

Breakaway Sessions

Calvin University // Grand Rapids, MI

July 20-23, 2021

Session A

// Get Out of the Cave!

Jocelyn Benson

“Do you believe that my forgiveness is God’s forgiveness? Yes. Let it be done for you as you believe.” God’s forgiveness is true, good, and beautiful—and it is real! Using Plato’s cave metaphor, we will discuss ways the world tries to convince us not only that the world’s shadows are real, but also that God’s reality is too overwhelming to experience. God created us to experience His truth, goodness, and beauty, and through Baptism gives us weapons to walk away from the world’s shadows. In this session, we will explore how the sanctity of life, biblical manhood and womanhood, and marriage are true, good, and beautiful gifts God has given us, but that the world seeks to shadow.

Mrs. Benson is with Wittenberg Academy and can be reached at mrsbenson@wittenbergacademy.org.

// Explaining Lutheran to Your Non-Lutheran Friends

Rev. James Douthwaite

How do you simply explain what makes Lutherans different? Sometimes other Christians use the same words as we do but with different meanings. How can you get past that without getting too complicated? And what about non-Christians? Is there a simple way to explain the Good News to them and help them think about the truth of God in a new way? This breakaway will offer some ideas for you to present theology in a simple, Lutheran way, and grow in the confidence of the salvation that is yours in Jesus.

Rev. Douthwaite is the pastor at Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church in Vienna, VA. He can be reached at revjdoc@gmail.com.

// Rice, Beans, Plantains and Jesus:

God’s Mission in the Dominican Republic

Rev. Joel Fritsche

Have you ever wondered what it’s like to be a missionary in another country? What does a missionary do? How does our Lutheran theology intersect with how we do missions? What is the LCMS doing around the world and specifically in the Dominican Republic and Latin America? How can you get involved? How many Dominicans can fit on a motorcycle? How does our liturgy sound in Spanish? ¡Vamos a ver!

Rev. Fritsche is an LCMS Missionary to the Dominican Republic. He also serves on the Higher Things Board of Directors as Secretary. He can be reached at joelfritsche@me.com.

// Are Public School Kids Going To hell?

Erica Jacoby

It’s time to talk about your education in this breakaway, even if you don’t attend a public school. What are they teaching teachers to teach these days and are students really learning how to learn? Are you being taught how to think or are you being taught what to think? Let’s take a look at why your school and teachers are the way they are. The Bible and Luther, the chief teacher of our church, have lots to say about getting a good education, even— gasp!—in a public school.

Erica Jacoby is the Executive Director of Higher Things and a member at Summit of Peace Lutheran Church in Thornton, CO. She can be reached at erica@higherthings.org.

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// The One About Gender and Homosexuality

Rev. Brett Simek

What does the Bible say about gender? What about Sexuality? What does the world say about these things? Is “gender” the same thing as “sex?” Does God even address these issues we are having today in a book written thousands of years ago? What if I am struggling with my gender? What about if my friend is? What do I say to them about it? Is there a place in the church for me or for them? Can we “hate the sin but love the sinner?” Come and talk about these questions and more as we hear about God’s gifts of creation, order, Christ, and salvation.

Rev. Simek is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church Rantoul in Hilbert, WI. He serves as the Catechesis Coordinator for Higher Things and is also the Catechist for this conference. He can be reached at brettsimek@higherthings.org.

// Forgiveness: The Voice Breaking Through The Voices

Rev. Steve Stolarczyk

More than a few of us have found ourselves crushed under the heavy burden of the countless voices trying to convince us what we should and shouldn’t be. We’ll use God’s Word to cut through those voices to hear what God demands of you, what He has made you, and what He has promised you. His voice of Law accuses but, ultimately, His voice of Gospel comforts. You’ll discover how His voice breaks through all of the others. And you’ll begin to develop the discipline of saying “Amen” to Him.

Rev. Stolarczyk is the pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Unionville, MI and can be reached at stolarczyk73@gmail.com.

// What Are You Worth? The Value of Life in a Culture of Death

Rev. Kelly Krieg

What are you worth? What gives your life value? The answer to these questions can vary depending on one’s worldview. In this session we will take a closer look at what gives life meaning and value. We live in a world which celebrates death and denigrates life, whether by abortion or euthanasia. Our society says life has no value. Come hear how to respond to those who would deny God’s image in humanity. Learn what it means to be created in the image of God and the value this truth gives to your life and all human life.

Rev. Krieg is the pastor at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Houston, TX and can be reached at kkrieg@osl.cc.

// Communing with the Betrayer?

Rev. Dr. Charles Schulz

Did Jesus offer the Lord’s Supper to Judas? Although all four Gospels narrate the meal in the Upper Room, that question is a hard one to answer. We’ll look at the Bible passages and then listen to how the early Church fathers (2nd-5th century) answered that question first with a no and then with a yes. Why did the Church’s position change? What truths did the fathers want to teach? What can we learn about holiness, grace, and forgiveness from Judas’ presence at or absence from this most holy meal? Come and find out!

Rev. Dr. Schulz is with Concordia University, Ann Arbor and can be reached at charles.schulz@cuaa.edu.

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Rev. Sutton is the pastor at Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Terre Haute, IN and can be reached at pastor@ielcth.org.

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When people look at you, what do they see? When what's expected of us crashes into what we actually do, the mess left behind very rarely matches up with the person we wish we were. It leaves us feeling lost, worthless, and without a place. When we carry all that baggage around, expecting someone to actually love us becomes an exercise in schizophrenia or a lifetime spent in fear of people finding out the truth. Your identity runs deeper than what you can do. In a world where identity is everything, God calls you His child. *Rev. Goodman is the pastor at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church in San Antonio, TX. He's also the Content Executive for Higher Things and one of the Plenary speakers for this conference. He can be reached at hgoodman01@gmail.com.*

// If Your Friend Told You to Jump Off a Cliff...

Rev. Bryan Hopfensperger

All throughout the Bible God's people are called sheep. How much do you know about sheep though? Sure enough, sometimes they're cute and fluffy and cuddly. Sometimes, though, they're awfully foolish and filthy. We're going to learn about sheep and why they need shepherds to take care of them. When we understand sheep and shepherds, then we'll know why we need a shepherd so badly! Best of all, we'll discover how Jesus is our Good Shepherd and what He does to care for us, His little lambs.

Rev. Hopfensperger is the pastor at Peace Lutheran Church in Sandusky, MI. He can be reached at revhopfensperger@gmail.com.

// Are Public School Kids Going To hell?

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// Me? Play the Organ? (Organist Boot Camp, Part 1)

Chris Loemker

Join our conference organist to learn the basics about the organ, from how to find the “on” switch to fundamentals about manual and pedal keyboards. You’ll also learn how the instrument makes its noise. This sectional is for anyone interested in learning more about the organ.

Chris Loemker is the Kantor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. He also serves as the Higher Things Kantor and is the organist for this conference. He can be reached at chris@loemker.org.

// Sin is no joke: Unmasking This World’s True Dark Knight.

Rev. Martin Measel

Our society today denies the seriousness of sin. Sin is thought to be merely an opinion of what’s right or wrong for a given individual, and therefore sin is simply an inconvenience to be ignored or excused. Using video clips of the Joker from The Dark Knight, we will explore the depth and corruption of evil and the true nature of sin, and learn how sin is forgiven by Christ.

Rev. Measel is the pastor at Christ Lutheran Church in Stevensville, MI and can be reached at pastormeasel@christ-luth.org.

// Unforgettable Forgiveness

Rev. Doug Minton

“Pastor, I know I have forgiven them, but I can’t forget what they’ve done!” “Pastor, I know I’m forgiven, but I can’t forget what I’ve done!” Are we called to “forgive and forget”? Jesus daily and richly forgives all your sins, but what about those that you can’t get out of your head? Did He forgive those, too? Yes, He forgave

those sins. Sometimes we can’t forget the sins we’ve committed or that have been committed against us. But that’s our fallen nature. Jesus forgives them all. That’s truly unforgettable!

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Rev. Minton is the pastor at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Milford, IL and can be reached at wrestlingwiththeology@gmail.com.

// Be angry and do not sin...

Rev. Preston Paul

“GOD I HATE THEM!” ...“I wish she would just die!”... What are we to do with our anger and the hurt that is often its source? Jesus makes it sound so easy: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” On the other hand, He does threaten to punish all who hate Him and break His commandments, which includes those who hurt us by their sin. Vengeance belongs to God. Being hurt and angry is no small matter. Jesus teaches us through the psalms HOW to pray with HIM when we are hurt and angry.

Rev. Paul is the pastor at St. Matthew Evangelical Lutheran in Almena, WI and can be reached at Prestonpaul@icloud.com.

// An Invisible Tattoo: Rethinking the Second Commandment

Rev. Daniel Pool

“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.” Many of us grew up thinking that violating the Second Commandment was simply using “Jesus” or “God” as a swear word. Good enough. But there is so much more to this commandment. Maybe the old King James Version was a little better here: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” What does it mean to “take” God’s Name? Do you think of yourself as one who is stamped or tattooed with God’s Name? Let’s explore these ideas together!

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Rev. Pool is the pastor at St. John Lutheran Church in Clinton, IA and can be reached at dpool@stjohn-clinton-ia.org.

// End-of-Life Decisions

Rev. Adam Steinbrenner

Should we remove the feeding tube? Should we increase the morphine? How do I care for my loved one who is no longer able to make medical decisions for him/herself? Pending the return of our Lord, we will all die someday. As human creatures, we are to confess the faith all the way to our death through caring for other

human creatures as they approach their death. Have you or your family ever been faced with end-of-life medical decisions for a loved one? How are we as Christians supposed to live faithfully in such challenging situations? As we navigate these questions and more, the hope of the resurrected Lord Jesus will be the center of all our discussion.

Rev. Steinbrenner is the pastor at St. John Lutheran Church in Dublin, OH. He can be reached at adam.steinbrenner@stjohndublin.org.

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Session C

// From Invisible to Indispensable 4 LIFE

Michelle Bauman

Invisibility would be an awesome superpower, wouldn't it? The ability to disappear, especially during embarrassing moments, sounds ideal. But what about the times we don't want to be invisible? What about the times the world averts its eyes from us because of our confession, abilities, or circumstances? Society cancels those who refuse to conform, but God declares every life indispensable because of Christ's redeeming work! How can we be certain of this? And how do we share this message with others? Join this session to find out how you can be a Gospel-motivated voice 4 LIFE!

Michelle Bauman is with Lutherans for life, Y4Life, and can be reached at michelle@y4life.org.

// Who Invited James?

Rev. Bradley Drew

James 2:24 says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." Seriously? Who invited James to this party? Certainly not Jesus, right? No, Jesus invited him, too. Why? Because James, along with every other writer in Holy Scripture, ties God's love and forgiveness NOT to our works, but to Jesus and His works. It's the message that is heard in Baptism, in every Absolution and sermon your pastor speaks, and in the Holy Supper. But, that message can also be seen. How? Come and hear James teach us how.

Rev. Drew is the pastor at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Metairie, LA. He is also one of the plenary speakers for this conference.

// ABSOLUTE-ly Forgiven

Rev. Rich Heinz

When you gather with the Church around God's Word and Sacrament in the Divine Service, you are forgiven—more than once! But God knows that you need His forgiving Word often and directly. Explore both the liturgy of Individual Confession & Absolution and the Divine Service, to hear His ABSOLUTE forgiveness.

Rev. Heinz is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lowell, IN. He also serves as the Worship Coordinator for Higher Things and is the Chaplain for this conference. He can be reached at revfrheinze@gmail.com.

// Keeping the Faith after High School and Beyond

Carrie Kober

What is the most important gift given to you? You should always be prepared to guard this gift with the full armor of God! As young people, the attack will come from all directions to steal this gift from you. What can these attacks look like? What can you do to be prepared? What happens if you mess up and let your guard down? Hear about both God's Law and Gospel in the Christian's faith walk after high school and beyond.

Carrie Kober is with Concordia University, NE, and is a member at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. She can be reached at carrie.kober@cune.edu.

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// I Got the Organ to Turn On. Now

What? (Organist Boot Camp, Part 2)

Chris Loemker

Our conference organist will discuss the primary function of the organist: leading congregational song. Learn how to register the instrument for hymn singing and hear tips to help you highlight the rich texts that we sing. Organists and those interested in playing will especially enjoy this sectional.

Chris Loemker is the Kantor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. He also serves as the Higher Things Kantor and is the organist for this conference. He can be reached at chris@loemker.org.

// How Come, God?

Rev. Roger Mullet

Why do bad things happen? Does God allow evil and suffering to come upon us? Does God actually cause those things? How do we as Christians respond in the face of such realities in our fallen world? We'll begin by taking a look at some less-than-satisfactory and perhaps less-than-helpful answers to these questions. Then we'll explore the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments alike, to form our "theology of suffering" and offer some practical advice.

Rev. Mullet is the pastor at Faith Evangelical Lutheran church and can be reached at rev.mullet@gmail.com.

// The One About Gender and Homosexuality

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What does the Bible say about gender? What about sexuality? What does the world say about these things? Is "gender" the same thing as "sex?" Does God even address these issues we are having today in a book written thousands of years ago? What if I am struggling with my gender? What about if my friend

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// Jesus Christ is Lutheran.

Samuel Smith

"Have you made Jesus Lord of your life?" "Hey dude, you're a Christian, what's the rapture?" "Lutherans and Catholics are basically the same right?" Come hang out with the Vicar, and learn how who Jesus is answers the above questions. Come and see why the Lutheran confessions put forward the faith of the bible. Come see how we are saved, and learn how these beautiful little words, "for you," make Jesus a Lutheran, Church something awesome, life worth living now, and the bible something worth reading. *Samuel Smith is a member at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Broadlands, IL and can be reached at samuel.smith@ctsfw.edu. He is also the Higher Things Summer Vicar.*

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// Generation Z Survival Guide: Spoiler

alert; It’s all about the Gospel!

Erica Jacoby

One out of five Americans belongs to Gen Z and yours is the first generation in American history whose the majority doesn’t identify as Christian. In fact, most of you believe that there is no one true “religion.” What does the Church need to do to keep the youth we have in the Church, and what more do we need to do to reach those outside of it? Let’s talk about this generation’s unique challenges and opportunities and why the Gospel just might flourish in spite of us!

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// What Are You Worth? The Value of Life in a Culture of Death

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// The One About Dating and Marriage

Rev. Brett Simek

When should I start dating? Who should I date? What about marriage? Do I have to consider more things than just whether or not I think they are hot? Could who I date or marry say something about my faith? What does it take to be a good husband or wife? Does God say anything about all this? The Bible is full of the imagery of marriage, of husband and wife, and even wedding

receptions (feasts) and it's not all good. What happens when things go wrong and life isn't "happily ever after" and where does Jesus fit into all of this? Come and hear about the perfect Groom and His Bride and what happens when things aren't perfect.

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// Music is for Sissies (Organist Boot Camp, Part 3)

Chris Loemker

Okay, so music isn't for sissies. In this sectional, taught by our conference organist, we'll begin to look at ways that organists can improvise and depart from what's written on the page. Useful strategies will be provided for re-harmonizing hymns, as well as presenting you with the building blocks needed to start improvising your own service music. This sectional is for organists, those who would like to be organists, and those who would like to understand organists.

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// An Invisible Tattoo: Rethinking the Second Commandment

Rev. Daniel Pool

"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God." Many of us grew up thinking that violating the Second Commandment was simply using "Jesus" or "God" as a swear word. Good enough. But there is so much more to this commandment. Maybe the old King James Version was a little better here: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." What does it mean to "take" God's Name? Do you think of yourself as one who is stamped or tattooed with God's Name? Let's explore these ideas together!

Rev. Pool is the pastor at St. John Lutheran Church in Clinton, IA and can be reached at dpool@stjohn-clinton-ia.org.

// Artwork in the Church

Edward Riojas

What is "sacred artwork," and what place does it even have in the Church? How does the Lutheran church view sacred artwork compared to other church bodies? Artwork is slowly making its way back into Lutheran sanctuaries, but beauty is often much deeper than what lies on the surface. The confessional nature of sacred art, and its place as a teaching tool will be explored in this brief overview. Christian symbols—many of them familiar and a few of them not so much—will also be examined, and you will be challenged to visually explore your own church sanctuaries, striving to underscore what we believe, teach, and confess.

Edward Riojas is a member at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, MI. He is a prolific Lutheran artist and created the logo for many HT Conferences, including Forgiven 2021 and For You 2022. He can be reached at edriojasartist@gmail.com.

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// Youth Ministry 101

Crysten Sanchez

Thinking about putting together a youth program can seem daunting. Let's be honest, if you were asked to build something from scratch with immediate success, it WOULD be daunting! There are a lot of building blocks that go into a healthy, sustainable, safe youth program. Crysten Sanchez, former youth coordinator at a church in Iowa, will walk you through the many pieces of the puzzle to do just that!

Crysten Sanchez is the Events Executive for Higher Things and a member at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mount Vernon, IA. She can be reached at csanchez@higherthings.org.

// End-of-Life Decisions

Rev. Adam Steinbrenner

Should we remove the feeding tube? Should we increase the morphine? How do I care for my loved one who is no longer able to make medical decisions for him/herself? Pending the return of our Lord, we will all die someday. As human creatures, we are to confess the faith all the way to our death through caring for other human creatures as they approach their death. Have you or your family ever been faced with end-of-life medical decisions for a loved one? How are we as Christians supposed to live faithfully in such challenging situations? As we navigate these questions and more, the hope of the resurrected Lord Jesus will be the center of all our discussion.

Rev. Steinbrenner is the pastor at St. John Lutheran Church in Dublin, OH. He can be reached at adam.steinbrenner@stjohndublin.org.

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// From Invisible to Indispensable 4 LIFE

Michelle Bauman

Invisibility would be an awesome superpower, wouldn't it? The ability to disappear, especially during embarrassing moments, sounds ideal. But what about the times we don't want to be invisible? What about the times the world averts its eyes from us because of our confession, abilities, or circumstances? Society cancels those who refuse to conform, but God declares every life indispensable because of Christ's redeeming work! How can we be certain of this? And how do we share this message with others? Join this session to find out how you can be a Gospel-motivated voice 4 LIFE!

Michelle Bauman is with Lutherans for life, Y4Life, and can be reached at michelle@y4life.org.

// Who Invited James?

Rev. Bradley Drew

James 2:24 says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." Seriously? Who invited James to this party? Certainly not Jesus, right? No, Jesus invited him, too. Why? Because James, along with every other writer in Holy Scripture, ties God's love and forgiveness NOT to our works, but to Jesus and His works. It's the message that is heard in Baptism, in every Absolution and sermon your pastor speaks, and in the Holy Supper. But, that message can also be seen. How? Come and hear James teach us how.

Rev. Drew is the pastor at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Metairie, LA. He is also one of the plenary speakers for this conference.

// ABSOLUTE-ly Forgiven

Rev. Rich Heinz

When you gather with the Church around God's Word and Sacrament in the Divine Service, you are forgiven—more than once! But God knows that you need His forgiving Word often and directly. Explore both the liturgy of Individual Confession & Absolution and the Divine Service, to hear His ABSOLUTE forgiveness.

Rev. Heinz is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lowell, IN. He also serves as the Worship Coordinator for Higher Things and is the Chaplain for this conference. He can be reached at revfrheinze@gmail.com.

// Keeping the Faith after High School and Beyond

Carrie Kober

What is the most important gift given to you? You should always be prepared to guard this gift with the full armor of God! As young people, the attack will come from all directions to steal this gift from you. What can these attacks look like? What can you do to be prepared? What happens if you mess up and let your guard down? Hear about both God's Law and Gospel in the Christian's faith walk after high school and beyond.

Carrie Kober is with Concordia University, NE, and is a member at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. She can be reached at carrie.kober@cune.edu.

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// Hymnody and Music in the Divine

Service

Chris Loemker

Music is all around us. From the music that's used to help sell us stuff in advertising, to music we listen to in the car, we consume a lot of music. Sometimes, we even make music ourselves: in our school's band, at home playing piano, or singing in the shower. How is that different from the music we make together on Sunday in church—or at home—when we sing “...psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs”? Why do we sing some of the same things every week at church? What constitutes a “good” hymn? Why even sing hymns in the first place? Come learn the “whys” and “hows” of the music of the Divine Service in this breakaway.

Chris Loemker is the Kantor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Collinsville, IL. He also serves as the Higher Things Kantor and is the organist for this conference. He can be reached at chris@loemker.org.

// How Come, God?

Rev. Roger Mullet

Why do bad things happen? Does God allow evil and suffering to come upon us? Does God actually cause those things? How do we as Christians respond in the face of such realities in our fallen world? We'll begin by taking a look at some less-than-satisfactory and perhaps less-than-helpful answers to these questions. Then we'll explore the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments alike, to form our “theology of suffering” and offer some practical advice.

Rev. Mullet is the pastor at Faith Evangelical Lutheran church and can be reached at rev.mullet@gmail.com.

// Artwork AT the Church

Edward Riojas

What is “sacred artwork,” and what place does it even have in the Church? How does the Lutheran church view sacred artwork compared to other church bodies? Artwork is slowly making its way back into Lutheran sanctuaries, but beauty is often much deeper than what lies on the surface. In this breakaway we discover some sacred Christian art in action as we go on a field trip to Our Savior Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids, to take a look at the art which decorates their sanctuary as it confesses the Church's great Te Deum.

Edward Riojas is a member at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, MI. He is a prolific Lutheran artist and created the logo for many HT Conferences, including Forgiven 2021 and For You 2022. He can be reached at edriojasartist@gmail.com.

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// The One About Dating and Marriage

Rev. Brett Simek

When should I start dating? Who should I date? What about marriage? Do I have to consider more things than just whether or not I think they are hot? Could who I date or marry say something about my faith? What does it take to be a good husband or wife? Does God say anything about all this? The Bible is full of the imagery of marriage, of husband and wife, and even wedding receptions (feasts) and it's not all good. What happens when things go wrong and life isn't "happily ever after" and where does Jesus fit into all of this? Come and hear about the perfect Groom and His Bride and what happens when things aren't perfect.

Rev. Simek is the pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church Rantoul in Hilbert, WI. He serves as the Catechesis Coordinator for Higher Things and is also the Catechist for this conference. He can be reached at brettsimek@higherthings.org.

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