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THE 8TH DAY, WHEN HE WAS CIRCUMCISED,
HE WAS CALLED JESUS, THE NAME GIVEN
BY THE ANGEL BEFORE HE WAS CONCEIVED.

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CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

JESUS—Name of Priceless Worth!

"And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2:21).

Learn from Joseph and Mary to obey God. God had commanded: "He that is eight days old shall be circumcised."¹ Therefore Joseph and his wife had Jesus circumcised when *He* was eight days old.

God's messenger, Gabriel, had said: "Thou . . . shalt call His name Jesus."² Joseph and the infant's mother obediently named Him "*Jesus*."

God had declared: "The firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto Me."³ The godly couple promptly brought the baby to Jerusalem and presented *Him* unto the Lord.

Such obedience honors God and brings many blessings.

O blessed home where man and wife
Together lead a godly life
By *deeds* their faith confessing (TLH 624:1)

Active Obedience

As true *God* the infant Jesus was not obligated to obey any laws. God is *above* all commands. He *gives* orders

for *others* to obey.

Yet Galatians 4:4 teaches: "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, and *made under* (subject to) *the law*." At His circumcision the little Lord Jesus obeyed God's law through Joseph and Mary.

The great Law-giver for our aid,
Obedient to the Law is made. (TLH 115:4)

Later our Lord *Himself* carried out the will of God. Jesus "did no sin."⁴ This carrying out of God's will is called Christ's *active* obedience.

Jesus obeyed God's laws in order to rescue us sinful humans who were under the law. He gave His perfect obedience to us. With the robe of Christ's righteousness about our undeserving shoulders, God adopts us as dear children into His family. "By the obedience of One many were made righteous."⁵

Passive Obedience

God then punished Jesus for our

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sins. "He was wounded for our transgressions."⁶ Christ became "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."⁷ This submitting to God's punishment is called Christ's *passive* obedience.

Christ's circumcision was part of His *active* not His passive obedience. He was circumcised and, years later, baptized "to fulfill all righteousness."⁸ Circumcision brought a blessing, not a punishment. Hymn 117:3 (TLH) overlooks this fact when saying: "His infant body now begins the *cross* to feel." During Old Testament times the Lord used circumcision as a way to receive infants into His family. In New Testament times the Lord used baptism to do this. The apostle Paul told the New Testament Christians living at Colossae: "Ye are circumcised . . . by . . . Christ . . . in baptism."⁹

Jesus Saves

Christ saved us by His active and passive obedience. His perfect *life* pro-

vided our righteousness. His valuable *death* paid for our *unrighteousness*. That is why His personal name "Jesus" is most appropriate. It means "Savior."

If John 3:16 is the gospel in a nutshell, then the name "Jesus" is the gospel in a mustard seed! His comforting name appears more than 560 times in the New Testament. Each time it declares that we have been saved from our sins and are now returned unto the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls.

Jesus! Name of priceless worth
To the fallen sons of earth
For the promise that it gave,
"Jesus shall His people save." (TLH 114:3)

—Robert Mackensen

1. Genesis 17:12
2. Luke 1:31
3. Exodus 22:29
4. I Peter 2:22
5. Romans 5:19
6. Isaiah 5:19
7. Philippians 2:8
8. Matthew 3:5
9. Colossians 2:11-12



From Our President—

THE PEOPLE OF THE LORD— AN ACTIVE PEOPLE

Toward the end of his life David blessed the Lord before the congregation in a song. David had experienced the grace of God. Toward the favorite project of the king's life, which was the construction of the temple, the people had given willingly and above expectation. On the part of the people as well as on the part of David there was an attitude expressive of the way it ought to be.

Action Words!

The people had offered willingly "to the Lord." The heart of David was so overwhelmed with joy and thanks that he offered praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for, as he said, "All things come from you" (I Chron. 29:14). The kingdom of God thrives, not because the heavenly Father could not do it otherwise, but because He has chosen to advance His kingdom through the

activity of His people.

That is something we tend to forget when we focus on ourselves. We need to focus attention on kingdom activity. It is so important.

Imagine if the preacher did not preach and the teacher did not teach. Imagine if people did not attend divine services or if the missionary did not go. Think of all the action words in Scripture, words addressed to God's people: "Go," "Preach," "Teach," "Pray," "Give," "Hold fast," "Sing," "Come," and many, many more. The Christian life is not intended to be one of inactivity. An inactive Christian pleases the devil whose only pleasure in inactivity is to be found when those who are called after the name of Christ are inactive.

Activity as Fruit

God be praised for all the faithful people who engage, most often quietly, in kingdom activity.

The new adult class member is often times one to whom a Christian brother and sister witnessed. The new mission is many times the result of a faithful confessor who testified to the Truth in the community. The clean church building is often times the result of a church member who saw a need and filled it. The mission work of the church is advanced by the shut-in who spends time praying, or the member who quietly remembers with thankfulness to return the first fruits to the Lord.

Yet when activity reaps fruit, it is because the Lord has been good: "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth are Yours; Yours is the kingdom,

O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all" (I Chron. 29:11).

That is the beauty of Christian faith, of a faith rooted and built up in Christ. It will expend itself without jealousy toward God, whose is the glory and the praise.

Jesus' Example

Christian faith will not be dissuaded by the passing of time which, if it were possible, would persuade the Christian to spend his short time on earth purely for personal pursuits. The Lord Jesus had no greater joy than to expend Himself for His people. Hardly could the thinking Christian find any greater joy than to expend himself for Christ's kingdom.

David concluded his song, saying: "For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; our days on earth are as a shadow and without hope" (I Chron. 29:15). These words almost seem out of place in this song of thanksgiving. But in fact they are very much in place. They remind us of an eternal—if not always obvious—necessity. "Work while it is day, before the night comes when no man can work."

The Christian delights in the fact that he is but an alien and a pilgrim in a land so contradictory to his faith and his hope. We who have the same hope as our fathers—the inheritance with the saints in light—do not expect to live any longer than our fathers. We will pray, however, that the Lord, for Jesus' sake, will engage, strengthen, and sustain our will to glorify God while we are here.

Driven by Hope

The "without hope" of this world's

existence will not deter the Christian from such life that glorifies God, for the eternal hope is what drives us. To that end the Lord Jesus Christ was born under the law for us, and under that law shed His blood for us, beginning with the blood of the circumcision.

At this turn of the year it serves us well, personally and collectively, to engage in honest introspection. Both clergy and member will be served well to make such a look within ourselves.

Let it begin with a search of how it is that we see ourselves.

If indeed we believe that we are but pilgrims and strangers here, and that heaven is our home, then it will follow that our thoughts and activities will be kingdom-ward. And we will bring joy to the King.

May we all have a busy and active year of kingdom activity while it is still day.

—Daniel Fleischer



THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

Percy Williams Bridgman, an 80-year-old physicist was in an advanced stage of cancer. He had the best medical help at his disposal, yet his condition deteriorated. Because of his terminal condition and the intense pain he was enduring, Dr. Bridgman requested that his physicians perform euthanasia. The doctors refused, so he committed suicide. Before doing so the desperate patient left this note: "It isn't decent for society to make a man do this thing himself. Probably this is the last day I will be able to do it myself."

More and more frequently we are reading articles and viewing television shows in which euthanasia or other forms of "mercy killing" are being advocated. Some groups are trying to promote legislation which would legalize euthanasia. Since the 1973 *Roe V. Wade* Supreme Court decision, abortion has been legal in our country and some one million human fetuses are destroyed annually.

How is a Christian to react to such trends in our society?

Ancient Times

Before we answer this question it may be instructive to note how some of the ancient civilizations dealt with their elderly, terminally ill, and feeble citizens.

According to Aelian, the Sardinians exterminated their elders. When a man reached an age in which he was considered too old and weak, his sons were required to kill him with clubs. It was considered disgraceful for a man to live



when he was quite advanced in years.

Plutarch reports on the practices of the Spartan culture. The elders of the tribe routinely examined infants. If a child was found to be strong and healthy, the parents were commanded to rear it. If the child was feeble and undesirable it was sent to "the place of the casting-out," a gorge near Mt. Taygetos.

Plato condoned suicide when a person was forced to endure intolerable pain or disgrace. He also believed that people of inferior intelligence should not be allowed to have children. Aristotle thought that abortion and infanticide (killing of infants) were proper means of disposing of unwanted children.

Enter Christianity

As Christianity spread through the western world, along with it was spread the morality and ethics of the Holy Scriptures.

The Bible teaches that all human life is sacred by virtue of the fact that it bears the image of almighty God, albeit that image is now tarnished because of the fall (Gen. 1:27; 3:1-19). Though an individual may be severely retarded, handicapped, infirm, or elderly he/she has infinite value in the sight of the "Maker of all things" (Mt. 10:29ff). Only God Himself is able to create and sustain life. The right to take human life remains His alone (Job 14:5, Ps. 104:27-30). In certain cases God has given his representatives the right to take human life (Rom. 15:3-5).

The Scriptures give another reason why human life is so extremely valuable. In Hebrews 2:14-15 it is written: "Since the children have flesh and

blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the powers of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." God's one and only Son, Jesus, partook of our human nature. Out of an unfathomable display of love He offered Himself on the cross as the sacrifice for all the sins of the human race. God was well-pleased with this sacrifice of His Son and declared the world of sinners "not guilty."

Since God valued human life so much that He redeemed and justified the world—including sick and seemingly "unproductive" people as well as healthy, "productive" people—dare anyone claim the right to cut another person's life short for any reason, even in the name of "mercy"?

Enter Evolution

The biblical ethic influenced much of western thought, philosophy, law, medicine, and education for centuries. Then came the "Age of Enlightenment" and with it the Darwinian theory of evolution, which cheapened the value of human life. Since this time there has been a steady "dechristianizing" of western society. Instead of Christianity influencing society, in many respects society has been influencing Christianity.

Most philosophers and leaders in the fields of science, education, and medicine go as far as regarding biblical Christianity as a vestige of our unscientific past. As the late Dr. Francis Schaeffer stated often, we are now living in a "post-Christian" era. The old pagan ethics of the Græco-Roman civilization regarding human life are

creeping back into our culture!

Can the Tide be Turned?

We return to our original question. How shall Christians respond to the apparent abandonment by our society of the Christian values regarding the sanctity of life?

In many respects we are standing at the same juncture St. Paul and his associates were nearly 2,000 years ago. Could it be that we might make a difference in our society even at this late date by following the example of Paul and other early Christian missionaries who courageously spoke the Gospel?

Paul called the Gospel "a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. 1:24). Might we turn the tide of modern man's cheap view of human life by asking our God to renew and revive

that genuine form of Christianity which is centered squarely on the Gospel of forgiveness? Might we not turn the tide by using every ounce of our strength to spread this Gospel even at the risk of depriving ourselves of the "creature comforts" we have come to enjoy?

In a brochure published by "Lutherans for Life" the following statements are made: "Our calling as Christians is to be instruments of the Lord by not only preserving the life He has created but by witnessing to His great love that others may receive eternal life as well . . . As technology becomes more complex, Christians will need to have a better understanding of the Scripture and a deeper prayer relationship with their Lord."

We pray that God will give us all an abundant measure of His Spirit to live and witness with great vigor in these last days.

—Kurt Luebke

Update:

In "The Drift Continues" in the November 1988 issue, Pastor David Lau made critical comment in reference to the AALC's plans to train its pastors at a non-Lutheran Seminary. Subsequently Pastor Lau reports that the AALC's *Evangel* of December 1988 contains an update on this matter in the President's Report. We pass along the following quotation from the AALC's official publication: "*The General Convention voted unanimously to begin our own AALC Seminary for the training of pastors. In further action, the Con-*

vention approved resolutions to terminate an interim relationship with Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA and to seek an agreement with at least one conservative confessional Lutheran Seminary as an interim measure for training men for the pastoral ministry."

While noting the above, other questions remain which, in our opinion, need addressing before it can be said that the AALC maintains an orthodox Lutheran position. Cf. Pastor Lau's original article.

—The Editor

ABORTION AND DENIAL

The Newsletter of the National Committee for a Human Life Amendment (NCHLA) has the rather uncommon byline: "Please copy and distribute as widely as possible." That their pro-life message gets out is of greater concern than copy-right privileges. (The "cartoon" on page 5 is also from their Newsletter.)

The Psychological Muddle

The August 1988 NCHLA Newsletter included a commentary by Dr. Vincent Rue. We quote at length: "Would that abortion could get the attention that AIDS does! AIDS fatalities will never 'catch up' to the 50 million human lives lost annually in the world to abortion. But then fear is generally a more persuasive motivator than denial . . . Consider the ways we defend ourselves from the mantle of abortion death: 'It's someone else's problem,' 'It's a matter of privacy,' 'It's got to be okay if doctors do it,' 'It's not for me to impose my values on others,' and 'It's easier to just not think of it.'

"As a society we have been attempting to move past the era of personal responsibility and accountability to no-fault problems, e.g., divorce, automobile accidents, and now no-fault choices. Abortion is such a 'choice.' "

The writer then quotes from the best-selling book *The Closing of the American Mind* by Prof. Allan Bloom which says: "Now, when we speak of the right to choice, we mean that there are no necessary consequences; that disapproval is only prejudice and guilt only a neurosis."

Such words bring to mind the "Whatever Became of Sin?" posture set forth in a book by that name a decade or so ago. Since Eden's fall Satan's trick has been to euphemize disobedience to God's will. Though "sin is the transgression of the law" (I Jn. 3:4), the world which recognizes no will or law of God uses different names for—and approaches toward—the ungodly malady which sin is. And Christians, according to the flesh which adheres, are not immune.

And one of the more common ways, also for Christian people, to seek to quiet an accusing conscience when it comes to abortion is denial. Says Dr. Rue: "Afraid of what abortion is, we deny that it is a tragic human fatality and camouflage it with emotionally safe words: 'pregnancy termination' or 'menstrual extraction.' It is as if by magic or delusion mere words possess the power to change everything."

Denial is Destructive

We need to hear more of what Dr. Rue says: "Denial is destructive to feelings. While anger, sadness, guilt, depression, self-denigration, numbness and distancing are typical of post-abortion trauma, denial of these feelings is the most common way of dealing with the tension and anxiety, the 'unfinished business' of one's abortion. Suffering in silence facilitates denial as well. And while denial merely dulls abortion pain and puts things off, it can never erase the death or the feelings.

"Denial is a psychological mechanism used to avoid or reject reality. This common defense mechanism attempts to protect individuals from what is too painful to accept. The process of moving from denial to confrontation is painful, curving,

and slow, yet absolutely necessary for successful growth and change." And then the writer brings this probing question: "But how is this possible if abortion death is not openly acknowledged and validated by both those who have personally experienced it and those who are in a position to be of assistance?"

A Pastoral Concern

Since this pastor became *Spokesman* editor a few years ago, we have been purposefully including pro-life articles in month of January issues—this being the anniversary month of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling legalizing abortion in all nine months of pregnancy. We want it clearly conveyed that ours is a pro-life position.

But we have harbored concerns. Included in these concerns is that we not leave the impression that abortion is the unforgivable sin.

It is, for us, sin, yes. No less a sin than, for example, David's planning, and having someone else carry out, the death of Uriah.

Nor, then, will the consequences be much different from what they were for David during his period of denial. According to the best book on psychology ever written, here is how it was with David: "When I kept silent my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long, For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer" (Ps. 32:3f). During the period of denial David's life was miserable.

But there is more! When he acknowledged his sin, no longer hiding it from God (as though that were possible!), he came to know the blessedness of one "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered;" the blessedness of one "whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit." The path of blessing for David came from realizing by faith the mercy of God in Christ Jesus whole blood "cleanses us from all sin" (I Jn. 1:7).

Christ's Love in Action

In the course of his ministry this pastor has had the challenge and privilege of ministering to more than one suffering from Post-Abortion Syndrome (PAS). It is a challenge for the hurt obviously runs deep. It is a privilege from the standpoint of being in a position where one can bring the unconditional Gospel to one who had been living, often despairingly, in various stages of denial.

The good Dr. Rue calls attention to four basic messages that need to get out for the sake of those suffering from PAS: "1) that abortion is capital punishment for unborn children; 2) that the sinner need not be condemned, just the sin; 3) that abortion is a major trauma for the parents of the dead unborn child and that grieving is necessary; 4) and that there is hope for healing and spiritual reconciliation for those who have mistakenly elected abortion, that God's love for us is far greater than our human transgressions."

For the sake of any who have been, or know of those who have been, fighting through the psychological muddle of PAS, we underscore the concluding words of the NCHLA commentator: "What we have to offer the world, our solution to abortion, is Christ's love and forgiveness *in action*."

—Paul Fleischer
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Beginning A New Series—

"Hold on, Pilgrim!"

Sounds like John Wayne, doesn't it? But it's also a theme of the writer to the Hebrews, as he encourages Jewish Christians of the first century (and believers of every era) to: "Hold firmly to the faith . . ." and to "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful" (Heb. 4:14; 10:23).

The hand with which we lay hold of Christ and God's promises in Him is, of course, the hand of faith. This was true for those to whom the letter *Hebrews* was first written. It is true for us today. It was also true for those who held fast to God's promises in Christ during those many years before His birth in Bethlehem.

From among the many who held fast by faith during the Old Testament era, the Holy Spirit led the writer to the Hebrews to select a number for the purpose of illustrating what it means to have faith. These the Spirit "inducted" into the "Hall of Faith"—as Hebrews 11 has been called.

As we meet these people we will see faith *in action*. For, though faith means holding on to God and to His Word, it is not usually like "cliff-hanging"—but rather like running a race (cf. Heb. 12:1). It is an active thing.

PILGRIMS ON EARTH—ABEL

The first activity of faith the Spirit would have us note is **WORSHIP**. And the example chosen by the Spirit is **ABEL**.

"Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor" (Gen. 4:2-5).

Attitude in Worship

The difference between Abel and Cain is pronounced. Their whole attitude toward God and His Word—therefore also toward life—is in contrast.

Cain (cf. Gen. 4:13 ff) was con-

cerned chiefly about making a place for himself here on this earth. Abel was a pilgrim, a resident foreigner, just passing through. Even Abel's occupation as a shepherd reflected this. His real home lay at the other end of the valley of the shadow.

Cain's problem, of course, was not his occupation (farming), but his attitude. The desire to possess land and other things of this earth is not in itself wrong, but it can be a symptom of a heart problem. Cain expressed his unbelief in his life-style. Abel expressed his faith in the way he lived.

It is Abel the Spirit would have us follow—all the way to the altar. For, if there is any activity in which faith will gladly and openly declare itself, it is worship. Faith, holding fast to God's promises, stays close to the LORD and sees clearly His hand in the blessings of

this life and the gift of new life in the Christ. Faith responds to God's gracious provision in words and actions which say: "God, my Father, is worthy of all praise and glory and honor."

That's what WOR(TH)SHIP is—showing worth.

We don't know if Abel built an altar or if he burned his sacrifice, but this we do know: He "brought *fat portions* from some of the *firstborn* of his flock." Abel's offering reflected his faith. He held fast the Giver, not the gifts. He brought from his best when he brought his offerings to the LORD.

Let us gladly and willingly use our best in the worship of our Savior-God. The time we spend in worship should be quality time. Our contributions our

"Cain's real problem was not in his hands but in his heart . . . Abel's offering was a true act of worship because it flowed out of his faith."

first-fruits, not left-overs. Our church building, supplies, and materials should not be the cheapest we can get by with.

In His grace and mercy God has richly blessed us. Let us declare our love and gratitude by using the best He has given us in our worship. Let us declare His love far and wide by giving our best to spread the Gospel. A well-appointed church building and bountiful mission offerings are not out of harmony with each other, but rather two stanzas of the same song of praise.

An Inner Difference

"By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when

God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead" (Heb. 11:4).

The outward difference between Abel's offering and Cain's was finally a reflection of the great inner difference between the two.

In Genesis 4 we note that God rejected Cain *and* his offering, and the LORD looked with favor on Abel *and* his offering. The great difference between Cain and Abel was not in what they brought, but in how they brought it. Cain's real problem was not in his hands but in his heart. Cain's worship was not faith but formalism, outward action without inner commitment. He did what his parents had undoubtedly done and what he figured was expected of him, but he held back what God wanted most—himself.

Abel's offering was a true act of worship because it flowed out of his faith. Trust and love moved Abel, not merely tradition. Abel's actions still speak to us today. His murder could not silence the witness of his worship.

Abel brought an animal sacrifice. But the words "by faith" indicate he came to God by means of that greater Sacrifice promised already in Eden's Garden and offered up on Calvary's cross.

May God enable each of us to follow after Abel. And if ever our worship should begin to be mere motions without vitality and meaning, then let us go to Calvary and to the Empty Tomb and consider afresh the relation between every liturgical response and every hymn stanza—and what the Lord Jesus has done for us.

—W. V. Schaller

Tracing The Acts Of The Apostles—

"And they were stoning Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit' " (Acts 7:59).

STICKS AND STONES

"Sticks 'n' stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!"

How brave we children were back then—or rather, pretended to be. The name-calling and the unkind words often hurt, did they not? Yet we felt certain that our clever little saying would save us from further abuse.

As we grew older we became more aware of the danger of living in a "grown-ups" neighborhood. Adult words are more piercing to our hearts, and adults may indeed prod us with "sticks" and pelt us with "stones"!

Self-consciousness

"*And they were stoning Stephen.*" The Jewish Council did not hurl insults, but stones! They did not merely slander Stephen, they slew him! They did not take only Stephen's means of livelihood because of his testimony, but his life!

What cowards we often are by comparison. Stephen was silenced only by stones, yet we are too often stopped before we start! If the conversation among friends turns hostile towards Christ, or the Christian principles set forth in His Word, do we speak up in love for Him and those who are in error? Do we look out for those who are yet walking in the darkness of sin and unbelief, or do we look out for ourselves as if we are *not* walking in the light of the Savior?

Surely, dear reader, our Christian witness is often smothered and spoiled by *self-consciousness*. We are daily tempted to side-step the sticks and stones which may come our way if we dare to let our light shine and expose the darkness of others. *We don't* want to be the ones to tell others that they also need the Savior. We are too often afraid of the hostile response that may come our way, too often concerned that we may seem foolish or fanatical in the minds of others.

Along with our self-conscious society we pay too much attention to our respective "faces," or look too long at our reflection in the mirror of public opinion. If we are poor witnesses, it may be that we are looking in the wrong direction, the wrong place—at our own face!

Christ-consciousness

As they were stoning Stephen "*he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'*" Picture the scene which Luke narrates so vividly. As the stones are hitting Stephen's body, he is neither unconscious nor self-conscious, only Christ-conscious!

Stephen was not an apostle or a called pastor. He was a layman chosen to serve with six others as a "deacon" in the ministrations of support for the widows of the Jerusalem congregation (6:1-5). But he was above all a "dis-

ciple" of Christ "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (6:5), whose Christ-consciousness moved him to share the Gospel.

Let us not miss the point of Stephen's address to the Jewish Council in Acts 7. Stephen had been accused of speaking "blasphemous words against Moses and against God" (6:11), "against this holy place (the Jerusalem Temple) and the law" (6:12ff). Without concern for his own defense or safety, Stephen addressed his accusers as "men and brethren and fathers" (7:2).

Then he attempted to correct their soul-destroying notion that acceptance before God is gained by devotion to the *person* of Moses, the *place* of the Temple, and the *performance* of external law-works. Indeed, Stephen argued that they had "not kept" the law (7:53). Like their "fathers," they had continued to "resist the Holy Spirit" and persecute the prophets, including Moses who foretold the coming of the "Righteous One," whom they had also betrayed and murdered. (7:51-53)

From the time of Abraham salvation had never been by persons, places, or performances, but by faith in the *promise* of God given to Abraham and fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ.

Never Forsaken

Stephen had this faith and the perfect "seeing" which comes with it. It is his Christ-consciousness which stands out in the closing verses of Acts 7.

What does Christ's death on the cross mean if it does not mean that the Christian is freed from the fear of death? What does it mean that Jesus Christ was forsaken by God to suffer hell, if it does not mean that you and I

shall never be forsaken—not here on earth, not ever? What does the ascension of the "Son of Man" mean to us if it does not mean that we also may gaze into heaven by faith and see Him "standing at the right hand of God" (7:56), ready to protect us from all real harm and ready to receive us into glory?

Such Christ-consciousness is to be our strength as we witness concerning Him. May every child of God, therefore, learn a new saying: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but they shall not divert me. My heart is fixed on heaven, my home, and Jesus who receives me!"

The martyr first whose eagle eye
Could pierce beyond the grave,
Who saw his Master in the sky
And called on Him to save.
Like Him, with pardon on His tongue,
In midst of mortal pain,
He prayed for them that did the wrong,—
Who follows in his train? (TLH 452:2)

—Vance Fossum



God protects His servant Daniel. See Daniel chapter 6.

Our "At Home" Missions—

St. Stephen Lutheran Church—East Bay* Hayward, California

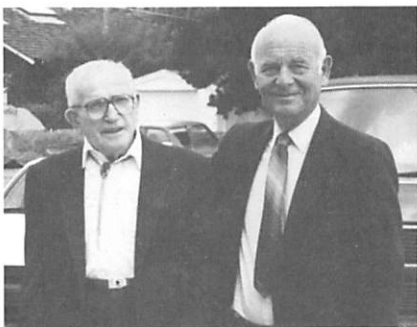
In Spring of 1989 St. Stephen Lutheran Church will commemorate its twentieth year of Gospel ministry.

During the Lenten season of 1969 a group of concerned individuals met on a Sunday afternoon to hear the preaching of Rev. Rollin A. Reim in a rented community center in San Leandro, CA. Those who gathered there were curious to know if this preaching might provide a more biblical message and ministry in comparison to what they had been receiving.

As the writer to the Hebrews says: ". . . (The Lord) rewards those who earnestly seek Him," so it was that the Lord blessed this small group. For the four Lenten messages at that rented hall convinced them that this was the message for which they so hungered. With strength and guidance from the Holy Spirit this small group extended a Call to Pastor Reim to serve them on a part-time basis.

During the next few years, though having to move from one location to another, the Word of the Lord prospered. By 1972 the congregation had grown to the point where the services of a full-time pastor were needed. A call was extended to Pastor Paul Schaller. Soon after his arrival, the Lord granted them the opportunity to rent a

*Note: The "East Bay" designation distinguishes this St. Stephen congregation from its mother church in the West Bay area, St. Stephen of Mountain View whose Pastor is Rollin Reim.



Charter members: Don Luebke and George Rick



Pastor Jerry and Mrs. Ruth Barthels, Nicole and Ryan (Church at Okabena, MN)



Nancy Miller and Mrs. Barthels visit, as Mark Weis assists Carolyn and Pat Cady.



Pioneer Chapel



Chapel Interior



Another "Lord's Day" in sunny California small, quaint chapel on Birch Street in Hayward called Pioneer Chapel.

Built during the pre-civil war era and considered an historical landmark in the middle of urban California, the

Chapel resembled that "old country church" where one might be tempted to assume finding "that good old conservative, Lutheran" teaching. In assuming so, one would be right!

Since 1975 this has been the place of worship for the members of St. Stephen. Nearly 15 years later by the grace of God the saving message of the Gospel of Christ can still be heard from the pulpit of Pioneer Chapel.

In 1980 Pastor Schaller was called to serve another flock in Washington. During the vacancy St. Stephen's was served faithfully by Rev. Greg Kesterson. In 1981 Rev. Mark Weis accepted the call to serve. Soon the Lord afforded opportunity to purchase a three bedroom parsonage only one block from Pioneer Chapel. After Rev. Weis decided to enter the lay ministry in mid-1987, Pastor Jerome Barthels arrived with his family.

Services are held regularly with an average attendance of 35. With an active Sunday School, Bible Class, and Choir, we rejoice in the opportunity to encourage one another and build each other up "in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power to His glorious might."

The fruits stemming from this Gospel ministry in Hayward bring to mind the words of the apostle Paul: "All over the world this Gospel is producing fruit and growing just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth" (Col. 1:16).

As we look back with thankful hearts for our Lord's strengthening and guidance, so we look to the future, praying that He continue to sustain us with that message of Christ and Him crucified.

—J. Barthels

A New Translation

The CLC Book House now has available Pastor H. C. Duehlmeier's translation of *The Second Epistle of Peter and The Epistle of Jude* by Dr. C. M. Zom. The booklet is 31 pages and sells for \$1.75 each, plus shipping.

The booklet's Foreword states that the final preparation was done by Natalie Duehlmeier and Elton Hallauer, and explains: "Pastor Duehlmeier had completed these translations but was unable to arrange for their publication before the Lord called him to his eternal rest. They are being presented here as his final effort to be of service to his Savior and His Church."

The Epistle to the Hebrews, by Dr. C. M. Zom also, and translated by H. C. Duehlmeier, is also still available from the Book House at \$2.75 plus shipping.



Daily Devotions for February 1989

Date	Scripture	Theme	Hymn
1	Mark 9:30-37	Jesus teaches how to be great in His kingdom	353:4
2	Mark 9:38-50	Beware of causing others to sin	353:5
3	Mark 10:1-16	What God has joined man should not separate	353:6
4	Mark 10:17-31	Entering the kingdom of God is not easy	353:7
5	Mark 10:32-45	Even Jesus came to serve, not be served!	512:1
6	Mark 10:46-52	Faith helps us to see.	512:2
7	Mark 11:1-11	Forth the Conqueror goeth—to die.	512:3
8	Mark 11:12-19	The Lord of the temple cleanses it	512:4
9	Mark 11:20-33	Have faith in God and great things happen	512:5
10	Mark 12:1-17	Even the vineyard owner's Son is rejected	512:6
11	Mark 12:18-27	The scriptures teach about life hereafter	511:1-3
12	Mark 12:28-34	The greatest commandment of all	343:1
13	Mark 12:35-44	Watch out for the teachers of the law	343:2
14	Mark 13:1-13	Watch out that no one deceives you	343:3
15	Mark 13:14-23	You must be on your guard	343:4
16	Mark 13:24-37	Be on guard! Be alert! Watch!	343:5
17	Mark 14:1-11	Learn to serve Jesus and not self with things	343:6
18	Mark 14:12-25	Take eat . . . take, drink in remembrance of Me	343:7
19	Mark 14:26-42	The Son of Man is betrayed into the hand of sinners	377:1-2
20	Mark 14:43-52	The Scriptures must be fulfilled	377:3-4
21	Mark 14:53-72	Christ disowned—even by His own disciple	377:5-6
22	Mark 15:1-20	"Hail, king of the Jews!"	377:7
23	Mark 15:21-32	Our King is crucified	377:8
24	Mark 15:33-47	"Surely this man was the Son of God!"	377:9
25	Mark 16:1-20	Surely this Man is the Son of God—who lives!	377:10
26	Isaiah 40:1-11	Jesus, the Shepherd, feeds his flock	500:1
27	Isaiah 40:12-18	Even today the nations are as vanity	500:2
28	Isaiah 40:19-25	To whom or what will you compare the mighty God?	500:3