

I-K Lutheran

Where God is doing new things

June 2018

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. (I John 3:2; NRSV)

I sit at the desk in our study at home tending to the monthly routine of paying bills and otherwise organizing my family's financial life. As I scan through the invoices and receipts, set up payments online, and write the relatively rare check, a short poem by the late Gerhard Frost pops into my mind. The poem is entitled "Autobiography"¹:



*If you should ask me,
"Who are you right now?
Where are you?
What road have you taken?
What have you become?"
I needn't give you fifty pages,
Or even five, or one.
My check stubs are enough.*

I don't have check stubs anymore. I don't receive monthly packets of cancelled checks like I once did. But I do get the electronic equivalent of check stubs, clear and accurate records of where and how I have spent my money. And it looks to me like Frost is right. If you want to get a good sense of who I am, what is important to me, what I am willing to commit myself and my resources to, where I have been and what I am becoming, a list of my financial transactions would give you a pretty good picture.

"Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven," Jesus says in the so-called (and very lengthy!) sermon on the mount, "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt 6:21). Our hearts go with our investments, whether the investment is money, energy, time, or some other aspect of ourselves. Consequently, like it or not, how we spend these precious gifts from God is a pretty good indication of what's important to us, who we are and what and who we value.

Frost's poem — and Jesus' words — reverberate in my heart and mind as I wrap up another round of paying bills. I wonder how my spending of money, energy, time, and self might more clearly reflect my primary identity as a child of God, called, claimed, and sent by water and Word in the power of the Spirit to shine the light of the crucified and risen Christ in all that I do. On what am I being called to spend less of myself and my resources? Where am I being called to be more generous? What important relationships or communities have I neglected of late? How might I reinvest myself in them? Is there something new that I am being called to invest in...and how can I free up the resources to do it? How might I write an autobiography that more clearly reflects who I am and who I am becoming in Jesus?

How about you? How's your "autobiography" looking these days?

Peace be with you,
Bishop Bill Gafkjen

¹ Gerhard Frost. Seasons of a Lifetime © 1989 Augsburg Fortress, p. 135.



Ben Kyle is our Synod Assembly Musician. Ben Kyle, best known as the songwriter-frontman behind the beloved alt-country band ROMANTICA, is also a distinctive solo and collaborative musical voice.

Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, but embracing the musical roots of North America upon his family's emigration to Minneapolis in his teens, he has won numerous ISC songwriting awards and his recordings have been critically heralded: PASTE Magazine named ROMANTICA'S album, America, "One of the Best Albums of the Year." in 2007 and American Songwriter has called his latest release "Perfect."

Ryan Adams, Alejandro Escovedo, Lucinda Williams, Sara Watkins (of Nickel Creek) and Dan Wilson are some of the artists Ben has worked with and his duets recording with Austin TX roots sweetheart Carrie Rodriguez, We Still Love Our Country, was a hit with Americana Radio in 2011.

In 2013 he released a self-titled solo debut, that received rave reviews and inspired the Huffington Post to dub Kyle "A Sleeping Giant."

In 2017 after an extended hiatus, Romantica came back with perhaps their finest album to date. From the hushed tones of 'Harder to Hear' to their tip of the hat to Gram Parsons, "Cecil Ingram Conor," Ben Kyle and the band sound like they mean business on the new Shadowlands album" says Bill DeVille of The Current.

Shadowlands was released on Last Chance Records on February 10th, 2017.

Romantica's fourth album and first release in seven years was in danger of never happening, after frontman/songwriter Ben Kyle became ill. "It feels like a resurrection," Kyle says of Shadowlands. As Ben told Andrea Swensson of The Current, "With the illness, with the hiatus over the past years, there was sort of a death for me; for the band, and for music even, in a way. It got to the point, with the illness, where I realized that I may not be able to write or play again. I may have to let everything go. It's a really, really hard place to be, where you feel like life is just slipping away from you. So I think I got to the place there where I was able to let go and say that's okay. I let go. I surrender. And I receive everything that I've ever been given, and everything that I will be given, as a gift. And so now I feel like everything I have is something that's really given back to me. It does feel like a resurrection."

June 8, 2018, will see the release of Romantica's fifth album: Romantica // Outlaws.



Indiana-Kentucky Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

911 E. 86th Street, Suite 200 | Indianapolis, IN 46240 | 317-253-3522