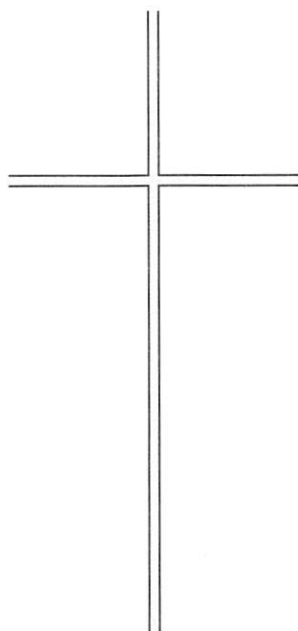


# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



God's Word is

**STILL**

Our Great Heritage

**CLC • 1960-2000**

# Our Great Heritage

**H**eritage, inheritance, and legacy are all terms that speak of one generation of people handing down to the next generation something very special that is worth preserving.

What that special something is depends on a person's value system. To some, a heritage worth passing on to each succeeding generation may be a family name, an heirloom, a piece of land, or money.

While these and other things of similar nature hold some value in this world, yet in each case their worth is limited and transitory. If any of us have been carried away with valuing earthly inheritance above measure, take some time to study the lesson Jesus taught in His parable of the rich fool when addressing a dispute over inheritance (Luke 12:13-21).

A well-known, beloved hymn focuses our attention on a heritage that is of far greater worth and lasting value than anything this world has to offer:

God's Word is our great heritage  
And shall be ours forever;  
To spread its light from age to age  
Shall be our chief endeavor.  
Through life it guides our way,  
In death it is our stay.  
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,  
We keep its teachings pure  
Throughout all generations. (TLH 283)

The revealed Word of God found in the Bible is such a great heritage worthy of being handed down to every generation, because of the light of God's saving grace that shines forth radiantly from its holy pages. That wondrous Word of light blesses us with the priceless gift of life and salvation. It unerringly guides us in the paths of righteousness for Jesus' sake. It continually warms our hearts with the spirit of love in the knowledge of God's redeeming love for us. And it unfaithfully sustains us in the faith to the very end of our life so that we can finally experience the fullness of joy in the eternal inheritance of heaven.

At our synod convention this sum-

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**At our synod convention this summer, we have the special privilege of gathering together to thank and praise the Lord for blessing our church body with the great heritage of His Word over the past forty years. . . .**

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mer, we have the special privilege of gathering together to thank and praise the Lord for blessing our church body with the great heritage of His Word over the past forty years. Mindful that this precious inheritance has been divinely handed from one generation to the next, the convention theme has been entitled "God's Word is STILL our Heritage." The three convention essayists are by the grace of God a reflection of this, as they represent three generations of faithful pastors from the same family line (Pastor Lester Schierenbeck em., Pastor John Schierenbeck, and Pastor Michael Schierenbeck).

Over the short history of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, it has been the abiding prayer of our Christian brethren that the Lord grant us the grace to keep His teachings pure throughout all generations.

Faithfulness in teaching and practice has been highly treasured and diligently contended for because of what our Savior assures us in His Word: "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:31f).

Not only can we be thankful that God has preserved His liberating Word in our midst over the years, but also that He has given us the high honor of being His ambassadors in spreading its saving light to different regions of the world.

The cherished hymn cited above not only helps us to give thought to past spiritual blessings, it also helps us look to the future with the prayer that the Lord will continue to grant this grace to us and to each succeeding generation.

—*Pastor Mark Gullerud*



**Pastor Paul Tiefel  
addresses delegates  
at 1998 convention  
in the auditorium  
at ILC, Eau Claire**

*“I know that you sincerely trust the Lord . . . that is why I remind you to keep fanning into flames the spiritual gift of God that is in you” (2 Timothy 1:5-6).*

## CONFIRMATION AND NEW BEGINNINGS

*Do you remember your Confirmation day? Many of us remember how spring was in the air. How exciting it is when everything seems to be coming to life after a long winter! It's a new beginning.*

That is quite fitting for confirmation, don't you think? We should think of confirmation as a new beginning.

Often when the students reach the end of their confirmation preparation, they rejoice, saying, “Yea! No more classes!” Yet we hope and pray that it is not the end but the beginning—the beginning of growing in faith and knowledge.

Other beginnings await. For example, the students are on the threshold of entering high school. Between the hormones, the pressure, and the responsibilities, high school is no time to take time off from God's Word, but a time to draw even closer to the Lord.

Who do you think is particularly glad that those young people are no longer attending catechism classes? That would be the enemy, the devil.

While the students were in those classes, they were increasing in their knowledge of God's Word. The enemy is not pleased with that! He wants them to become spiritually flabby. “Wouldn't it be great,” he thinks, “if these young people get so involved with other activities and interests that they forget much of what they've been learning in catechism class? If that happens, then I will be able to pick them off at my leisure.”

That is no way to begin life as a young adult!

### ‘Easy Pickin’s’?

Many young people take advantage of the vitality of their youth to build their muscles to increase their physical speed and strength. Their youth is an excellent opportunity to get into tip-top shape.

It is also the opportunity to get into better shape spiritually. Without the time constraints and pressures that will come later, these young people can spend extra time with those things that will make their faith stronger and their understanding greater.

One of the best things that can be done is spending time with other young Christians who are devoted to their Lord. In this case, peer pressure can be a great thing! Christian friends encourage, admonish, and comfort each other with God's Word.

Have you ever seen the way a poor sport acts when he is beaten? He will often fling his hat or helmet against the ground. He may kick the wall in frustration. He may likely mumble or scream in annoyance.

Wouldn't it be great if that were the way that Satan is compelled to act

when he tries to seduce our young people? There is only one way that our young people can avoid becoming “easy pickin’s” for Satan—and that is to continue in the Word and Sacrament!

Satan much prefers that after their confirmation these young people would regularly skip church. Also, he’s really hoping that they won’t pick up their Bibles anymore, and he’s counting on them to forget the passages they memorized.

Confirmands, do not allow yourselves to become easy targets! Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Surround yourselves with faithful Christian friends who will build you up.

Parents, pastors, and congregation—do whatever you can to encourage your young people to walk a path of spiritual vitality.

May our young people be a source of joy for the Lord and a constant source of frustration to Satan!

—Pastor Delwyn Maas



## ONE HILL HOLDS LIFE

It’s a clear day up here in the Northwest.

Within a few hours’ drive are dozens of beautiful mountains in the Cascade Range, which stretches from British Columbia right out through Washington State. They are beautiful in the spring sunshine! One wonders if they were here prior to the Flood. Possibly not.

There is something scary about these lofty peaks. They are beautiful—but from afar. Twenty years ago in May, Mount St. Helens blew its top. That’s fifty miles from downtown Portland (which has a volcano within its own city limits, according to a recent “Modern Maturity” magazine). Downtown Seattle is fifty miles from spectacular Mount Rainier. These hills are part of the “Ring of Fire” which contains a reported 516 fairly active

volcanoes. Mount Baker is nearby; a trip up there early last June revealed very deep snow beside the highway, with news that several lost skiers will probably never be found.

Even though there is also something dangerous as well as somewhat impractical about these hills, snowboarders and skiers seem to find their challenges more and more enjoyable. Their snows are excellent storage places for water. But avalanches are frequent. Earthquakes can occur almost any time. Whole highway sections—and whole towns—have been wiped out by slides and floods. Beyond a certain height nothing grows. And you need all kinds of extra equipment to survive up there.

The point is not to put you off coming here. It is absolutely lovely—while it lasts!

But it will not last. When everything

is said and written and done, these hills will remain reminders of the fury of God over human sin. God is not furious by nature. But back before the Flood His fury was aroused by the evil and selfishness of mankind. We cannot fully grasp all that happened during the Flood, but the turmoil and upheaval, as well as the rain, was more than awesome. Devastation came from above and from below!

The real point is that it shall happen again, on an even larger scale. The whole universe will be involved. That's almost enough to put us off the idea of living or visiting here or anywhere else in creation for any length of time.

Almost enough—except for the fury that was directed somewhere else. As we travel each year through Lent and Easter, we see how the wrath and judgment of God fell on Jesus Christ. God

took the catastrophe of sin upon Himself. Every mound and mountain now become reminders of that “green hill far away” where “our dear Lord was crucified, who died to save us all.”

All the earth's hills presage death and damnation—all except that one, and it holds life!

In 1997 Hollywood came out with the movie “Volcano” with LA as its setting. The movie's cast of heroes pretty well stems the disaster. Funny how people think they can avoid or evade or check the fury of God. Sometimes it seems to work. But the Day is coming when only one thing will work.

That's why we cling to the Gospel now, go to hear it and receive it in the Sacrament as often as we can. For we do not want to lose the protection God gives against that Day.

And therein is real beauty.

—Pastor Warren Fanning



## A Father's Day Meditation—

# HUMBLE FATHERS

“He's the proud father of a new baby girl.”

This is the sort of thing we often say of the father when a baby is born. And it is not a bad thing to say about the father of a newborn when by it we mean that he has great joy in his child as a gift of God, and that he is eager to share his joy by talking about the children and showing pictures of them to his friends.

But a father's pride in a child is not a good thing when it is pride in himself, or when he looks at his newborn baby as an achievement of his own

rather than as a gift of God.

A father's sinful pride in his son or daughter is like any other sin. If it is not recognized as a sin and not repented of, it will lead to any number of evil consequences.

A proud father may become an indulgent father, failing to do the hard and sometimes unpleasant work of discipline lest he hurt his daughter's feelings or have to endure her tears.

A proud father may try to make his son into a carbon copy of himself rather than recognizing the son's gifts and personality which may be quite

different from his own.

\* A proud father may push his children to achieve success in school or career, not to encourage good stewardship but so that the father can point with pride to his child's success: "My daughter graduated first in her class"; "My son is a successful lawyer."

### A High Responsibility

The Lord's Word teaches fathers to be humble: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

God would have us recognize that our children come from Him. He would have us see each of them not just as a delightful gift but especially as a high responsibility entrusted to us.

Our children are here not just to fulfill our hopes and dreams. They are first of all God's children bought with the blood of Christ and brought into God's family through baptism.

Furthermore, being humble does not mean that we fathers are afraid to use parental authority to discipline and correct. We understand that our children need discipline. And we understand that our authority over our children is God-given, so it is not some-

thing we can surrender.

But our understanding that it is God-given restrains us from abusing this authority by undue harshness (perhaps when we are angry or frustrated?). We know that we are accountable to God for the way that we deal with our children.

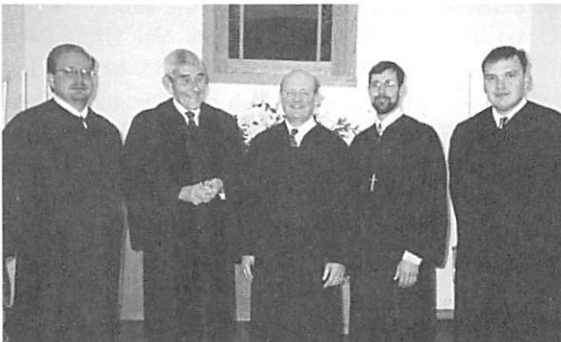
Our saving knowledge of God and our faith in Him as our Savior shape our thinking about our children and our role as fathers.

As believers we recognize that we are sinners in need of God's grace in Christ. Therefore we see our children as undeserved gifts from a gracious God. We see that we need God's help to fulfill our responsibilities as parents and we need His forgiveness when we fail.

We also want to reflect the *love* of a heavenly Father in the way we treat our children. God loved us when we were still unbelieving sinners, sending His Son to redeem us. We are not worthy of being His children, yet He does not disown us but forgives us for Jesus' sake and still calls us His children.

We reflect this love of God when we parents—in humility as forgiven sinners—forgive our children the sins they commit against us.

—Pastor John Klatt



Taking part in the January 16, 2000 installation of Pastor James Sandeen at St. Paul's, Golden, Colo. were Pastors Frank Gantt, Rev. Em. Victor Tiefel, (the new pastor), Peter Reim, James Naumann

## Psalm 134

*“LORD, bless Your pastors and bless Your people”*

A Psalm of Instruction

### Psalm 134

Behold, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, who by night stand in the house of the LORD! Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.

The LORD who made heaven and earth bless you from Zion!

This psalm brings the Songs of Ascents collection to its conclusion. It may be thought of as a closing doxology. The psalm consists of two parts: 1) a call from those outside the temple (the people) to those inside (the priests) to praise and thank the Lord in their name for mercies bestowed on them (vv. 1-2); and 2) a response from those inside the temple who ask God to pour out His blessings on those who have addressed them (v. 3).

This psalm was very suitable for use by the pilgrim-bands. Oftentimes they would arrive at the city of Jerusalem late in the day. After proceeding to the temple gate, they would announce their arrival to the priests who were on night-duty and who would be expecting them. They would call on the priests to “bless the Lord” for His grace in conducting them safely to Jerusalem. The priests in turn would call on the Lord to bless the Jewish pilgrims through their worship of Him during the up-coming festival.

*“Now this psalm, being placed here at the end of the series, bids us look back and trace, in the psalms that have*

*gone before, the manifold reasons wherefore we should bless the Lord. The first of these psalms, Ps. 120, tells of deliverance from cruel enemies; Ps. 121, of God’s continual preservation of his people; Ps. 122, of joy and delight realized in the worship of the Lord; Ps. 123, of waiting continually upon God in times of trouble; Ps. 124, of deliverance from fierce foes; Ps. 125, of experience of God’s guardian care; Ps. 126, of the joy of God’s salvation; Ps. 127, of the Lord alone being our sure Keeper; Ps. 128, of God’s grace and goodness sweetening the home; Ps. 129, of afflictions many, but of preservation in them all; Ps. 130, of God’s blessed uplifting; Ps. 131, of the souls kept in the peace of God; Ps. 132, of the prosperity of the Church; and Ps. 133, of her unity; and now in Ps. 134 there is, as there well may be, the command to bless the Lord. What a long list it is of mercies, and help, and deliverance, and blessing unspeakable! If men will look back along their lives, they too will bless the Lord.”* (Pulpit Commentary, Psalms, Vol. III, p. 276)

To this we would add, before closing, that we also have wonderful reason to bless the Lord as we look ahead to the *future*. Though our journey as pilgrims in this world of sin has not yet reached its end (there are miles remaining to travel, hills to climb, valleys to pass through, uncharted territory to traverse before we reach our destination),



our eventual entrance into the New Jerusalem is assured because of Jesus and His saving work in our behalf. With our faith anchored solidly in Him, we may confidently affirm with Paul: *"I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."*

What a Day it will be! Then we'll experience fullness of joy and pleasures at God's right hand forevermore! Until then may our prayer be:

Jerusalem, thou city fair and high,  
Would God I were in thee!  
My longing heart fain, fain, to thee would fly,  
It will not stay with me.  
Far over vale and mountain,  
Far over field and plain,  
It hastes to seek its Fountain  
And leave this world of pain.

O happy day and yet far happier hour,  
When wilt thou come at last,  
When fearless to my Father's  
love and pow'r,  
Whose promise standeth fast,  
My soul I gladly render?  
For surely will His hand  
Lead her with guidance tender  
To heav'n, her fatherland.

And when within that lovely Paradise  
At last I safely dwell,  
What songs of bliss shall from my lips arise,  
What joy my tongue shall tell,  
While all the saints are singing  
Hosannas o'er and o'er,  
Pure hallelujahs ringing  
Around me evermore! (TLH 619:1,2,7)

*(We thank Pastor Schuetze for this series of edifying studies of the "Songs of Ascent" psalms. — Ed.)*



**Editor's note:**

Not long ago, on one of the CLC e-mail forums, there was an exchange on the subject of what a Christian might say to another who is experiencing some great trial or testing of faith. With the permission of the writer (Robin Vogsland, a member of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Albuquerque, N.Mex.), we are sharing with you this encouraging expression of faith from one who endured such trial in his family.

Introducing his remarks, Mr. Vogsland said: *"I wrote the following a couple of weeks ago for a Christian friend of a friend whose 15-year-old son has inoperable brain cancer, and who was looking for answers and comfort in that terrible trial. . . ."*

## 'Bereavement Letter'

This is what I would say as a fellow Christian to \_\_\_\_\_,

There is no way that I can appreciate exactly what you are going through, but I know what it is like to lose a young child. My second daughter Rachel was born with major genetic abnormalities (blind, retarded, perhaps deaf, and medically fragile and a life expectancy of weeks). For us, her birth was an occasion of grief instead of joy and hope. The first thing I did

was remember what Christ says: "You have not because you ask not," so I prayed fervently that He would work a miracle to make her healthy and even normal.

I also remember that Christ, when facing His own death and pleading under the torment awaiting Him, ended His plea with "But Your will be done," so I did the same. If Christ did so (and Christ said, "A servant is not above His master"), then I as Christ's servant

too must accept whatever God decides. He did not answer my prayer the way I hoped, but I believed that He had a reason. This strengthened me but did not take away the pain—for the grief must still be dealt with—so I cried too.

We live in a world twisted by the fall into sin, and disease and corruption is the result—that is not a surprise or a change. The real, personal question is (given that some children will suffer in this way), "why mine?" I thought about the words: "To whom much is given, much will be required," and "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear, but with every temptation will provide a way of escape, that you may endure it." I realized that if God allows this to happen, then He was also expressing His confidence in my wife and me to bear this burden without breaking. He would not have allowed it if our faith was too weak. Also, this trouble is indeed all too common to man. And, although it is not quite logical, I also thought to myself: "It is better for us to carry this burden who are able to do it, than that it should have fallen instead on someone who had no faith, who would have been destroyed by it."

After being able to accept the burden that much, I then remembered lots of other things: "Be witnesses of me"; and "You are the salt of the earth"; and "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven"; and even "All things work for good to those who love the Lord." Could there be good in THIS? Indeed there could. . . .

I thought of it from my daughter's perspective. We suffered mentally, but



she suffered the greatest loss—a life cut short and emptied of accomplishment (our natural minds told us this). But in faith we baptized her the night she was born—that she would be joined to the body of Christ. Thereafter we marveled at how uncomplainingly she bore all the discomfort and pain (and there was a LOT of it) in multiple hospitalizations, injections, IVs, fevers, seizures, and respiratory arrests and resuscitations. She bore it even better than we did our lesser burden. Our "little Christian" bore witness to us that God's "grace is sufficient for you." This was a powerful accomplishment for any Christian's life.

One of our family friends also told us that when she was counseling a young handicapped girl who was contemplating suicide, our friend told her the story of Rachel and used it to bear witness to this girl of God's grace. Another accomplishment for such a little Christian. There were a number of such occasions in the 2 1/2 years that she was with us (God's answer to my first prayer was to extend her life beyond what any expected) when she was a witness of God's love to doctors, friends, and family. The time was filled with trouble and worry, but also peace and joy in the shelter under the wings of the Almighty. Rachel may have accomplished more for the Kingdom of God in that time than I will in my whole life! How unlike our ways are His ways!

It was only after I had understood the things above that I was able to read and rejoice in the most shocking but also most comforting Bible verse of all: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His holy ones," His believers. God is not sitting off somewhere casually watching us drop like flies. He is here with us. He is invested in us and close to us each moment of our lives--especially through the suffering and pain which draws us closer to Him. And when the end comes, God weeps too (as we saw Christ, the perfect image of the Father, weep at the grave of Lazarus). And He treasures the soul who departs as if it were a precious jewel--or gold refined and made precious by the burning fire of adversity.

Comfort your son in this last trial, build up his faith, remind him he is a powerful witness to those whom he meets, that he has been called to this very difficult assignment by the Lord. You and he must set your eyes on heaven, and when the time comes for him to depart, say as David did in hope at the death of his child from illness: "He shall not return to me, but I shall go to him." Then put that reunion on your long-term calendar--Christ said: "He who believes in me shall never die."

And I pray that you will in the end be able to rejoice in the Lord WHO DOES ALL THINGS WELL.

May you be strengthened in this trial and find true peace in Christ.

*The Vogslands*



## Appreciating Our Lutheran Hymns

1 Come, oh, come, Thou quick'ning Spirit, God from all e - ter - ni - ty!  
 2 Grant our hearts in full - est mea - sure Wis - dom, coun - sel, pu - ri - ty,  
 3 Show us, Lord, the path of bless - ing; When we tres - pass on our way,

### Come , Oh, Come, Thou Quickening Spirit

A Pentecost Hymn

#226 in The Lutheran Hymnal

The Orders of Morning Service in *The Lutheran Hymnal* begin with this direction: "A hymn of invocation of the Holy Ghost or another hymn shall be sung."

As we begin our Sunday worship together, we invoke the Holy Spirit. We pray to Him, asking that He would be present with us during our service,

working in our hearts as we hear the Word. We ask Him to lead us to repent of our sins as we hear God's holy law. We ask Him to strengthen our faith in Jesus through the Gospel, giving us peace and joy in the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. We ask Him to work in us the desire and the strength to do the will of God in our lives.

Our hymn is a fine ‘hymn of invocation’ of the Holy Ghost, appropriate not just for Pentecost, but also for any Christian worship service. With it we glorify the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity, confessing that we are in constant need of His indwelling with His gifts.

The hymn recalls various passages of Scripture which teach of the Spirit and His work. For example, stanza 4 recalls Romans 8:15-16, which teaches that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption who bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Stanza 5 paraphrases Romans 8:26, a verse that assures us of the help of the

Holy Spirit when we pray, even when we are unable to put our needs into words. The hymn closes with a prayer for the Spirit to preserve our faith in the hour of our death.

The author, Heinrich Held, lived in Germany in the seventeenth century during the time of the Thirty Years War. Those were times of severe trials and suffering for believers. Those trials led Held to the Scripture where he found comfort and strength in the knowledge of God the Holy Spirit.

We will find the same comfort in our trials and strength for our lives in this hymn of invocation of the Holy Ghost.

—Pastor John Klatt



## Parables Of The Master

### The Lost Son And The Elder Brother

The parable of the prodigal or lost son is perhaps the most well-known and touching of Jesus’ many parables. It touches the heart of every mother and father who have ever had a wayward child. It also touches the heart of every lost sinner who desperately is seeking to find the love of God.

The three parables in Luke 15 were in direct response to the Pharisees’ challenge: “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” The first two parables (the lost coin and the lost sheep) stress the determination of the Lord to seek and to save the lost. The parable of the lost son stresses not only the love of a forgiving father, but also

exposes the deep disease of self-righteousness among those who consider themselves God’s people.

In the end both the lost son and the elder brother suffer from the malady of self-seeking. The young brother said, “Give me.” The elder brother complained, “You never gave me.” It is important that every person see himself both in the lost son and in the elder brother.

— We are all like the rebellious son —

Very few people go through their teenage and young adult years without a streak of headstrong rebellion. This

younger son was headed on a course of self-destruction. He wanted his share of his father's inheritance now! He then left home and wasted his possessions with riotous living. He lived what he thought was the good life—with wine, women, and song. Then his inheritance ran out, and his new friends deserted him. He was reduced to the most degrading job of all for a Jew—taking care of ceremonially unclean pigs. The younger son hit bottom.

All of us are by nature like this younger son. We were dead in sins and trespasses. We were under the power of the prince of the air, and we all conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind (cf. Eph. 2:1-3). It is sometimes a difficult thing to face what we were and what we have done. Sometimes the words of *“Abide With Me!”* strike powerfully home: *“Thou on my head in early youth didst smile, and though rebellious and perverse meanwhile, Thou hast not left me, oft as I left thee . . . ”*

**— We would be like the  
contrite son —**

The younger son “came to himself.” he came to his senses as he remembered the love of his father. He could not even claim to be a son any longer. All he wanted was to be a servant in the house of his father. It was not easy for him to go to his father and admit that he was wrong. The father rejoiced in the return of his son and restored him to full sonship. In fact, he prepared a feast, “for this my son was dead and is alive again.”

How many children and young people who have wronged their parents do not also discover this same long-suffering love in their earthly parents?

Only the Holy Spirit can break the cycle of sin and destructive lifestyle that is a part of us by nature. In the depths of our despair, the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins and leads us to truly repent of those sins as did David, who confessed: “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done this great wickedness” (Ps. 51:4).

It is a miracle of God's grace when the Father's love penetrates our rebellion and hopelessness and reminds us of His unconditional love for us. You who were dead in sins and trespasses, God made alive. Our salvation is the personal story of a father and a son, of waiting love and repentance, of return and joyful welcome, of free forgiveness and exuberant joy. This is the story of God's love for us as revealed in Jesus Christ.

**— The danger is that we will be  
like the elder brother —**

The key to this third parable in Luke 15 and the answer to the religious leaders who condemned Jesus for “eating with sinners” is found in the attitude of the elder brother. He was angry because of the attention the father gave to his younger brother. He also felt that he had deserved more because he had been the “good son.” He resented the love the father showed to his younger brother.

Should not the elder brother also have rejoiced in the return of his lost brother?

The wrong, self-righteous attitude of the religious leaders of Israel was laid bare in this parable. Jesus' seeking love provoked the dissent of the “righteous” Pharisees and scribes.

Similarly, it is very easy for “good” Christians today to look down on “real” sinners and even resent Jesus'

unconditional love and acceptance. Sometimes members of churches want to impose conditions of public repentance on certain kinds of sins. Sometimes there is an unspoken self-righteousness that questions the genuineness of faith of other "bad" sinners. In many churches the attitude conveyed is that you have to become as good as we are in order to be a part of our group. A real danger among conservative Lutherans is that the devil injects the unspoken attitude of the

elder brother into the fellowship.

The key is to identify with the younger brother rather than with the elder brother. We were dead, but now by the grace of God we are alive in Christ. We were lost, but—thanks be to God's grace—He found us and accepted us in Jesus as His beloved sons and daughters. Let us come to the Father and find His accepting love.

This is a parable of "amazing grace."

—Pastor John Schierenbeck



(Adapted from a recent bulletin article of Grace Ev. Lutheran Church, Sleepy Eye, Minnesota; Paul Fleischer is pastor.)

## SEEKING ANSWERS

### WHAT ABOUT THE 'ORDER OF THE EASTERN STAR'?

Our local paper recently carried the story of the disbanding, after some 98 years, of the local chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, the women's branch of the Masonic Lodge. We're told that the Masons, the male fraternity of the Lodge, disbanded last December, leaving the Eastern Star without a meeting place. It seems it was largely a declining membership which accounted for the demise of both branches.

Quoting a local Eastern Star member, the article gives some insights into the organization which, of course, continues to exist nationally. For example, this is said: "Eastern Star is an international philanthropic organization. It is not a religion but it does profess a belief in a supreme being and does have its values based on the bible (sic)...."

Our objections to the Masonic Lodge have long been in place and will not be new to any of us. Careful study of official Masonic literature over the years has led orthodox Lutheran Christians to see Masonry as a religious organization which, for conscience reasons, a disciple of Christ would want to avoid lest the Gospel of Jesus Christ be compromised in one's own heart and undermined among us.

That Masonry—even as the other lodges, and scouting as well—practices "philanthropy" is hardly wrong in and of itself. Nevertheless, careful examination of their official literature leads to the conclusion that the "good deeds" in which lodge members are involved are intended to be a contributing cause to salvation—to future entrance into the "grand lodge above."

Putting it another way, Masonry, as the grandfather of the lodges, teaches

and encourages self-righteousness. It reinforces sinful man's innate tendency to trust in self for salvation before God. Many a Mason carries about in his wallet a little card entitled WHAT IS A MASON? The card reads: "A Mason is a man and brother whose trust is in God. He will meet you on the level, and act upon the Square. Truth is his Compass and he is ever Plumb. He has a grip on all that is right. He is loyal to his order and whatever his degree. He is master of himself. In the lodge of life he wears unstained the white lambskin of innocence. From his initiation as Entered Apprentice he travels ever toward the East in search of light and wisdom until he receives the Final, the divine Password that admits him into the ineffable presence of the Eternal

Supreme Grand Master of the Universe GOD."

From such and similar self-testimony we beg to differ with the local Eastern Star member who is quoted in our paper as saying that Masonry is "not a religion." Inasmuch as it does indeed "profess a belief in a supreme being" and does have (and teach!) "values based on the bible (*sic*)," conscientious Christians have no recourse but to ask: Who is the "Supreme Being" of Masonry? What are the "values" Masonry teaches? Is the God of Masonry the Triune God, the only true God as revealed by the very Bible they claim to use as their guide-book? Are Masonic "values" those based on the Ten Commandments which include teaching that God's Law convicts and

## PICTURING THE PAST



The August 9-14, 1962 Synod Convention was held at Manchester, Wisconsin. Speakers at services during convention days were (l-r) Pastor Herbert Witt, opening devotion; Pastor Otto J. Eckert, convention service; Missionary Fred Tiefel, Sunday morning service; Pastor John Johannes, closing service; Host pastor, Egbert Albrecht.

condemns all men as sinners doomed to an eternity of separation from God? Furthermore, is the Masonic teaching of how one enters heaven consistent with what the Bible teaches? The answer is a clear “no” to all questions!

Holy Scripture teaches that “all our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Is. 64:6). It teaches that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:28). It teaches: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? and what communion has light with darkness? . . . And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. . . . Therefore, come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty.” (2 Cor. 6:14ff).

### **WHAT ABOUT THE AMERICAN LEGION?**

Interestingly, the same issue of our local newspaper had a lead article on the American Legion (AL), inasmuch as the National Commander spent a day in our city visiting with local legionaries, talking “to the troops,” and finding out “how everybody’s doing.” According to the Commander “some of the concerns we have in the American Legion are those dealing with national defense. . . . Legionaries and Americans in general are concerned about the state of readiness in our military forces, the number of missions that we have troops deployed on....” According to the article, the AL

is lobbying for VA hospitals and outpatient clinics through the GI Bill of Health, as well as for construction of a World War II Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.

Obviously the Legion is a veterans’ organization. However, looking at its literature—starting with its slogan: “For God and Country”—one finds obvious religious elements. This causes a conscientious Lutheran Christian to investigate how, when, or where his religious scruples—his orthodox confession of God’s Word of truth—might be compromised.

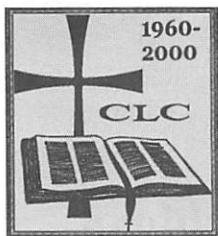
One troubling fact concerning the Legion is that, for example, its literature contains statements where, in effect, scouting is endorsed and/or promoted. How shall we react to such a fact, especially considering that we have long found scouting to be one of those organizations to be avoided for conscience reasons?

Careful scrutiny also needs to be given to a question such as: does membership in the Legion—or any other “semi-religious” organization—make one responsible for everything in that organization (including instances when our biblical stand against religious unionism is compromised)?

The CLC is currently studying questions related to semi-religious organizations in general, and the American Legion in particular. Pastoral conference studies done recently on the subject, as well as individual memorials on the matter, will be before this summer’s synod convention for consideration.

May the Lord of the Church be with us as we study these things and as we take care to preserve the full truth of His Word and Gospel against the inroads of false teaching. ●





## *Historical Markings*

# Where Have We Been? Where Are We Going?

### **"CONSTITUTING CONVENTION AT WATERTOWN, SD AND SLEEPY EYE, MN**

#### ***"I. Convention at Watertown, South Dakota — August 9-12, 1960***

*"As an outgrowth and culmination of many meetings held during preceding months of preparation and concentrated study and discussion, brethren from as far west as the state of Washington and from as far east as the state of Michigan, as well as from the deep South, namely the state of Florida, gathered in convention as the invited guests of Trinity Lutheran Church of Watertown, South Dakota. Under the blessing and guidance of God, this meeting together with the recessed sessions at Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, proved to be the organizing convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.*

*"It is noteworthy that although the matter of organizational form would be a major item on the agenda, nevertheless doctrinal essays took precedence and were given the right-of-way. It can truly be said that when business and external matters of a church organization push aside doctrinal study and deliberation and practically send them into limbo, then the spiritual health of such a church group is not only being threatened but is already on the downgrade. This is something that needs to be watched and guarded against more and more as a church body grows and naturally becomes more involved in the activities of its various boards and committees. The godly fervor and zeal of the first love can so easily be lost in the maze of intricate details of synodical operation. Constitution and synodical handbook approaches to a problem can so easily take precedence and squeeze out the doctrinal concerns. The proper functioning of any church group ever needs the undergirding of God's Word as the source of all truth and spiritual strength. . . .*

*" . . . On Friday afternoon, August 12th, opportunity was afforded the members of the convention to record their signatures with the secretary in evidence of their subscription to the constitution adopted by this convention. Eighty-nine names were then recorded and filed in the minutes of the secretary.*

#### ***"II. Recessed Convention at Sleepy Eye, Minnesota - January 24-26, 1961***

*"Although the weather was bitterly cold with winds blowing strongly from the northwest, there was a warm and cheerful spirit of Christian fellowship in evidence as pastors, teachers, delegates, and visitors assembled . . . The membership committee reported that 33 congregations had applied for membership in the CLC. . . . Since this was a meeting set aside for the purpose of effecting an organization with proper order and form, much time was devoted to the election of officers, boards, and committees, as well as to the adoption of articles to the constitution and by-laws tabled by the Watertown meeting."*

*— From 'A HISTORY OF THE CLC' (Prof. C. M. Gullerud, 1978)*

# Fortieth Anniversary Historical Vignette

vignette (vin-yet'), n. 1. short literary essay; sketch  
vignettist (vin-yet'ist), n. a maker of vignettes, painter,  
photographer, or writer

## Dateline: Coloma, Michigan

WALTER 'BUD' REINHARDT, VIGNETTIST

Celebrating forty years of Faith congregation in Coloma, Michigan brings back many memories.

One such memory was leaving a beautiful new church building, built when I was president a few years earlier, when about 80 communicants with their pastor, Ralph Schaller, chose to remain faithful to God's Word by separating from their former congregation and held their first service on Mother's Day, May 10, 1959.

Two, was remembering the WELS convention that I was a delegate to in Saginaw, Michigan in 1955, charging the Missouri Synod to "mark . . . and avoid" lest the hearts of the simple be deceived (Romans 16:17-18); and then to hold in abeyance taking any action against them.

Three, also in 1959, was Faith's charter affiliation with the Church of the Lutheran Confession, whose name was adopted after a committee I served on recommended that name.

Four, the many blessings the Lord of the Church has blessed us with: 1. During our first year obtaining a parsonage with ten acres of land; 2. Dedicating a house of worship constructed by members during the second year; 3. Sharing our pastor with a concerned group of Lutherans in the Sister Lakes area which became Redeemer Lutheran Church; 4. Beginning our Christian Day School in 1974.

Five, the forty years of faithful service given to us by only two pastors, namely, Ralph Schaller and James Sandeen.



## BREAK TIME AT 1998 CONVENTION



Spokesman assistant editor, Prof. Em. Paul Koch (center) consults with Synod Vice President, Pastor Elton Hallauer.



Delegate Curtis Brown, Teacher Mark Kranz, and Pastor John Hein relax in the shade.

*Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, Weslaco—*

## New CLC Church In Texas



**Pastors Daniel Fleischer and L. D. Redlin with members of the Church Council. The altar, pulpit, and baptismal font were reclaimed from storage on the Hansen farm in Oakes, N.Dak. The furnishings were in storage since the CLC church in Aberdeen, S.Dak. closed.**

Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church is an assembly of believers who gather around the Word of God. In 1997 a group of believers inquired of Rev. L. D. Redlin concerning the Church of the Lutheran Confession. They were interested in the doctrine and practice of the church body. The first meeting was in October 1997. Rev. Redlin, who was serving the vacancy at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Corpus Christi, shared with the inquirers the doctrine and practice of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

With the arrival of Rev. Daniel Fleischer at Resurrection in Corpus Christi, services were begun—with the kind agreement of Resurrection to share its pastor. He was subsequently called as the first pastor and presently serves both congregations.

Convinced that the church body their pastor represented was faithful to the Scriptures in its teaching and prac-

tice, the congregation sought the continued services of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. The membership of this congregation was established by a public confession of faith on Thanksgiving Day 1998.

The first services were conducted in the home of Buddy and Gretchen Hovda. Afternoon services were then held in the Community Room of the Texas State Bank.

Shepherd of the Valley became the winter “home” of many CLC families who spend their winter in the Rio Grande Valley, as well as of others who



**“Winter Texan” Wilbur Soleta (St. John’s, Okabena, Minn.) serves Hans Hovda, congregation president, the barbecue he prepared.**

appreciate the Word of Truth spoken from its pulpit.

The desire of the congregation was to have its own worship facility. The Lord gave patience, as everyone was involved in seeking such a place. We were led to the present building which was originally Grace Episcopal Church and currently the headquarters of the Rio Grande Valley Girl Scouts. With a loan of \$78,000 from the Church Extension Fund of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, the congregation was able to purchase this house of worship. The first service in the building was conducted on September 19, 1999.

During the winter months Pastors Redlin or Fleischer conduct services every Sunday in Weslaco and Corpus Christi. When the pastor is not present, lay services are conducted with sermons provided by Rev. Fleischer. It is our hope and prayer that the time will come in the not too distant future that the congregation can have a full-time resident pastor.

Shepherd of the Valley exists to proclaim the Word of God, so that through that Word all who gather may be led to confess their sins and find their joy and

hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes (Romans 1:17).

We thank the Lord for His goodness and grace, and implore Him for His continued blessing.

*—The above history of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church is adapted from the Dedication Service folder, March 12, 2000.*

**PLEASE NOTE:** Bulk renewals Group subscriptions to the *Lutheran Spokesman* expire with the June issue. The renewal rate is \$8.00 for individuals under the bulk plan.

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Shepherd of the Valley  
Lutheran Church,  
Weslaco, Texas was dedi-  
cated to the glory of God  
on March 12, 2000