



## Message from the Director, Dr Eric Trozzo



2017 is a year filled with great possibilities. Many eyes are turned to Martin Luther with renewed interest as the half millennium of Reformation thought is marked. This time of review and reflection provides an important opportunity for both education and for forging new possibilities. It is an important task and responsibility of the Lutheran Study Centre to be a resource for churches this year as a means of helping them to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves. A number of congregations have invited me to come speak about Martin Luther and why he is important. For many Christians, Martin Luther is a name that they have heard as an important figure in the history of Christianity, but they know little of what he had to say. My sense is that an increasing number of church members are becoming interested in looking back to better understand what treasures of insight might be found from the Reformation. As I have

taught in these congregations, I have found that many people are surprised at how relevant such insights still are to life in the church today. They find in core values such as the theology of the cross and the distinction between law and gospel a way to hear the consistent call of the gospel through the clatter of competing theological claims.

At the same time, pausing at 500 years for reflection also opens the door to charting new directions for the future. Our theological task is not merely to look back and celebrate insights from 500 years ago, but rather to draw on those insights as a means of inspiring us to continue to proclaim the gospel in our time and place. In particular this year provides an opportunity for ecumenical discussion of how to draw on our shared Christian heritage in formulating how we speak God's Word in the contemporary situations we face. In this it is particularly exciting that the coming months will see the beginning of Lutheran-Pentecostal dialogues within Malaysia. Hopefully such discussions will begin to pave a path to mutual recognition as members of the body of Christ.

It is my hope that The Lutheran Study Centre can be a helpful resource this year for those who not only wish to dig deeper into

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torical theology but also to draw on that depth to help sharpen the church's theological vision for today and into the future. This sort of project takes us beyond this particular anniversary year and into God's continuing mission in the world.

### Liberated by God's Grace

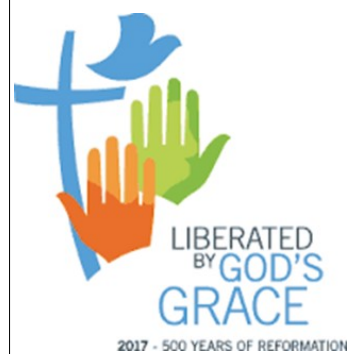
2017 marks 500 years since the beginning of the Reformation, and many churches have a variety of activities planned. The LSC is organizing events for the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Malaysia and Singapore. There will be three events: one in Mandarin, one in Bahasa Malaysia, and one in English. Each will be a three-day event focused on the theme of "Liberated by God's Grace." Each event will be a mix of talks, workshops and activities, and a time of fellowship to help build bridges between members of different churches within the FELCMS. Registration forms are available with the central offices of the member churches.

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### Schedule:

**5-7 June, in BM at STS**  
**12-14 June, in English at Malaysia Bible Seminary**  
**10-12 July, in Chinese at STS**



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NEWSLETTER

7th Edition  
February 2017

### Welcome to Dr. Guillermo Hansen

In February 2017, Dr. Guillermo Hansen will be visiting STS as part of his sabbatical. Dr. Hansen is Professor and Martin Luther King Jr. Chair for Justice and Christian Community at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. A native of Buenos Aires, Argentina, he has worked in a variety of capacities with Lutheran churches around the world. During his visit to STS, Dr. Hansen will join in a session of LSC's Lutheran Ethics course to talk about Luther's economic ethics.

### New LSC Staff

We welcome Ms. Davina Therese Perreau as the new LSC administrator. She is a member of BCCM Bundusan (Charis). She will be in the office Monday-Wednesday. We give thanks for her service.



### Welcome to the Child Evangelism Fellowship of Borneo

Beginning in Feb. 2017, the LSC will sublet a portion of its space to the Child Evangelism Fellowship of Borneo, a Christian mission organization focused on children's ministry. Much of the LSC space is only occasionally used, so sharing the space benefits both groups. The group will not build any walls or change the physical space dramatically; book shelves will act as dividers while remaining somewhat mobile to accommodate the occasional need for a larger space for seminars.

### Publications Update

As part of our 2017 celebrations, LSC is excited to be able to make available translations of several of Luther's writings in Bahasa Malaysia. LSC has received permission from Augsburg Fortress to print and distribute a book containing translations of five of Luther's writings.

These are:

- A Brief Exposition of What to Look for and Expect in the Gospel
- How Christians Are to Regard Moses

- The Heidelberg Disputation
- Two Kinds of Righteousness
- On the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, and the Brotherhoods

These writings, along with an introduction by Dr. Eric Trozzo, will be put together in a book entitled *Faith, the Word of God, and Righteousness*. The translations are currently being finalized and proofread, and hopefully will be available by June for the FELCMS event. It will also be helpful for use in LSC classes in the future.



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### Visit by Dr. Uwe Hummel

*The LSC is grateful to Mission 21 for organizing a visit by Dr. Uwe Hummel. Dr. Hummel serves through Mission 21 at the seminary in Banjarmasin, Indonesia. He visited Sabah for two weeks in October. During that time he taught a courses on Lutheran ecclesiology at both STS and at the PCS Bible Training Centre in Tinnangol. He also conducted a seminar on a Lutheran structure of the church for mission for the BCCM-BM. His presence in Sabah was a great blessing.*



### Mekong Mission Forum

Dr. Eric Trozzo represented the Lutheran Study Centre at the meeting of the Mekong Mission Forum, a gathering of Lutheran churches and mission partners involved in the Mekong region, which was held in Yangon, Myanmar in October. The meeting was an opportunity to both better understand the needs of the churches in the region and to offer the LSC as a resource for theological education to those churches. While there, Dr. Eric also had the opportunity to preach at the central congregation of the Myanmar Lutheran Church at the invitation of Rev. James San Aung, who has spent time studying at the LSC.



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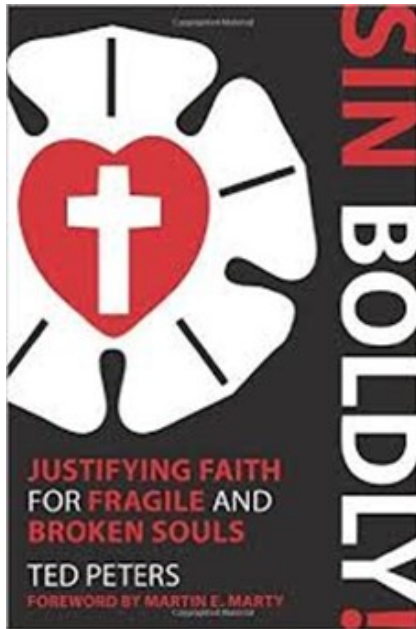
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### Book Review:

## Sin Boldly! Justifying Faith for Fragile and Broken Souls, by Ted Peters

One of the questions I am most frequently asked to address is whether the Reformation insights about justification by grace are still relevant today. Many find the concepts surrounding justification might seem to be outdated and better suited for a church history class than for informing our contemporary practice of ministry. In *Sin Boldly!*, Peters dives into the topic of justification anew, giving fresh insights that at the same time remain firmly rooted biblically and in Lutheran tradition.

Peters distinguishes between fragile souls and broken souls. Fragile souls, he explains, are those people wracked by anxiety about their worthiness: whether they are doing their fair share in being a positive influence in an increasingly complex world. This description may well describe the bulk of us as we struggle to keep up with the many demands on our time and on our hearts. We want to be caring and loving and competent and moral but are overwhelmed by what all of that entails. Such souls are fragile because they easily succumb to the temptation to ease their anxiety by trusting in their ability to manage everything. Such an attempt, however, is doomed to failure because it leads to various types of legalism. To such a person, the Lutheran

insight that we must stop such attempts at self-justification and instead trust in the grace given through Christ is a helpful diagnosis.

What the Lutheran tendency to diagnose all people with the disease of self-justification fails to recognize, in Peters' estimation, is that the fragile soul is not universal. Through an investigation into post-traumatic stress disorder and other deep spiritual wounds, Peters leads us to see that some people have fallen so deeply into despair they have simply lost hope. In such a case, Peters holds that a forensic rendering of justification by faith is insufficient. Healing from deep hopelessness comes through the indwelling of Christ as the real presence of the suffering, dying, and resurrected Christ entering into the brokenness of life.

Peters presents a living faith in the living Christ in a manner that engages not just theory but also lived examples of faith. He brings out the ties between justification and ethics and sets the discussion within the context of ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue, and dialogue with non-religious people. At the same time his thought is very much within the Lutheran tradition. I have found this book to be a valuable resource for classes and for discussion with those who wish to think more deeply about the continued relevance of the concept of justification by faith.

by Eric Trozzo