

**Sacramental Identity for Today's Church:
Timeless Gifts for Our Time in History
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About your presenter

- Family background
- Pastoral background
- Service in the church background

How this was advertised

Listen to your neighbor in need. Time and again, they are expressing a desire for that which is authentic and beyond the ordinary. Our gracious God who came in flesh to a world in need continues to come to a world in need in gifts: the Word spoken and read, forgiveness proclaimed, the water of life in Holy Baptism, and true body and blood in the Lord's Supper. These are not symbolic gestures but divine encounters—signposts of heaven breaking into earth.

This breakout will build on themes presented at the 2024 symposium at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. A conversation and re-examination of our Lutheran identity will give participants something to take home for further conversation. Some questions we will consider: How can baptismal identity be continually remembered and lived out? How does the *viva vox evangelli* ("the living voice of the gospel") take center stage in worship and in daily life? How can the Lord's Supper anchor congregational life and make a proclamation both to the church and the unchurched of the real presence of Jesus among us? This presentation will lead to practical considerations for your ministry setting.

What I'm hoping to do/was encouraged to do

- Err on the side of practical
- Encourage further conversations
- Raise our awareness about the lifelong Lutheran and the first-time attendee and the 60 minutes we'll spend together in public worship. (Said another way: Can we think about those we'll see on a Sunday morning?)
- Help us answer how the timeless (God's presence/God's gifts to us) intersects with our time?
- "For any pastor, this journey begins with humility, curiosity, and a deep desire to serve."

Where I would like to start

- Awareness of the history; Awareness of the present.
- I'd like you to think about the sidewalk from the parking lot to the front door. "2025—the year Christianity became a viable option again." What about our day and age gives us opportunity for a winsome witness? What do you know about these people?
- What's going on around us?
- I'd like to tell you about some people who are part of my church family.
- And, I'd like to tell you about a conversation last week with one of my college-aged daughters.

Can we answer these questions/finish these sentences

- The reason I'm going to church this Sunday...
- The reason I'd invite my unchurched/de-churched FRAN to church this Sunday...
- WHAT THIS IS ABOUT:

And so, practically speaking

- 1) The search for something "authentic/deep/profound"
- 2) Those walking through your doors
- 3) Fun one to bat around: "Church should be something different, not just some vaguely theological version of what they can get elsewhere."
- 4) The building preaches
- 5) What you care about/don't care about, it speaks volumes
- 6) God's presence and Holy Baptism
- 7) God's presence and Holy Absolution
- 8) God's presence and the Word read; the Word preached.
- 9) God's presence and Holy Communion
- 10) Taking it home

Appendix 1

Theses for our consideration/conversation (taken from 2024 Symposium essay)

1. Our Lutheran identity starts with justification.
2. Our identity is also evangelical, incarnational, sacramental, liturgical, vocational, and missional.
3. Lutheran worship is rooted in promise.
4. Lutheran worship is for dead people.
5. Mindless worship can happen within any style/structure of the service.
6. Lutheran worship has an answer for the “cold and lifeless” argument.
7. The building preaches a sermon too.
8. The Pastor cares about leading worship because he cares about the people he leads in worship.
9. Lutheran worship is authentic.
10. Our worship prayers lift our eyes beyond ourselves in a most helpful way.
11. Lutheran worship is thoughtful and careful. (Traditional and contemporary aren’t the most useful labels.)
12. Lutheran worship upholds our confession yet also confesses the *Una Sancta*.
13. *Wir sind in der Wisconsin Synode; wir machen keine Show* was a helpful phrase at a point in history.
14. Lutheran worship seeks to serve both first-time visitors and long-time parishioners.
15. Lutheran worship has in mind those who cannot read.
16. Lutheran worship informs and Lutheran worship forms.
17. As we worship, we consider our service to the person sitting next to us.
18. Non-verbals matter and a picture is worth a thousand words.
19. Lutheran worship understands the other-worldly nature of our task and the every-day nature of our task.
20. Lutheran worship acknowledges that everything is beautiful in its time.

Appendix 2

A Bible Class: "Seven Things You Cannot Miss—60 Minutes at St. John's" (Presented February '25)

- 1) Baptismal Grace
- 2) Kyrie Eleison
 - a. For the peace of the whole world...
 - b. for the well being of the church of God.
 - c. and for the unity of all
 - d. For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise
- 3) Togetherness
 - a. The Lord be with you
 - b. We Believe
 - c. Announcements and Prayer
- 4) Offerings
- 5) Did you see them? The Saints and Angels
- 6) What you receive and what you give in this meal.
- 7) Blessing
- 8) And a bonus...The narthex