

In Celebration for the Life of
Albert Edwin Swingle



October 22, 1938—October 28, 2024

Lutheran Church of the Reformation
Washington, DC
Saturday, December 7th ☩ 11am

☪ ☪ ☪ **GATHERING** ☪ ☪ ☪

The Holy Spirit, the comforter, gathers us in worship.

Prelude

*I Call to Thee, Lord Jesus Christ
Now Thank We All Our God*

Bach
Bach
Arr. H. Lefevre Pope

Welcome

Gathering

The Holy Spirit, the comforter, gathers us in worship.

Gathering Hymn

All Are Welcome

ELW 641

Introduction

Welcome in the name of Jesus, the Savior of the world. We are gathered to worship, to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, to remember before God our brother, Albert, to give thanks for his life, to commend him to our merciful redeemer, and to comfort one another in our grief.

Thanksgiving for Baptism

When we were baptized in Christ Jesus, we were baptized into his death. We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Eternal God, maker of heaven and earth, who formed us from the dust of the earth, who by your breath gave us life, we glorify you. **We glorify you.**

Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life, who suffered death for all humanity, who rose from the grave to open the way to eternal life, we praise you. **We praise you.**

Holy Spirit, author and giver of life, the comforter of all who sorrow, our sure confidence and everlasting hope, we worship you. **We worship you.**

To you, O blessed Trinity, be glory and honor, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

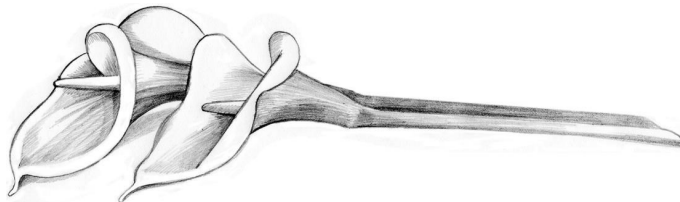
Prayer of the Day

Let us pray. *A brief silence.*

O God of grace and glory,
we remember before you today our brother, Albert.
We thank you for giving him to us to know and to love
as a companion in our pilgrimage on earth.
In your boundless compassion, console us who mourn.
Give us faith to see that death has been swallowed up
in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ,
so that we may live in confidence and hope until, by your call,
we are gathered to our heavenly home in the company of all your saints;
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Reflections

Eric Swingle
Sharon Swingle
Kyle Swingle



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God speaks to us in scriptures read, sung and preached.

First Reading—Psalm 46

Vicar Jayme Kokkonen

- ¹God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
- ²Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
- ³though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
- ⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
- ⁵God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
- ⁶The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
- ⁷The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.
- ⁸Come, behold the works of the LORD;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
- ⁹He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
- ¹⁰"Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth."
- ¹¹The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Word of God, Word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

⁵⁰What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

"Death has been swallowed up in victory."

⁵⁵"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Word of God, Word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Musical Selection

"If Ye Love Me"

Thomas Tallis

Reformation Choir

If ye love me, keep my commandments.
And I will pray the Father,
And He shall give you another comforter,
That He may 'bide with you forever;
E'en the sp'rit of truth.

Hymn of the Day

Borning Cry

ELW 732

Apostle's Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**Or, "who proceeds from the Father." The phrase "and the Son" is a later addition to the creed.*

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray. *A brief silence is kept.*

Almighty God, in holy baptism you have knit your chosen people together into one communion of saints in the body of Christ. Give to your whole church in heaven and on earth your light and your peace. God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Grant that all who have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection may die to sin and rise to share the new life in Christ. God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Give courage and faith to all who mourn, and a sure and certain hope in your loving care, that, casting all their sorrow on you, they may have strength for the days ahead. God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Grant to us who are still in our pilgrimage, and who walk as yet by faith, that, where this world groans in grief and pain, your Holy Spirit may lead us to bear witness to your light and life. God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Help us, in the midst of things we cannot understand, to believe and trust in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, and the resurrection to life everlasting. God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all grace, we give you thanks because by his death our Savior Jesus Christ destroyed the power of death and by his resurrection he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Make us certain that because he lives we shall live also, and that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, will be able to separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

✠ ✠ ✠ **SENDING** ✠ ✠ ✠

God blesses us and sends us in peace.

Commendation

Let us commend Albert to the mercy of God, our maker and redeemer.

Silence is kept.

Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant, Albert.

Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming.

Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light.

Amen.

Sending Hymn

Go, My Children, With My Blessing

ELW 543

Postlude

God of Grace

Paul Manz

The family deeply appreciates your many prayers and love during this time. Please greet them at the reception downstairs in the Parish Hall following this service.

In keeping with Al's ideals of service to others in need, memorial offerings may be made to Lutheran World Relief at <https://give.lwr.org>, (800) 597-5972, or Lutheran World Relief, PO Box 17061, Baltimore, MD 21297-1061.

Presiding Minister: The Rev. Kevin Vandiver, PhD

Assisting Minister: Vicar Jayme Kokkonen

Director of Music: Paul Leavitt

Stream Team: Matt Cook, Andy Weaver



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I MADE IT

By Albert Swingle

I'm writing this in 2020 with the intent that it be read at the memorial service after I die. I, of course, do not know when it will be read. So far, this journey on earth has entailed 81+ years. I echo the words of my dad when he was in his late eighties. "We're all going to die some time. But I'm in no hurry."

We have lots of euphemisms for death. One of the most common is to say "He passed away" or the African American equivalent, "He passed." One of the strangest expressions is "He kicked the bucket." This was popular when I was a child, and apparently it refers to a method of suicide – standing on a bucket with a noose around your neck and then kicking the bucket out from under yourself. In the Kpelle language in Liberia we would say "He crossed to the other side (of the river)".

One expression I often heard when I was working as a hospital chaplain was "He didn't make it" to express that a patient had died. This expression has always intrigued me, and I encourage you to spend a little time with me thinking about its meaning. Why is "They didn't make it" used to announce that someone has died? What's interesting about this expression is that it is in the negative. It tells what didn't happen. The patient didn't survive. That surely is a strange roundabout way of saying that a person has died.

As I've been thinking about this phrase, I think I understand why it is used to express that a person has died. It seems to me that this is one of the key building blocks that our culture uses to deny the reality of death. When someone dies it is not even necessary to use the word die or dead. The usual expectation of a life or death crisis is that the person will "make it". For the person to die is unexpected, a surprise, unusual, and perhaps the implication is that if you don't talk about death it won't happen or at least you don't have to think about it.

Now I don't know about you, but I'm convinced that I will die someday. My death will not be an unanticipated surprise. In fact, at my age I'm surprised that I haven't already died. To die will be the natural outcome of my life here on earth and will mark the end of it. Furthermore, I suspect that you will have the same experience some day as well. I frankly don't know of any other way of leaving this life that we have on earth but to die.

Of course, as a Christian there is a lot more that I can write about living and dying than this obvious fact. Shortly after my birth here on earth I experienced another far more important birth. Through baptism I was born into a new life and into a new family – the family of the Lord Jesus. It is a life in which I am bound together with Christ in a relationship that transcends my life here on earth. The Lord and I have been journeying along together for over 80 years now. I haven't always done a very good job holding up my side of the partnership, but the Lord has been faithful to me, for which I am grateful. Thanks to the faithfulness of the Lord, that relationship will not be broken even by my earthly death. I will still be "in the Lord". Check out Romans Chapter 8.

This is a big deal and makes all the difference when I leave the realm of the living here on earth. It is such a big deal that when I die, I do not want you to say "He didn't make it." In fact, I want you to say the exact opposite. Thanks to the grace and mercy and forgiveness of God, "He made it."

Albert Edwin Swingle

Reverend Albert E. Swingle died peacefully on October 28, 2024, at his home on Capitol Hill. Born October 22, 1938, as the third of 10 children, he was raised on the family farm in southeastern Ohio homesteaded by his great-great-grandfather. He grew up milking cows, attending St. John's Lutheran Church in Stovertown, Ohio, and, for his final year of high school, building a new barn two days a week instead of attending school. He met his wife, Nancy, in high school as members of Luther League; they started dating while attending Wittenberg University (he was her page-turner at chapel, where she was an organist). Al and Nancy married on August 6, 1960, beginning 64 years of shared Christian faith and service, parenting, travel, and adventure.



Al subsequently attended seminary, and following his ordination, Al and Nancy served as missionaries in Liberia, West Africa. In their initial years, following language school to learn the local language (Kpelle), they lived and served in a small village an 8-hour walk from the nearest road (where, after adopting son Eric, they would put the legs of his cribs into buckets of kerosene to protect against fire ants). After adopting daughter Sharon, they moved to Phebe, where Al served as chaplain to Phebe Hospital and pastor to St. Luke's Lutheran Church.

The family returned to the United States in 1976, and Al served as pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lewisburg, Ohio, and later as associate pastor at Glenwood Lutheran Church in Toledo, Ohio. He subsequently ministered as a chaplain at The Toledo Hospital before retiring in 1999. Apart from his official work, Al became certified for and deployed in emergency disaster response work in the U.S. He also worked for peace and rebuilding after the armed conflict in Liberia. He and Nancy sponsored Liberian refugees from that conflict, who became part of their family.

Retirement allowed Al and Nancy to pursue their passion for travel full-time. They purchased a campervan and explored the US, Canada, and Mexico, often visiting friends and family along the way. They also traveled extensively internationally – 77 countries in total – both with groups and independently with just their backpacks and travel guides. Al and Nancy moved to Washington, D.C. in 2005 as part of this new chapter of their lives. In the last two decades of his life, Al had a vibrant life in the city, as an active member of Lutheran Church of the Reformation, volunteer for the Capitol Hill Village, avid aficionado of the many cultural and musical opportunities in D.C., and daily walker around Lincoln Park, adjacent to their home.

Al is survived by his wife, Nancy; son Eric (Laura) and daughter Sharon (Francisco Medina); grandchildren Kyle (Annie), Brian (Madison), Derek, Gabriel, and Paul; and great-grandchildren Bennett (Kyle and Annie) and Matilda (Brian and Madison). He is survived by 8 siblings: Ruth (the late John) Fabian, Dave (Sue) Swingle, Joanne (Paul) Miller, Jim (Gail) Swingle, John (Teri) Swingle, Leslie (Gary) Williams, Susan Showers, and Vince (Linda) Showers. He is predeceased by his 9th sibling, Jeff (Karen) Showers.

Al's life stands as a wonderfully rich example of service to and gratitude for others regardless of creed or color. As a final gesture of his life of service he chose to have his body donated to the Georgetown University School of Medicine.

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