

# MTC STUDENT MINISTRIES

Laura Pulliam, DCE | [lpulliam@mtcsa.org](mailto:lpulliam@mtcsa.org) | 210.824.8748

JULY 2017



## UPCOMING

### JULY 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 EDUCATION

The Education Hour (every Sunday from 9:45-10:45am) is your chance to connect with other students, learn from God's Word, pray, and be refreshed as you learn more about our Christian faith!

### JULY 16-21 SERVE [UN]PLUGGED MISSION TRIP



### SUMMER SERVE PICS!



### WHERE DID LAURA GO?

Maternity leave! If you have questions about upcoming educational or student ministries, please contact Susan at the church office to find out the point of contact for that particular ministry.

## JULY SCHEDULE

- SUN 2** 9:45am Education Hour {youth room}
- SUN 9** 9:45am Education Hour {youth room}
- SUN 16** 9:45am Education Hour {youth room}  
2:00pm Depart for [Un]Plugged Mission Trip
- SAT 21** 3:30pm Return from [Un]Plugged Mission Trip
- SUN 23** 9:45am Education Hour {youth room}
- SUN 30** 9:45am Education Hour {youth room}

## FROM THE DCE

*In honor of Reformation 2017, the next few months of "From The DCE" will feature excerpts from the final chapter of my Master's Thesis—"Chapter 4: Implications and Possible Applications for the Church Today." Complete copies are also available.*

### [CONT.] CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES: BALANCING CULTURE AND HISTORY IN CORPORATE WORSHIP

#### LUTHER ON WORSHIP

In his remodel of the service for Wittenberg, Luther saw the benefit of using both caution and freedom when editing the liturgy for his context. He was keenly aware that order and tradition are necessary or, at minimum, helpful for the weak in faith:

## FROM THE DCE (CONT.)

Therefore, I have used neither authority nor pressure [in renovating the Mass]. Nor did I make any innovations. For I have been hesitant and fearful, partly because of the weak in faith, who cannot suddenly exchange an old and accustomed order of worship for a new and unusual one. (*Luther's Works: Liturgy and Hymns*, 19)

Luther was aware of his context. He realized that in order to be both culturally relevant and historically mindful, he needed only change those elements of the liturgy which either contradicted Scripture or did not communicate to the culture of his age (for example, the simple matter of vernacular language).

Luther recognized that the constant dangers in weighing the value of history and culture is that, in exercising freedom, one can unknowingly trample upon one of the essentials. He cautioned against abuses in three particular areas:

First, God's word has been silenced, and only reading and singing remain in the churches. This is the worst abuse. Second, when God's Word has been silenced such a host of un-Christian fables and lies, in legends, hymns, and sermons were introduced that it is horrible to see. Third, such divine service was performed as a work whereby God's grace and salvation might be won. (*Ibid.*, 11)

As reformer of the church, Luther emphasized that the Word is, and should remain, the central element of Christian worship. Indeed, he felt strongly about this matter: "We can spare everything except for the Word. Again, we profit by nothing as much as by the Word" (*Ibid.*, 14). For Luther, the Word was *the* essential.

### IMPORTANCE OF CONSIDERING BOTH CULTURE AND HISTORY

There is a popular false dichotomy that is thrown around in the LCMS today—*Should worship be traditional or contextual (that is, depending upon the circumstances of culture)?* A large number of churches in America are perpetuating a contemporary—or, more accurately, a contextualization-driven—worship methodology. But not all theologians believe that culture should have the greater weight in liturgical formation. Tradition has been understood by many as a cumbersome rock weighing down the creativity and relevance of Christian worship. However, the history or tradition of the church is not a rock but a sieve through which

bad practices and bad doctrine are refined. Hippolytus spoke very highly of tradition because it serves as a guard against unchecked heresy. He wrote *Apostolic Tradition* in order "[to] address the churches, so that they who have been well trained, may, by our instruction, hold fast that tradition which has continued up to now and, knowing it well, may be strengthened. This is needful, because of that lapse or error which recently occurred through ignorance, and because of ignorant men."

The benefit of tradition is that it can be continually purified. The difference between publishing a Facebook post and publishing a dissertation is that one has undoubtedly been *refined*. There is no argument that one will be more thoughtfully composed than the other. When churches continually do one new thing after another in their worship, they do not have (or take) the time to refine.

We, as the church, must learn to appreciate the role of both history and culture in our worship. To act as though history cannot teach us anything is arrogance; to act as though culture has nothing to do with the way one worships is naive. Worship curation, not stylization must take place. [Yet we should not go to the opposite extreme, assuming] that culturally-mindful worship is inherently devoid of good theology. What if, instead, we began to understand how cultural relevance can help *communicate* good theology? If a French-speaking individual walks into a Spanish-language worship service, he will not be able to understand the Good News no matter how doctrinally-pure the words.

The history of the church is not without its flaws; we should not strive to go back but to go forward *informed!* "Although a return to pre-Constantinian Christianity is not our goal, early Christianity informs" our worship even today (Brauer and Precht, *Lutheran Worship*, 22)... Almost everything in early church worship held significance that we can either adopt for modern-day use or dismiss. Dismissal can be acceptable and is sometimes necessary, but it should not be done lightly.

NEXT MONTH: KEY APPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH TODAY

