day felt a sense of disconnect between themselves and the richly ornamented figures that adorned their worship spaces and icons. How do contemporary Lutheran artists effectively express knowledge of a gracious God – the One who made the unholy, holy through His Son?

our lady
Ceramic and mixed media
16” x 8”
MALIA WILEY

BIography
I grew up in rural Minnesota outside of Nicollet on a farm. I have always had a love for animals, painting and anything creative like learning to crochet from my grandma.

Lutheran Context
Today painting is my profession, but animals and crochet are my hobby. My newest body of paintings incorporates, crochet afghans and my love for animals. Using these three loves that God had put into my life only seem like the right thing to do.

Stag Luxuriously Robed in Crochet
Oil on Canvas
3’ x 4’

Flying Geese
Oil on Canvas
3’ x 5’
DENICE WOLLER

BIOGRAPHY
Some would say Denice Woller is all over the place. Each day she has to decide whether that day will be dedicated to being a photographic artist, BLC instructor, or farmer. As a wife to husband Eric and mother to four children ages 9-14, at this stage of her life mothering and chauffeuring is the overriding daily job. In high school her mom told her, “When you grow up and get married you will have to slow down and not do so many things.” Denice is still trying to figure out how to listen to that brilliant motherly advice. In the meantime, she will continue to run her studio Woller Photography, which she physically built herself in the hayloft of her 117 year old barn. Plus, be in charge of many groups through her church, sell the eggs from her 33 chickens, breed Golden Retrievers, and maybe ride her horse or have an art show every now and then.

LUTHERAN CONTEXT
I am an artist and a documentarian. I feel the importance of photographing pieces of life history for future generations. I have been taking photos for nearly all of my life and became a professional nearly 20 years ago. During that span of time I have seen many changes in the world of photography, but the historical processes still rank at the top of my favorites to produce. Each week I spend countless hours staring at the photos I take for my studio business on a computer screen. It is fun for me to step away from that technology every now and then to produce imagery reminiscent of those which were made over a century ago. Two of the images I have included in this show are cyanotypes. The process is one that utilizes specific chemicals which undergo numerous changes to finally produce their brilliant cyan color. I have been stuck on this particular process for over a decade. I never get tired of the many challenges of the process, nor the color of my final images, because let’s face it, this is the best color under the spectrum! These two are also the current buildings where I attend worship services, Peace in North Mankato and Bethany’s Trinity Chapel.

The non-cyan image is of the church I was baptized in and grew up going to. The congregation of Zion Ev. Lutheran Church in Colome, South Dakota, built a new, (and much less dynamic) structure after I got married. This original building was sold, and because it is located in the heart of pheasant country is now home to a hunting lodge. There is now a fully stocked bar where I once stood to take communion. Even though it is used a few weeks every year, it is obviously fading away. The cornerstone has sadly been hacked away, and modified. Remnants of the cross outline still show on the steeple above the balcony window where my Dad played the organ every other week. Time marches on, and God reminds us that our time on earth is only a blink.

Each of these locations is near and dear to my heart. Yes, they are just structures, but within these walls God's word is shared, and I thank God that He has guided my life the way He has. I would be a completely different person had I not been given the opportunity to worship here, and therefore that is why I chose to submit them for this special art exhibition.

(titles left to right)

Trinity Chapel
Cyanotype
17” x 12”

Peace Steeple
Cyanotype
55” x 46.5”

Zion SD
Print
10.5” x 15.5”
BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE

In 1911, Bethany Ladies College opened with forty-four students and four faculty members, and a mission to educate young women. In 1927 the Norwegian Synod, later known as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), purchased the college. The ELS operated the school as a co-educational high school and junior college until 1969, when the high school department was closed. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary began in 1946 as a department of the college; in 1975 it became a separate institution.

In May 1996, the Board of Regents resolved to start moving Bethany from an associate to a baccalaureate degree-granting institution. In the spring of 2001 Bethany entered a new era in its history by granting its first baccalaureate degrees.

Regardless of these significant changes, Bethany continues to offer a student-centered Christian liberal arts education designed to prepare students for this life and for life in eternity.

YLVISAKER FINE ARTS CENTER

Dr. Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker was president of Bethany Lutheran College from 1930 to 1950. He was a devoted theologian, scholar, teacher, and administrator. In both educational and theological circles he was highly respected for his depth of knowledge and understanding. His goal for students of Bethany was to “develop useful and noble lives, strong in Christian character, respected and sturdy citizens in church and state.”

The S.C. Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center was completed in 1989. This building houses the art, music, and theatre departments, Sigurd K. Lee Theater, a black box theater, and the Anna John Silber Recital Hall. Activities, competitions, and performances by student and community groups constitute a major part of the yearly events calendar.
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