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# IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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## *From Pastor's Desk . . .*

God is dead . . . again. At least, that's what the press is telling us.

It's becoming commonplace, isn't it, to see some headline in the newspaper that claims science has disproven the existence of God? The most recent of these headlines is the release of well-known University of Cambridge physicist Stephen Hawking's book *The Grand Design*.

Don't let the title fool you. In this book, he doesn't put forth an argument in support of Intelligent Design or a divine creation of the universe. Rather, he argues that, while he hasn't proven that God doesn't exist, he *has* proven that science makes God unnecessary to understand how the universe came to be.

How does he do this? Hawking says that the laws of nature dictate that the universe would come into existence. He wrote in a recent Op Ed in the Wall Street Journal, "As recent advances in cosmology suggest, the laws of gravity and quantum theory allow universes to appear spontaneously from nothing."

He continues, "Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing,

why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going" (Wall Street Journal, September 3, 2010).

Now, I'm no scientist, but this sounds fishy to me. How can there be laws of nature without nature? How can you have a law governing something when there is no something? And then, if you do have laws of something before the existence of what they govern, where did those laws come from?

Well, according to Hawking, they came from the physical nature, from the universe itself. Um, did I get that right? So we have a universe because there are these laws of nature, and we have the laws of nature because we have a universe. Excuse me? Are you sure?

Logically, this is what we call begging the question.

Begging the question is a logical fallacy that assumes the truth of the conclusion without proving it, that is, without demonstrating that it is true. It's also often called circular thinking or the vicious circle.

There is only one way in which Hawking's argument that the universe arose from the laws of nature and the laws of nature arose from the

*"... the difference between the two explanations of why the world is the way it is isn't found in the data or evidence. The difference is found in the presuppositions that each bring to the evidence. . . ."*

universe can be true: If they came into existence simultaneously and so appear to give rise or bring the other into existence.

In the beginning, the Holy Trinity created all things by speaking the universe into existence. Throughout the creation account (Genesis 1–2), we repeatedly see the words “And God said . . . and it was so.” God said it and it happened.

So, by speaking the universe into existence, God created not only the matter—the physical stuff—but also the laws of nature that govern the universe. While Hawking thinks he’s answered all the questions without reference to God, he’s left out one significant question: Which view makes more sense? Which view interprets the data best?

Both Christian and secular scientists use the same evidence—the same data—for their accounts of why things are the way they are. That means that the difference between the two explanations of why the world is the way it is isn’t found in the data or evidence. The difference is found in the presuppositions that each bring to the evidence. Those presuppositions serve as the glasses through which each person interprets and understands the story that the evidence tells.

The secular scientist comes to the evidence with a presupposition that man has all the answers, that it took millions and billions of years, and that there are no supernatural causes in the universe. This is called

methodological naturalism. It assumes right from the start that there are no such things as supernatural—read divine—causes.

The Christian scientist understands that the biblical record gives us the history of the world, and, therefore, the history of the evidence of how the earth was formed. This is just like how a history book explains events that took place at a time when we couldn’t see it for ourselves. The evidence exists in the present, but it can tell us a story about the past.

The bottom line difference is that the secular scientist immediately dismisses one possible cause right from the start. The Christian scientist, on the other hand, sees the evidence as corroborating what we find as the recorded history of the beginning of the world in Genesis.

The evidence is the same, but the glasses are different. The biggest question is: What set of glasses, what presuppositions, make more sense to the body of evidence as a whole?

And that’s the question that we posed to Hawking above. He may have put forth a possibility. But what is the probability? What makes the most sense given the evidence that we both use? My money is on the Scriptures—not only because I have faith, but also because it makes better sense of the evidence that both Christian and secular scientists study.

Pastor Braaten

## **TOUR THE LUTHER SITES!**

There’s still room to join Dave Rohe and President Bueltmann on a nine-day tour of the Luther sites on May 10–18, 2010. All travel in German is by chartered coach, driven by an English-speaking German Pastor. Breakfast is provided at the hotel and your evening meal is included in the cost of the trip, estimated at \$2250.

If you are interested in joining us, please contact Dave Rohe at [drohe@cidlcms.org](mailto:drohe@cidlcms.org) or by phone at 217-793-1802



# EDUCATION CORNER

## The Message of Confirmation

Ah, confirmation--a defining mark of Lutheran congregations. It's supposed to be a good thing, the pastor preparing youth for communicant membership. Too often, though, it's seen only as a necessary rite of passage to endure rather than a blessing to enjoy.

For some reason, teenagers just don't seem to enjoy memorizing the Catechism or giving up their Wednesday nights to attend class. They often arrive as unwilling participants. And frankly, when that's the atmosphere, we pastors aren't all that excited, either.

So, what to do? I've contemplated other options, like a reality-show format where we vote one student out of the class each week. But I believe there's a better way. Here are a few suggestions that pastors and parents might find helpful.

### 1. Start at Home

Each chief part of the Small Catechism begins with the subtitle, "As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household." The Small Catechism isn't supposed to be the mystery book that your child suddenly discovers in confirmation class. It's designed to be used in the home by the family. When it gets used at home, it communicates to your child that it's a book for use in life, not just at church.

### 2. Start Early

God created toddlers with the astonishing ability to memorize. They can hear a jingle on the radio one time and sing it back to you for the next eight hours in the car. (What a fun trip that is!)

Young kids are very good at learning words by heart, even if they don't understand what the words mean; so help children memorize the Catechism while they're still very young. They won't understand all the words; that will come later. For now, teach the text.

One of the great errors of education today is to think that kids need to understand the words before they learn them. So parents tend to leave the Catechism on the shelf. Meanwhile, kids are growing up listening to ads and music, often loaded with sexual innuendo.

They're memorizing this stuff even though they don't understand the meanings. But they will.

Later, when they become puberty-stricken teenagers, their parents expect them to do memory work.

That's the last thing they want to do. Eighth-graders don't want to memorize--they want to argue, which actually is a necessary and helpful skill in education when properly directed.

That's why you give them the data at an earlier age, so they can defend it and debate it later on. Confirmation-class time is much better spent discussing doctrine than reviewing memory work.

Young children want to be grown up. That's why they follow you around the house, put on your shoes, and try everything that you're trying. They want to use grownup words and sing grownup songs. If you work with them at memorizing, they'll want to do it, too. And if you tell them that this is what eighth-graders do, they'll work hard to be like "the big kids."

*" . . . kids are growing up listening to ads and music, often loaded with sexual innuendo. They've memorized this stuff even though they don't understand the meanings. But they will. . . . It's a bad idea to give the world a decade's head start on these matters. . . . "*

Don't be afraid of big church-words. Kids love them. Recently, I was talking to two 6-year-old students from our school in front of a bunch of adults. When I mentioned that we all were sinful, one of them said, "But God justifies us!"

The second one soberly added, "This is good, because we are concupiscent."

I imagine that the adults scurried for dictionaries when they got home. But the point is, when children hear new words, they want to use them.

Another big mistake is to believe that kids want to be young and cute. They don't. Sure, they'll learn little children's songs, but they're also capable of learning serious hymns. They love to sing them by memory in worship with the "big people."

It's disturbing that so many parents approve of makeup for very young girls, but then want to limit their vocabulary to childish words. Meanwhile, the world isn't waiting--it's indoctrinating your kids about grownup issues at early ages.

Dinosaur books (practically every boy's favorite) preach evolution, and after-school TV shows for kids imply that all religions are the same. It's a bad idea to give the world a decade's head start on these matters.

### 3. Take Little Steps

You may feel ill-equipped and unprepared to teach the faith at home. However, you have the tools you need and more opportunities than you realize. You probably already read stories to your children; so read them Bible stories and talk about what God does for people in each one.

If you have a toddler in a stroller or a bike seat, recite the Apostles' Creed during the ride. Call your child over from the swing set and whisper, "Hey, do you know what? 'We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.'" Kids love it when adults take time to impart information, because it makes them feel more grown-up.

Celebrate their baptismal birthdays every year, so that they understand that it is important to you. Get a copy of the Catechism on CD and play it in the car. Better yet, print off a portion of the Small Catechism on a piece of paper and hang it in the kitchen. Each day, memorize three or four more words as a family. Don't force it. Make it a simple, important family ritual over the years.

### 4. Review Frequently

As the old saying goes, "Repetition is the mother of all learning." Challenge your children to repeat the memory work you've learned as a family or to tell you their favorite Bible stories. Praise them lavishly when they do.

### 5. Model Church Attendance

Your kids are watching you; your actions teach them what is important to you. When parents drop off their kids for Sunday School on their way to breakfast, it sends the message that they skip Bible class because they believe that there's a time when we can stop learning about the Lord and His grace.

When parents attend worship only sporadically, it teaches their children that church is something to be done occasionally--that Jesus' presence and forgiveness are no more important than sports or reading the paper in bed.

### 6. Model Study at Home

Set aside some time for your own prayer and Bible reading. Your kids need the example. You need the Word.

### 7. Model Repentance

It's hypocritical to teach your kids about confession and then never apologize to them for your mistakes. And your kids know it. So confess your sins when you mess up, and ask for their forgiveness. Furthermore, voice your thankfulness that Jesus forgives you, too.

One of the failures that you may need to confess is that you haven't taught the faith at home through the years, and now you're facing a rebellious confirmand. Don't bluster and threaten. Confess. And then rejoice that the Lord forgives you for all of your sins. When all is said and done, that is the message of confirmation.

**About the Author:** *Rev. Tim Pauls is associate pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Boise, Idaho. This story appeared originally in the July/August 2006 Lutheran Witness. LCMS congregations may reprint for parish use. All other rights reserved. Text copyright © 2006 by Tim Pauls. Used by permission.*

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# IN THE NEWS

**Stephen Hawking, perhaps the most famous physicist since Einstein, has again emphasized that the universe didn't need God to get things rolling.**

In a new book, *The Grand Design*, Hawking and coauthor Leonard Mlodinow lay out the case for a universe that began without any divine spark—one step beyond even those who accept the big bang but see it as God's handiwork. To the authors, the big bang was the unavoidable result of the laws of physics at work. "Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing," they write.

Among the authors' arguments is that the discovery of extrasolar planets—those that orbit stars other than our own sun—shows that "the coincidences of our planetary conditions . . . [are] far less remarkable and far less compelling as evidence that the Earth was carefully designed." However, nearly all extrasolar planets (or exoplanets) discovered to date appear to be extremely inhospitable.

The book also raises the possibility of multiple universes, a theory commonly invoked to explain, without the need for God,

how life could have arisen in our universe. Turning the usual argument on its head—and begging the question, in a way—the authors argue that the existence of multiple universes would be "redundant" if God was trying to create mankind and are therefore another evidence against God.

The Times [report](#) (subscription required) includes a quotation from atheist biologist Richard Dawkins, who admitted tellingly that he had "always assumed the same thing" even before Hawking's book was released.

Also quoted was Oxford University theoretical physicist Frank Close, who incisively points out, "Given the vast numbers of stars in our known Universe, God's efficiency may already be called into question: if the sole aim was to create you, me, and Stephen Hawking, would not one solar system have been enough?"

Reacting to the news, Answers in Genesis astrophysicist [Jason Lisle](#) noted, "Progressive creationists claim that the big bang is God's method of creation. But here we have the most respected astrophysicist in the world saying that the big bang is a replacement for God. It's not God's method. It's

what you are supposed to believe in instead of God."

But debating whether God or no one created the universe leaves out a third possibility, argues University of Sussex astronomy fellow John Gribbin in a [Telegraph column](#) this week. "[O]ne possibility has been almost ignored," he writes, "—the idea that the universe around us was created by people very much like ourselves, using devices not too dissimilar to those available to scientists today." Gribbin is referring to such devices as the [Large Hadron Collider](#).

Sadly, while Gribbin declares, "The universe is comprehensible to the human mind because it was designed, at least to some extent, by intelligent beings with minds similar to our own," he steadfastly insists that he "do[es] not mean a God figure, an 'intelligent designer' monitoring and shaping all aspects of life." Whether the "creators" are the inanimate laws of physics or a race of beings with "roughly our level" of intelligence, mainstream scientists seem to do all that they can to avoid the conclusion that the universe was designed.

*Reprinted with permission from "News & Notes" on the Answer's in Genesis website.*

# KIDS PAGE

## A TASTE OF GRACE

Because Jesus died and rose for us, we have the free gifts of forgiveness and eternal life. That's the meaning of grace: "God's Riches At Christ's Expense."

Celebrate God's grace by "spelling it out" with this fun, nutritious recipe.

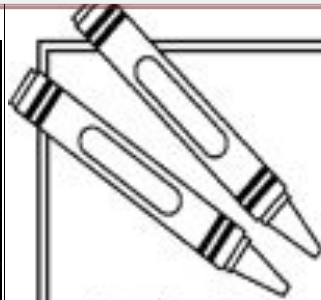
### What you need:

- An adult to help
- 2 bowls
- Mixing spoon
- 1 Tablespoon yeast
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 1/3 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Cutting board
- Cookie sheet



### What you do:

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.
2. In a small bowl, stir the yeast with the water and honey. Let the mixture sit for five minutes.
3. In another bowl, stir the flour and salt together.
4. After five minutes, add the bubbly yeast mixture to the flour and salt mixture.
5. Stir everything together, first with a spoon and then with your hands. The dough is ready when it's still a little crumbly.
6. Put the dough on a cutting board with a little flour. Knead it into one big ball.
7. Divide the dough into 12 pieces, and roll each piece into a snake shape.
8. Form the letters G R A C E (twice). Then form the two extra pieces into any shape you choose.
9. Bake your letters and shapes on the cookie sheet for about 10 minutes. Let cool, and enjoy!



Just for **KIDS**

## THE GIFT

God has given us a gift that we can't work for or buy. Discover what this gift is by reading Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV.

Fit the words in bold into the word puzzle below. We've provided two letters for you.

**"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast."**



## OCTOBER 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Pastor's Day Off	2 8:30a – Confirmation 5:30p – Divine Service Spencer Eversole
3 9:00a – Divine Service 10:15a – Bible Study & Sunday School	4 7:30a – Matins  Brittany Arthur Ruth Slaughter	5 7:30a – Matins  Carolyn Dyer Shawna Pollock	6 7:30a – Matins  Henry Rahn Paula Bowles	7 7:30a - Matins	8 Pastor's Day Off  Michelle Van Cleave Herman & Corrine Oye	9 8:30a – Confirmation 5:30p – Divine Service  Henry & Shirley Rahn
10 9:00a – Divine Service 10:15a – Bible Study & Sunday School 11:30a – Church Council	11 Pastor at Continuing Education Class 7:30a – Matins 5:00p – Missions 6:00p – Elders Christopher & Miranda Czerwonka	12 7:30a – Matins  Johanna Wienke	13 7:30a – Matins  Deborah Reifsteck Jourdan Parrott	14 7:30a – Matins  Erin Pangborn	15 Pastor's Day Off  Amber Catt Josh & Jaimee Whitson	16 8:30a – Confirmation 5:30p – Divine Service
17 9:00a – Divine Service 10:15a – Bible Study & Sunday School  Geof & Sue Danielson	18 CID Fall Pastor Conference, Peoria, IL 7:30a – Matins 7:30p – Voters  Alana Poe	19 CID Fall Pastor Conference, Peoria, IL 7:30a – Matins  Erin Partheimer	20 CID Fall Pastor Conference, Peoria, IL 7:30a – Matins  Pat Kresin	21 7:30a – Matins  Jeffrey Ladage Karen Rentz	22 Pastor's Day Off  Mary Ellen Burnett	23 8:30a – Confirmation 5:30p – Divine Service  Christina Rahn
24 9:00a – Divine Service 10:15a – Bible Study & Sunday School Thomas Bennett Andrew Bennett Tom Poe Daniel & Sheila Stevens	25 7:30a – Matins 6:00p – Board of Education Cathy Rahn Alice Johnson Hanah Britt	26 7:30a - Matins	27 7:30a – Matins  Trent Ponder	28 7:30a – Matins 1:30p – Ladies Aid  Stacy Pollock	29 Pastor's Day Off  Marcia Deem Chloe Alexander	30 8:30a – Confirmation 5:30p – Divine Service
31 9:00a – Divine Service 10:15a – Bible Study & Sunday School Ruth Bretz Duane & Joan Rahn						