

Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Heritage

Part 5: Resource Packet¹



December 2012

Included in This Resource Packet

- **Pages 2-3: Some tools to help pastors develop a plan for growth in personal Word and prayer.**
- **Pages 4-6: A review of John Kleinig's book *Grace upon Grace***
- **Pages 7-17: Reviews of three devotional resources**
 - ***The Meditation of My Heart* by Allen Lindke**
 - ***Minister's Prayer Book* by John Doberstein**
 - ***Treasury of Daily Prayer* edited by Scot Kinnaman**

¹ This resource packet is a work in progress. As the author becomes acquainted with more resources in his own devotional life, and through brothers sharing what they have found helpful, the goal is to continue to add to and strengthen this resource packet.

Note: this resource packet intentionally has not sought to evaluate the wide variety of devotional literature available. While such tools can be very helpful to our devotional study, the emphasis of this packet is on materials that provide resources intended to send us directly into the Scriptures themselves for our devotional reading.

MY PERSONAL DEVOTIONAL PLAN FOR WORD AND PRAYER

+ IN NOMINE JESU +

I MAKE THESE PLANS IN THE ASSURANCE THAT IN JESUS' LIFE AND DEATH I AM A CHILD OF GOD AND HEIR OF HEAVEN IN WHOM MY FATHER IS PERFECTLY WELL PLEASED.

Whom might I ask to be my personal Barnabas to be God's gift to help me put this plan into action and begin again (and improve the plan!) when I struggle?

What will help me make sure I am pursuing time in Word and prayer not as a "to do" done for God's benefit, but as the gift it is from my gracious God?

As you consider plans for time in Word and prayer, be sure to consider these specific questions:

- What is the best time of the day for me to make this a regular part of my day?
- How much time will I set aside?
- What will come out of my schedule to make room for this?
- Where will I spend this time so as to avoid as many distractions as possible?
- How can I reduce distractions from other duties and tasks in my many callings in life?

What way will I seek to slow down and meditate on what I am reading?

What books or other materials do I want to use during my devotional time?

If I plan to study Scripture "directly," how will I determine what to read and how much to read?

How can I make prayer a more vital part of my devotional time?

If I intend to develop a plan for expanding intercessory prayer, how will I structure that?

What else could be a blessing to my time in Word and prayer? (Use of hymns...etc.)

(Use the next page to turn these ideas into specific goals and action steps.)

SPECIFIC GOALS TO PUT INTO PLACE

Goals for Strengthening My Personal Devotional Time in Word and Prayer

Under God's blessing (without which nothing good happens!) prayerfully work to make your goals and the supporting action steps **SMART**: **Specific** (gives concrete direction for action), **Measurable** (able to know when goal has been reached), **Attainable** (avoids OOPS: overly optimistic planning syndrome – goal is realistic about available time/resources), **Relevant** (goal/action steps clearly relate to what you are trying to achieve), **Timed** (goal has a specific time limit).

Goal #1:

Anticipated action steps (what and when) needed to complete this goal:

- 1) What I will do and by when:
- 2) What I will do and by when:
- 3) What I will do and by when:
- 4) What I will do and by when:

Goal #2:

Anticipated action steps (what and when) needed to complete this goal:

- 1) What I will do and by when:
- 2) What I will do and by when:
- 3) What I will do and by when:
- 4) What I will do and by when:

Goal #3:

Anticipated action steps (what and when) needed to complete this goal:

- 1) What I will do and by when:
- 2) What I will do and by when:
- 3) What I will do and by when:
- 4) What I will do and by when:

I have asked or plan to ask _____ to serve as my Barnabas for these goals.

REVIEW OF GRACE UPON GRACE: SPIRITUALITY FOR TODAY

John W. Kleinig

St. Louis: Concordia

2008

ISBN: 978-0-7586-1304-2

A review by Professor Rich Gurgel

Since this book is quoted so frequently in the essay, here is a slight revision of a book review that appeared in conjunction with the preaching newsletter *Preach the Word*. This review alerts the reader of *Grace upon Grace* both to what is valuable in the book as well as some cautions and discernment that are needed in the reading.

Here's the book review:

Dr. John Kleinig is dean of chapel and head of biblical studies at Australian Lutheran College, Adelaide. He has often been a guest lecturer at LCMS schools in this country as well.

Kleinig draws heavily on Martin Luther's threefold approach to spiritual growth: *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer), and *tentatio* (struggle, testing). Kleinig's main point of emphasis throughout is to urge us **not** to approach spiritual growth as a product of our effort and determination but rather to see it as a gift of God through his gospel.

Because our spiritual life depends on our receiving from God, Christ teaches us to become beggars....This makes it hard, yet at the same time easy, for us to live as His disciples. It is hard because we take such great pride in our own achievements and self-sufficiency. We do not like to ask God, or anyone, for anything. Far better to do without than to become dependent on others! Yet it is also easy because our spirituality does not depend on our performance but on our receiving from God. No one is more or less spiritually advantaged. To change the picture, we must all become as little children, helpless infants that are totally dependent on their mothers (Matthew 18:3; Mark 10:14-15; 1 Peter 2:2). (29)

Therefore in every one of the three areas of focus (*meditatio*, *oratio*, and *tentatio*) Kleinig seeks to help us see clearly the grace of God at work. Just as the chief "service" that takes place on Sunday morning is God serving us through his means of grace, so Kleinig urges us to see our *meditatio*, our time spent pondering the Word, not primarily as our devotion to God but as his devotion to us!

The teaching of Jesus on meditation does not concentrate on what we do but on what He does as we meditate on His Word; the emphasis is on what we receive from Him and His heavenly Father as we let Him and His Word occupy our hearts. By meditating on His Word we receive what He has to give us through it. (107)

In the same way, *oratio* (prayer) is also chiefly receiving. First of all we appropriate Jesus' perfect prayers as that which counts for us. We also learn from God's promises what it is we are to pray for. Finally, we rely on the intercession of both the Spirit and our Lord Jesus who speaks up for us even when we are not sure what words to utter.

Even *tentatio* (struggle, testing), although the devil seeks to use it to drive us to pride or despair, must serve as a gracious gift to us as it drives us back to our Savior's Word and to prayer. All of which begins the cycle of gifts and grace all over again (much to Satan's dismay!).

But as worthwhile as this book is for any Lutheran called worker or lay person to read, there are some cautions that this reviewer believes need to be sounded:

- In several places in his book Kleinig engages in pressing biblical narratives past a point that can be clearly established from the text (see, for example, his use of the dark cloud on Mt. Sinai on pages 33-34). Even when such flights of hermeneutical imagination are pressed into the service of clear biblical points, a troubling pattern of going beyond the point of the text is showing itself. While it would be exaggeration to call what Kleinig does allegory, it is a close cousin. In this reviewer's experience, such pressing of biblical narrative beyond safe boundaries is becoming a more frequent experience in materials that are written by authors in fellowship with the LCMS.
- Other related tendencies seem in some LCMS publications were also noticeable in Kleinig's book. Absolution at times seems to be placed on a level with the sacraments (see page 43, for example) and the Lord's Supper is spoken of in terminology that ventures beyond clear Scripture (see page 282 for several examples). Kleinig seems to imply, if not state, that different (perhaps higher) gospel gifts are to be found in the Supper, rather than seeing the very same gospel gifts communicated through Baptism, Supper, and Word.
- While the concept of mystery is clearly a New Testament concept in that everything of the gospel remains foolishness to man's natural reason, and that much about our "hidden God" remains mystery even to believers as we live by faith and not by sight, yet Kleinig seems to have fallen just a little too much in love with the concept of mystery. Notice that "mystery" forms a key part of the titles of three of the book's five chapters. In this reviewer's opinion, mystery begins to morph into mystical. See, for example, the suggestion on page 144 that we may expect at times to see visions and hear voices as we meditate on God's Word. Is this an attempt to appeal to a "spiritual" postmodern world in which the more mysteriously spirituality is dressed the more appealing it becomes?
- A paradoxical problem occurs on page 156 when the author who loves "mystery" appears to seek to solve that which Scripture truly allows to remain a mystery. As Kleinig is discussing prayer, he rightfully seeks to emphasize the fact that prayer is powerful and that God does indeed take into account the prayers of his saints as he governs his world. In making that statement Kleinig rightfully avoids the danger of falling into a Calvinistic type of determinism. Yet Kleinig then seems to fall into the danger on the opposite side as he borrows some ideas from the Quaker theologian Richard Foster. Kleinig seems to advocate for a concept of an open future in the details of this world and our lives that comes perilously close to some of what is

taught by Open Theism (those who teach that God himself does not know many details of the future). Part of what seems to lead Kleinig down that path is his tendency to press biblical anthropopathic language (God changing his mind) beyond its biblical point. Here this reader would encourage Kleinig to allow a true mystery to remain! It is far better to affirm that we are confronted by what appears as a paradox to our minds. God takes into account the prayers of his saints to affect the future of his world and their lives. Consider Hezekiah's prayer in 2 Kings 20 and Isaiah 38 which extends his life 15 years. Yet it is also true that "all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16). Only God knows how that mystery is solved.

- One final concern can be found on pages 46-48 as Kleinig rightly seeks to counter the Pentecostal misunderstanding of how the Holy Spirit is received ("swallowing him feathers and all" apart from the means of grace). Yet in stressing the importance of the daily receiving of the gift of the Spirit by a daily return to our baptism, Kleinig almost seems to deny the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that has indeed been established by the means of grace. Yes, we certainly must counter the false Pentecostal concept of "possessing" the Holy Spirit apart from the means. Yet there is a true biblical concept of receiving the Spirit through the gospel as a sign and seal guaranteeing eternal gifts yet to come (2 Corinthians 1:22).

All in all, this book is one that can be heartily recommended provided the reader has developed some degree of discernment. It offers a refreshing gospel-centered approach to all matters of spiritual growth. How right Kleinig is to state:

We believe in justification by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, in practice, we all too often fail to live by grace and faith. In our spirituality, in our devotions and praying, we, in fact, all too easily slip back into justification by works and reliance on our own performance. (161)

What a beautiful gospel-centered gift this book presents to us, especially in distinction to so much of what is written about spirituality that urges us to growth by our own strength and determination. Such encouragements often only add to our frustration and sense of guilt about our spiritual life. In contrast, this book, seeks to empower us and draw us to Word and prayer by winning and wooing us with the gospel. What blessings await us when we are won by that invitation!

REVIEW OF THE MEDITATION OF MY HEART

Allen L. Lindke

Unpublished manuscript – available on ***Grow in Grace***

Allen Lindke currently serves as pastor at Mt. Sinai Lutheran Church in Montrose, Michigan. He has several times taught the use of these resources he authored during Winterim and Summer Quarter at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. He has also shared these resources at pastoral circuits and conferences by request.

For the first several years of his ministry, Pastor Lindke had made use of John Doberstein's ***Minister's Prayer Book*** (also reviewed in this resource packet). As much as he enjoyed and benefitted from that resource, he determined to move away from the *lectio continua* pattern of longer suggested readings tied to the church year. He has substituted a *lectio selecta* pattern of briefer readings built around six themes of the pastor's life.

Much like Doberstein's resource, there still is a weekly and a daily pattern being suggested.

Each week still follows the pattern of the church year with a daily repetition of the prayer of the day, hymn of the day, and psalm of the day. What also follows a weekly pattern are a repeating brief confession, absolution, and benediction that are related to the emphases of the church year, even if they are not drawn directly from those resources. Finally, for those who wish to review the Scripture lessons appointed for that particular Sunday of the church year, six different series of lessons are also listed (ILCW A, B, C, Historic, Synodical Conference, and Soll).

The real change from Doberstein's pattern is found in the daily resources. The main suggested readings in Pastor Lindke's resource are devoted to a daily thematic pattern of six major aspects of the public ministry. He builds these themes around the fact that each of us is called to be:

- A Christian
- A Student
- A Proclaimer
- An Evangelist
- An Advocate
- A Counselor

As the pastor moves through his devotions during that week, he would focus on one of these six major aspects each day. There are also six prayers provided each week, one for each of the six aspects of life and ministry. The pastor can use that prayer as he finishes meditating on thematic readings he chose to use that day.

For each week of the church year, under each of these six aspects, a series of four related sets of readings are presented. Each set includes: a Scripture lesson, a brief reading from the Confessions, and a portion taken from ***What Luther Says***. It is Pastor Lindke's goal to eventually produce an anthology of brief readings from the fathers of the church that would relate to each of the six aspects.

Pastor Lindke is not suggesting that on any given day the pastor should focus on all four sets under that day's emphasis. Instead, a pastor could focus on one or two of the sets, thereby allowing this resource to provide him with 2 to 4 years of "fresh" readings.

Usefulness of this resource²:

- This resource maintains a tangible connection between corporate worship and personal devotions. The thoughts of the previous Sunday's corporate worship continue to be heard and sung throughout the week.
- The hymn for the week allows God's gift of music to provide variety in how the Word is communicated within each devotion. The Word to be pondered isn't just read; it's sung.
- The briefer nature of the selected Scripture readings (the selections from the Confessions and the quotations from Luther are also quite brief) may be more conducive to a thoughtful pondering/meditating on what has been read, rather than just reading to "get through" what has been appointed for the day. There isn't a rush to cover large quantities of material.

Weaknesses of this resource:

- Those looking for a continuous reading of the entire Bible in one or two years will not find that in Pastor Lindke's resource. It was not designed for that purpose.
- The use of shorter scriptural lessons also provides the challenge of not reading those lessons out of context with their biblical surroundings.
- While easily added by the pastor, the omission of the Lord's Prayer or Luther's Morning or Evening Prayer (or the Prayer for Grace and the Prayer for Peace) departs from the typical devotional orders of most resources.

² This review is being written without firsthand experience in making use of this resource. The author of this review intends to revise this review after he has had opportunity to make use of this resource for his own devotional life.

REVIEW OF MINISTER'S PRAYER BOOK: AN ORDER OF PRAYERS AND READINGS

Edited and with an introduction by John W. Doberstein

Fortress Press: Philadelphia

1986

ISBN 0-8006-0760-0

John W. Doberstein was a professor of practical theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. This is a reprint and slight updating of Doberstein's original edition which came out in 1959.

The *Minster's Prayer Book* is a resource for daily Word and prayer designed for pastors. The resource weaves together into the devotional pattern two complementary emphases: 1) there is a repeating **daily pattern** of seven different devotional orders that focus on "seven themes of the minister's calling and life" (VI); and then there is 2) a **weekly pattern** that reflects the emphasis of that particular week of the church year.

The **daily pattern** includes these seven themes:

- Sunday: The Divine Institution and Commission of the Ministry
- Monday: The Promise and Responsibility of the Ministry
- Tuesday: The Minister's Life
- Wednesday: The Minister as Confessor
- Thursday: The Minister as Pastor
- Friday: The Minister as Intercessor
- Saturday: The Minister as Preacher

For each of these days there is a set of brief lessons (about 10) on that day's theme as well as other brief Scripture passages (about 10 again) that can be used for further meditation on that same theme from the minister's life and calling. Since "the lessons on the ministry" are only one part of a much more extensive devotional order, Doberstein is not suggesting that the pastor would read and ponder each of those lessons each week as he comes to that particular day. Instead, as that particular day of the week comes around week by week the pastor could select a different passage or two to read and ponder, thereby gaining a fuller biblical picture of that particular emphasis of a minister's calling and life.

The **weekly pattern** is built around the church year. For each week of the church year, Doberstein provides a focus verse for the week, collect, suggested psalms, a hymn of the week (in the 1986 edition the hymns are from *Lutheran Book of Worship*), and a two year series of lessons. In each of those two series, for each day there are three suggested lessons. One lesson is from the Old Testament, one from the epistles, and one from the Gospels. While Doberstein does not indicate this in his introduction, the

readings appear to be intended to cover the entire Scripture in the course of two years. While the readings from the Gospels jump around a bit more to fit the emphasis of that week of the church year, the first two readings tend to follow more of a *lectio continua* pattern to allow the pastor to ponder entire books of the Old Testament or the Epistles read serially on consecutive days.

In addition to those two repeating patterns, 50 pages of the book provide a prayer book for pastors focused on the many different settings and situations of the ministry.

The last major section of the book is entitled: “Meditations for Ministers: An Anthology.” Here Doberstein has sought to gather a wide variety of brief quotations from authors spanning the history of the church (as well as a few quotations from secular literature). The anthology is broken down into seven sections reflecting the seven emphases from the pastor’s life and ministry as referenced above.

At the end of the book there are two appendices. The first is Doberstein’s translation of Luther’s devotional gem, “A Simple Way to Pray.” The second is another translation of a selection of a devotional work by Caspar Calvor (1650-1725). The selection is entitled “The Ladder of Devotion.”

Here is this reviewer’s perception of the pros and cons of what Doberstein has put together in ***Minister’s Prayer Book***:

Usefulness of this resource³:

- Since this resource was designed specifically for the devotional life of the pastor, it has the great advantage of being focused on that audience.
- The repeating daily emphases would seem to drive home to the pastor the unique emphases of his holy calling.
- The connection to the church year also provides a happy correspondence between the pastor’s personal devotional life and the corporate worship of his congregation.
- The hymn for the week allows God’s gift of music to provide variety in how the Word is communicated within each devotion. The Word to be pondered isn’t just read; it’s sung.
- While the readings in the anthology appear to be of uneven quality, bringing in the voices of “the fathers” can enrich a pastor’s devotional pattern.
- The rich variety and daily smorgasbord of choices that Doberstein offers can certainly assist in staying out of mindless ruts and routine in the devotional pattern.
- For those who would like to have not only a morning devotional time, but also a briefer time of devotion at noon, and again in the evening, they will find that Doberstein offers suggestions for how to divide up the resources into three distinct devotions each day.
- Woven into Doberstein’s devotional orders is also a useful pattern for intercessory prayer. ***Christian Worship Supplement*** has included a modification of Doberstein’s pattern (78-79).

³ This review is being written without firsthand experience in making use of this resource. The author of this review intends to revise this review after he has had opportunity to make use of this resource for his own devotional life.

Weaknesses of this resource:

- While Doberstein himself warns that not all the resources and suggested readings are intended to be used in “one sitting,” if the pastor seeks to use this book only as a morning devotional tool, he may find himself torn between trying to do too much in one sitting (thus making meditating on what was read a great challenge) or leaving out such large chunks of the suggested readings that he misses the intended ebb and flow of the weekly and yearly patterns Doberstein has woven into his prayer book.
- The language used in the ordinary of his orders of devotion and the choices of readings for the proper are considerably different from what is in current use in ***Christian Worship*** (or ***Christian Worship Supplement***). If the pastor wishes to keep the useful correspondence between his personal devotional life and corporate worship, significant changes will need to be made.
- This is the polar opposite danger of a strength listed above. While the rich variety of what Doberstein offers can be a blessing, in some ways the whole pattern appears a bit overly complex. From this reviewer’s perspective, while Doberstein’s patterns could provide mind engaging variety within a repeating pattern, this complexity could also easily play into the natural tendency of our sinful hearts to just “go through the motions” as the pastor works his way through all the elements.
- The seven emphases of the minister’s “calling and life” seem so focused on our calling into the public ministry that our other callings in life fail to receive adequate focus. (See the review of Rev. Allen Lindke’s ***The Meditation of My Heart*** in which he addresses that issue.) While such emphases of our more “royal priestly” callings (husband, father, etc.) would be addressed by the readings from the church year, the imbalance in the daily focus seems to this reviewer to reflect one side of the ditch in what is often our daily struggle to maintain proper balance among our many God-given callings.

REVIEW OF TREASURY OF DAILY PRAYER

Scot A. Kinnaman, General Editor

Assisting Editors: Henry V. Gerike, Arthur A. Just, Jr., Nathan W. Higgins, Todd A. Peperkorn, David H. Petersen

Concordia Publishing House: Saint Louis

2008

ISBN 978-0-7586-1514-5

[Note: this review in its current form is based on the author using this resource for one month for his morning devotions. The author makes no claim to having read *Treasury of Daily Prayer* in its entirety.]

Concordia Publishing House, and those who worked on this book, are to be commended for seeking to provide the child of God with a “one stop shop” for their devotional needs for each day of the year. This massive volume (1495 pages) seeks to provide a wide variety of devotional resources to give the believer precisely what the name of the volume says: a rich treasury for daily Word and prayer.

Here is a brief overview of what the user will find in this book:

- There is an extensive introductory section to help the user grasp the various resources included in the volume with suggestions for how best to make use of the wealth that is presented. Concordia has provided a ribbon marker that can be inserted into the book’s spine. The rainbow of six differently colored ribbons is very useful in finding one’s way more easily among the sections of the book.
- There are several brief sections explaining the development and function of the church year, an encouragement to the reader to develop a pattern of daily prayer, and an explanation of the pattern of the daily office as practiced in the history of the church.
- The largest section of the book (over 1000 pages) contains the devotional selections for each day of the year.
- In the center of the book are 74 pages of orders for daily prayer taken from **Lutheran Service Book**. Five of these orders are taken from corporate worship (Matins, Vespers, Compline, Morning Prayer, and Evening Prayer). There are also four simpler orders of prayer for individual or family use (morning, noon, early evening, and close of the day). This section closes with two responsive prayers, the Litany, and seasonal invitatories, antiphons, and responsories.
- The final sections of the book include:
 - A section of additional prayers with emphasis on specific situations in the believer’s life;
 - Psalm tones as well as all 150 psalms;
 - Luther’s Small Catechism; and
 - Materials that Christians can use to prepare for confession and absolution and the Lord’s Supper.

Here is a brief overview of the pattern for each day's devotion:

- Based on the user's choice of devotional order, each day would begin in the red-edged devotional order section in the middle of the book. For example, in the month that I have been using this resource, I began each morning singing through Matins.
- As the user reaches the section of the worship service normally set aside for lessons from the Word, the user turns to the specific resources for that particular day of the year. This includes:
 - **Psalmody:** a brief portion of a psalm appointed for that day. There is also a daily suggestion for a complete psalm which can be found in the section near the back of the book. "No attempt has been made, either in the Psalmody or the suggested additional psalms, to present all the verses of the Psalter or either to represent a selection of verses from all 150 psalms. Instead, the seasons and the readings have been used to select psalms" (xii).
 - **Scripture Lessons:**
 - Both the Old Testament reading and the New Testament reading that follow are taken from Daily Lectionary in **Lutheran Service Book**. If someone used both readings each day, the introduction to **Treasury of Daily Prayer** indicates that the reader will have covered during the year about one third of the Old Testament and almost the entire New Testament.
 - Old Testament reading: this lesson is usually a chapter or less (printed out in its entirety using the ESV). It follows a general *lectio continua* pattern of reading whole books over the course of many days while also seeking as much as possible to capture the message of the specific time of the church year. The readings typically do not cover every verse or chapter of the particular Scripture book. Often there are large gaps between each day's readings.
 - New Testament reading: the same general pattern at the Old Testament reading is followed here. However, there are no gaps apparent between the daily readings as was true in the Old Testament reading.
 - **Writing:** Following the Scripture lessons there is a brief devotional selection from a father of the church related to the emphasis of the lessons just read.
 - **Hymn of the Day:** This is a single stanza (or two) of a hymn that matches the emphasis of the lessons or the commemoration that falls on that day.
 - **Prayer of the Day:** The emphasis of this brief prayer either matches the thoughts of the lessons, or, if the day is a commemoration day, the prayer will match that emphasis.
 - **Biographical sketch:** If the day is a commemoration, there will be a brief biographical sketch of the person or event being commemorated that day.
 - **Book of Concord:** The specific resources for each day conclude with a suggested reading from the Book of Concord. This is the only "external resource" to which **Treasury of Daily Prayer** sends the worshiper. Other than this encouragement, the book is entirely "self-contained," providing within its covers all suggested readings in their entirety. Those who followed the suggested readings of the Book of Concord would find that they have read through the entire Book of Concord during the year.

- At this point the worshiper would return to the orders of devotion found in the middle of the volume to complete his devotion with prayers (Lord's Prayer) and benediction.

Strengths of *Treasury of Daily Prayer*

In the month this reviewer used this resource for his devotional life, here are the strengths he noted.

- While for the first week I had the sense of being hopelessly adrift in the midst of a large ocean of resources, that sense of disorientation was soon replaced by an appreciation for having so many resources contained within the shores of a single volume. While traveling to at least three different sections of the resource each day, the ribbons provided make this relatively painless.
- The resources succeed beautifully in almost seamlessly synchronizing the public and private worship of the child of God within the flow of the church year. I particularly appreciated the companion musical CD that features someone speaking or chanting the leader's portion of the five corporate devotional services while the Kantorei choir from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne provides the congregational responses. I love the opportunity, though worshipping alone in my study each morning, to be reminded so concretely that no one within the body of Christ ever worships alone even horizontally as they approach their Triune God.
- The briefer length of the Scripture lessons allows for thoughtful meditating on the Word. This helps to keep the worshiper from allowing the quantity being read to dissuade them from quality time in pondering what has been read.
- In both the devotional orders and the hymn of the day, the believer is being encouraged to approach his Savior with Word and song. The rich devotional heritage of hymnody is on display.

Weaknesses of *Treasury of Daily Prayer*

In the month this reviewer used this resource for his devotional life, here are the weaknesses he noted.

- I found myself again and again regretting that I was not reading in my own Bible for three reasons:
 - I often longed to be able to quickly note the context of the reading, especially when the Old Testament reading had omitted multiple chapters from the previous day's reading.
 - If I would continue to use this resource as my main daily devotional tool, I would be concerned about losing my sense of where particular verses and sections are on the pages of my own Bible. Even if I used *Treasury of Daily Prayer* as my devotional tool of choice for years, the very nature of a set of readings scattered throughout the 1400 pages of a resource cannot duplicate that sense of familiarity that develops by using one's own Bible. This is not a complaint about how the *Treasury of Daily Prayer* went about organizing their readings. It is an unavoidable weakness for any devotional

resource that seeks to provide the blessings of the “one stop shop” mentioned above by including the readings in their entirety. If I were to go on using *Treasury of Daily Prayer* as my regular resource, I would do as I did when for many years I used Concordia’s two volume *Daily Prayer* (1986). While *Daily Prayer* also printed out suggested readings in full, I simply used my own Bible when it came to psalms and lessons.

- The previous solution would also solve the next challenge I encountered in my one month (so far) pilgrimage through *Treasury of Daily Prayer*. Since this reviewer finds the ESV to be stiff for devotional reading (a conviction that grew over the course of the month using this resource), I often found myself longing for another translation on the pages before me.
- The editors made the decision to determine the readings to be used for each day of the year in two different ways. During the time of Easter (Ash Wednesday through Holy Trinity), the “proper” for each day’s devotion is built entirely on where that day falls in the church year. There is a clear and evident harmony between the emphasis of corporate worship on the previous Sunday and the private devotions that follow during the week. However, for the rest of the year, the readings, while still trying to approximate the emphasis of the church year, are built off the date of the secular calendar. Since my sampling of this resource took place almost entirely during the season of Advent, I often had the “close but not quite on” feeling. The “proper” for the days of the week did not always harmonize so well with the emphasis of the previous Sunday. While the movability of Easter and the impact on the rest of the church year presents a challenge, as does the desire of the editors to include more than 120 commemoration days (most tied to a calendar date), there appears to have been a net loss by a failure to proceed more consistently on the basis of the Sundays of the church year.
- All the other concerns listed are small and easily remedied by someone using this resource. This last concern is this reviewer’s greatest.

There clearly seemed to be a desire by the editors of this volume to present a tool that did not merely draw on the liturgical/devotional heritage of our Lutheran Church but also to draw on the liturgical/devotional heritage of the wider church. As a general principle, that inclination is commendable. It certainly can be a wholesome reminder that the Lutheran Church exists within that larger body of believers known as the Holy Christian Church. All liturgical/devotional riches have not been deposited solely within the resources of the Lutheran Church. We do well to remember those truths lest we live as schismatics who repudiate the broader gifts the Spirit has given to the whole church on earth.

Yet what is good in principle seems to struggle in practice in places within the *Treasury of Daily Prayer*. Here are three places I noted where the use of the resources and liturgical language of the wider church was potentially less than edifying.

On pages 1011-1012, in the “writing” featured for December 13, Irenaeus of Lyons was the featured father of the church. Here is a sampling of what was shared from the pen of Irenaeus:

[After drawing a comparison between Adam and Jesus, Irenaeus continues] In accordance with this design, Mary the Virgin is found obedient, saying, “Behold the handmaiden of the Lord; be it unto me according to Your word.” But Eve was disobedient; for she did not obey when as yet she was a virgin. And even as she, having indeed a husband, Adam, but being nevertheless as yet a virgin...having become disobedient, was made the cause of death, both to herself and to the entire human race; so also did Mary, having a man betrothed [to her], and being nevertheless a virgin, by yielding obedience, become the cause of salvation, both to herself and the whole human race.

Not only does Irenaeus play quite fast and loose in what he claims to know about what was similar between Eve and Mary (Eve was still a virgin when she fell?), he also speaks words about Mary as the “cause of salvation” that reflect what for all too many over the centuries has led to idolatrous worship of Mary. Since the heart of this quotation from Irenaeus is so problematic, it is perplexing that it was included at all.

For a second example, consider the wording of the suggested prayer of the day for the Thursday following Ash Wednesday:

Lord Jesus, Holy One of God, You showed that the kingdom of God had come by Your healing the sick and casting out demons. Heal us in both body and soul by the medicine of immortality of Your body and blood that we may truly be Your disciples. (29)

Such speaking of the Lord’s Supper as providing “medicine of immortality” for us body and soul can indeed be found in the writings of the Fathers – and perhaps even among some Lutheran fathers – but it is difficult if not impossible from Scripture to defend such devotional exuberance. While some may defend this as merely poetic license captured in prayer, yet this appears to be allowing a love for the liturgical language of the wider church to run roughshod over clear theology.

For the final example, in the devotion for Ash Wednesday this explanatory paragraph was included as an overview not only of Ash Wednesday but of the entire season of Lent.

During the forty days of Lent, God’s baptized people cleanse their hearts through the discipline of Lent: repentance, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Lent is a time in which God’s people prepare with joy for the Paschal Feast (Easter). It is a time in which God renews His people’s zeal in faith and life. It is a time in which we pray that we may be given the fullness of grace that belongs to the children of God. (26)

With sufficient explanation and cautions, is it possible to understand this paragraph in a way that does no violence to biblical Lutheran theology? Perhaps. But considering the works-righteousness-history of how the “discipline of Lent” has often been misunderstood in personal piety. Doesn’t that render the language of this prayer to be at best unguarded? To say that fasting “cleanses [our] hearts” is a volatile mixture of unlike things (a human custom being credited at least in part with that which alone the means of grace can accomplish). And while we certainly will pray each day that God will continue to shower on us the fullness of his grace, the wording of the last sentence seems to imbibe a way of speaking of the wider church that calls into question whether ever since our baptism we already possessed God’s grace in all its fullness. It seems to open the door more than a crack to the kind of speaking adopted by those who believe the church slowly measures out the fullness of grace in ever increasing infusions through its sacramental system.

The question this reviewer would ask the editors is this: in an eagerness to mimic the rich liturgical language of the wider church, have they at times unwittingly sacrificed the clarity of our Lutheran confession? There is indeed an intoxicating beauty to much liturgical language, but when offering something for the pondering of the flock in their daily devotions, it is critical to be sure that what we are urging people to be filled with carries the Holy Spirit’s imprimatur, not just the church’s. Used without significant discretion, the rich liturgical language of the broader church makes us poorer, not richer.

I would like to commend the editors of *Treasure of Daily Prayer* for the monumental addition they have made to the devotional literature of the church. But unless the three examples above prove to be a fluke of the sections I just happened to read, I would be uncomfortable urging the broad use of this resource among souls entrusted to my care. For called workers whose study of the Word may have provided them growth in the gift of spiritual discernment, this may indeed prove to be a helpful resource. My own experience, with the exceptions noted above, has been strongly positive.

It is the intention of this reviewer to expand his sampling of *Treasure of Daily Prayer*. Perhaps that will allow a more positive review to lay aside the cautions spoken in this one.