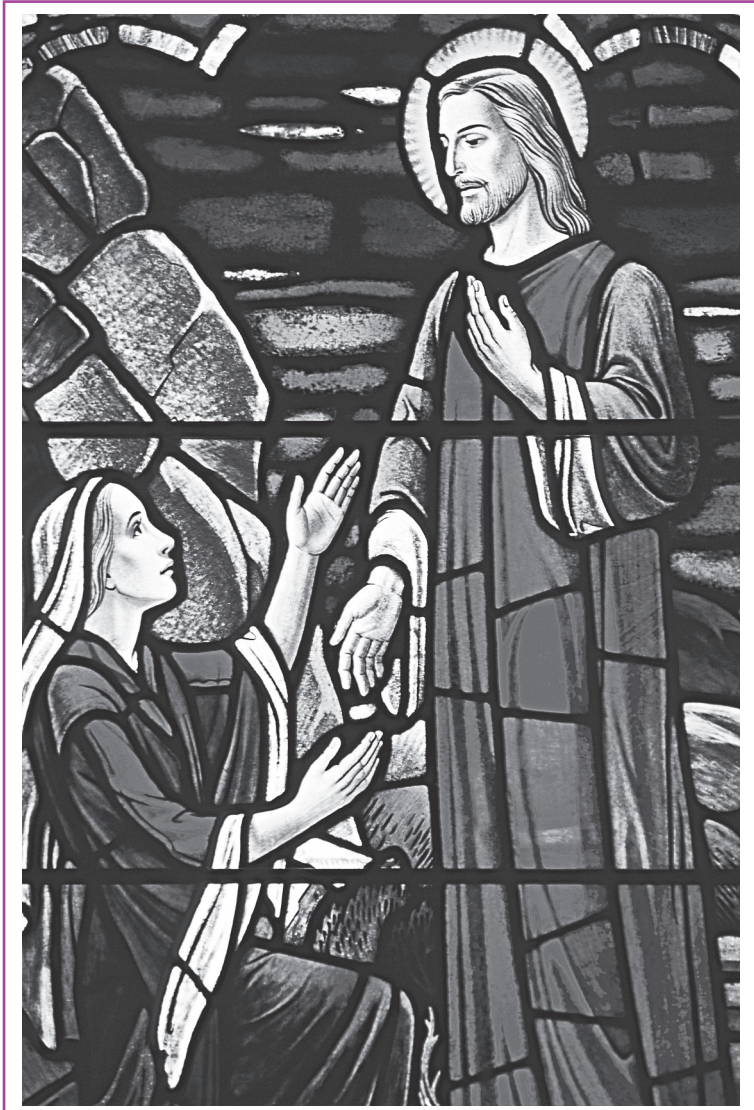


EASTER

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



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He lives to grant me ... His Promises!

When Jesus was alive, He made a great many promises to us. How certain, how convinced of them can we be? When we look into the depths of our heart and soul, how convinced are we that any one—even the smallest—will be kept?

Were we to ask that question in regard to politicians, we might sneer a bit, shake our heads, and say, “A politician keep a promise?” Experience teaches us to take with considerable doubt the promises politicians make. This can be said equally of any person we know. This is so because people are people and all too often promises have not been kept by others. The result is: we doubt.

Well, it would be foolish to expect a person who has died to keep a promise. We do not expect someone like Teddy Roosevelt or John Kennedy to keep some promise they made years ago. Anyone who would think that someone who has died could keep a promise would likely be locked up in a padded

room rather quickly.

The reasons are obvious and simple—the person is no longer living and does not have the ability to do anything. We might remember the persons, we can recall their words, and we can speak of the things they did, yet that is as far as it goes. They have passed on beyond the point of doing anything more, including keeping any supposed promise they made!

The Key...

A person who is still living, however, does have the ability to do something. Such a one might yet keep promises made. Such a one might yet do some good for others, even though—based on experience—you

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and I may be hesitant to believe them. It is their being alive which holds the key!

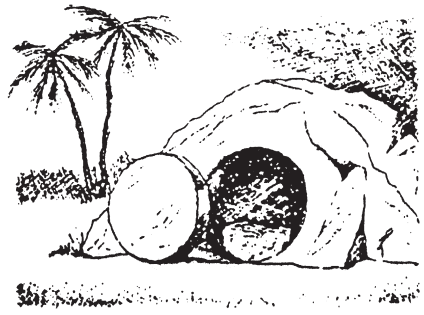
So—how certain, how convinced, are you that the Lord Jesus can keep His promises?

The question is: Is He living or is He dead? If He is dead, then the promises which He made to us are not “yea” and “amen” (as St. Paul says, see 1 Cor. 1:20). If He is dead, then surely the tomb where He was laid is well-marked and well-known, and we could go there and see it for ourselves.

But, behold, the disciples did not return again and again to the tomb! Why should they? Jesus was not to be found there. They had seen Him alive—glorified, yet still living and breathing as He had before His death and burial.

The only wonderful conclusion is—since Jesus is alive and not dead, He is able to keep all the promises He made!

We could fill a book discussing the many promises made by our Savior Jesus. One glorious promise He made—and it is the reason He came to this world to suffer, die, and rise again—is this: “I go to prepare a place for you...and I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am,



there you may be also” (Jn. 14:2f).

Because Jesus, my Savior, is living and not dead, I know that this promise can be kept—yes, will be kept!—to me! Only a living Jesus could do this.

We rejoice greatly in the wonderful work of salvation Jesus brought about, and by faith we are secure. We rejoice in our living Savior, for we know that He can and will keep His promises to each and everyone of us who believe.

What great comfort this sweet sentence gives, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Lk. 24:5-7).

—Pastor Roland Gurgel

Why Do We Celebrate Easter?

Why do we celebrate Easter? We are celebrating the resurrection of our Savior after He paid for our sins with His death. We also celebrate the fact that Christ’s resurrection means that we too will rise from the dead at the Last Day.

But even as we are celebrating not

only a past event, but a future event as well, we are also celebrating a present event. We may make a special observation of Christ’s resurrection on Easter Sunday, yet in a practical sense every day of our life is a day of Easter worship; as Paul states, “...if we have been united together in the likeness of

His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Rom 6:5f).

In the Old Testament the worshiper was to get rid of every bit of leaven, or yeast, from his house. The leaven, or yeast, represented sin and its creeping effect. The believer was to cleanse his home of leaven, even as he was also to cleanse his heart and life of sin. To be unleavened—that is, to be free from leaven—signified that the believer was free from sin.

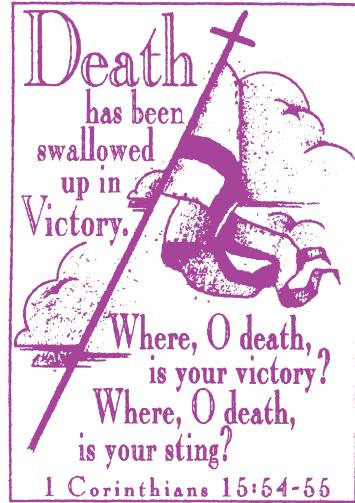
For New Testament believers Christ’s death and resurrection do not only signify that we are free from sin. Jesus paid for our sins. He took our sins away—past, present, or future; every single one of our sins has been paid for, and God has put them away.

Therefore we are truly free from sin, for we have been declared “Not guilty!” As St. Paul says, we are “unleavened.” Therefore the same apostle tells us to live as though we are free from sin.

Paul tells believers to “Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you are truly unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us!”—that is, Christ paid for our sins so that we are innocent before God. With this in mind, we do not want to make ourselves guilty before Him again by ignoring our sins and falling again into unbelief by serving sin.

Before...and After...!

Before our conversion, we were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), a fact which makes Christ’s death



and resurrection vitally important for us in this life as well. “If Christ is not risen, you are still in your sins!” But at our conversion—whether at Baptism or, before that, through the preaching of the Word—we received new spiritual life when we were resurrected from spiritual death. As it is written, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father” (Rom 6:4).

Martin Luther tells us that we are not only to celebrate Easter, but we are to live Easter! If you were dead, who could blame you for just lying around the house? But we are not dead! We are spiritually alive because of Christ’s death and resurrection! Therefore the Lord’s apostle says that it is high time that we start living like we were alive in Christ, rather than living as though we were dead in sin.

Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover. “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:8).

Why do we celebrate Easter? Is it just another Sunday? No, it is a reminder that for the believer every day is Easter! For the believer every day is a celebration of the fact that we, who were dead in sin, are now alive in Christ, so that we no longer serve sin. We serve God!

For the believer Good Friday is every day through contrition and repentance, as we put our sinful flesh to death.

And for the believer, every day is Easter in that every day we find forgiveness for those sins in our living Savior; every day we find new life in

Him who died and rose again, not only that we might live again at the Last Day, but also that we might live for Him who died and rose again to give us life.

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:8-11).

—Pastor Joel Fleischer



“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Revelation 7:9-10)

the NEW The Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem

Do you notice the similarity between our Revelation passage above and the events of Palm Sunday? On both occasions a great multitude of people is waving palm branches and singing Hosanna (the Hebrew word Hosanna means “save now” or “salvation”—as the hosts in Revelation sing).

We can also notice some very major differences between the two accounts. On Palm Sunday a multitude of Jews was singing Hosanna to Jesus as their Messiah. In Revelation there is a far greater multitude “which no one could

number” from every nation under heaven.

On Palm Sunday the people came as they were, wearing their old dirty clothing which they then laid on the road before Jesus. In Revelation all are clothed with white robes given them by Jesus.

On Palm Sunday the people still didn’t understand the mission of the Messiah. They were looking for an earthly king. In Revelation the crowd gives praise to God and the Lamb for giving eternal salvation.

As we read on, we see the biggest difference between the two accounts: on Palm Sunday Jesus and the crowds were entering the worldly Jerusalem where unbelievers ruled and sin corrupted. In our text the saints are gathered before God in the heavenly Jerusalem, with angels around the throne joining the saints in praising God. We are told that the multitude in white robes with palm branches in their hands are those who have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Heaven’s Door Opened!

In this we see the real connection between the two accounts. Jesus rode into the earthly Jerusalem in humility, so that we could be a part of the throng in white singing praise to God in the heavenly Jerusalem!

Jesus did not have any false hopes of grandeur when He rode into Jerusalem amid the shouts of Hosanna. He did not think, “Finally the people are receiving Me as they ought. Things are looking up now.” No, He knew very well what lay ahead of Him in the earthly Jerusalem. He was entering Jerusalem devoted to His purpose of saving us. He came into Jerusalem knowing that He would be driven out

and crucified. He came to suffer and die at the hands of men.

Because Jesus entered the earthly Jerusalem as the Lamb of God to be sacrificed for the sins of the world, He has opened the door of the heavenly Jerusalem for us.

He wore a crown of thorns, so that we could wear a crown of glory.

He was forsaken by God Himself, so that we could be accepted by God into perfect peace and glory.

What a glorious procession that will be when we wave our palm branches and join the angels in singing Hosanna to our God!

On Palm Sunday we have a little foretaste of the glorious entry into the New Jerusalem. What a great day to which we can look forward.

But we do not have to wait until then. We can sing our praise to God with our whole heart now.

Just as we eagerly anticipate that we will “serve God day and night in His temple” of heaven, we can serve Him now with our whole life.

As we celebrate Palm Sunday, let us praise Him who opened the way for our triumphal entry into the *New Jerusalem*—Heaven!

—*Pastor David Reim*



EASTER—The Only “Cancelled Check” You Need

One day when I was visiting at the home of a church member, he told me about the boxes of financial records in his basement. “A copy of every bill, every statement, every cancelled check

of mine, going back twenty years.” Why, I asked him, would you want to keep all those papers and receipts for so long? Surely no one is going to be interested in records that are more than

seven years old. “Just the same,” he said, “If anybody ever comes and says I owe them money, I want to be able to show them that IT’S ALREADY PAID!”

How’s your financial record-keeping? If the IRS notified you of an audit and told you to come to their office with the past seven years’ worth of receipts, records, and tax returns, how would you fare?

Some people are very careful about maintaining their own paper trail; some pay a professional to do this for them; others would be in rather serious trouble. If you are unprepared to show that you have really paid everything you owe to Uncle Sam, you may find yourself owing back taxes and penalties that could cripple you financially for a long time.

Of course, even those who are unprepared can comfort themselves with the thought that they’ll probably never get audited. They may be right, at least as far as the IRS is concerned.

There is another kind of audit that every person will undergo some day. When Jesus comes again on the Last Day, no one will be exempt from scrutiny, and there will be no statute of

limitations. Debts that are owed will not be counted in dollars and cents, but rather in broken commandments.

On that Day will you be able to show that your debts have been paid? Those who imagine that their own good deeds can somehow balance out the bad will be in for a terrible surprise. They’ll find out that their account—no matter how rosy it may have looked in this life—is severely underpaid.

That’s true because God demands perfect holiness and sinlessness, and none of us has that kind of record!

This is where the good news of Easter comes to the rescue! When God’s Son went to the cross on Good Friday, He carried the full load of sin-debt on behalf of the entire world. With His death your debt was paid. Then when He rose bodily from the grave on Easter Sunday morning, that was His presentation of the cancelled check to God the Father—a mighty “PAID IN FULL” notice which has settled our account with God once and for all!

So how many boxes do you have in your basement? Here we’re not talking about paper bills and receipts. The real question is: what about the record of sin and debt stored in the inner reaches of your heart?

This Easter season is a good time to do a little spring cleaning. Because of Jesus, you have the privilege of giving them all to the Lord. And since God the Father has accepted the payment Jesus offered for you, there’s no need to hang on to any doubt or guilt anymore. With faith in Christ, His once-for-all “cancelled check” is the only record you need!

—Pastor Bruce Naumann

(First written for the pastor’s column of a local newspaper)



Jesus is the Bread of Life

*“To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”
(John 6:68)*

Jesus had just fed the five thousand with five loaves and two small fish. In response, the crowd had tried to make Him their Bread King. When Jesus would not give them what they wanted—material security and prosperity—and when Jesus spoke hard sayings regarding His being the Bread of Life, many of His disciples no longer followed Him. When Jesus asked His disciples, “Do you also want to go away?” Peter replied, in effect, “Where shall we go?”

A thousand years earlier, the Preacher had asked himself, “Where can I find meaning and happiness in life?” The Preacher records his search in the book of Ecclesiastes.

The Preacher sought happiness and meaning in life in connection with the things of this world. “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity” (Eccl. 5:10). The reason that such a lifestyle is vanity is because of death. A person dies, and his heirs spend what he had worked so hard to accumulate.

Today people work themselves to the bone so they can secure their future, and then so often they cannot enjoy their wealth or life.

The Preacher sought happiness and meaning in life in connection with the pleasures of this world. “Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any

pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun” (Eccl. 2:10-11). Because of death which made it all vanity, the mad pursuit of pleasure turned to dust in the mouth of Solomon.

Priorities

Our generation is one that could be described as hedonistic, that is, madly pursuing pleasure at all costs. This pursuit of pleasure can end only in heartbreak and emptiness.

The Preacher sought happiness and meaning in life in connection with the pursuit of the world’s wisdom. “And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind” (Eccl. 1:13-14). Man’s wisdom can provide no real answers because it has no answer for death.

You may have tried all of these things as you sought to discern the purpose and meaning of your life. You may not want to talk about or think about death because it makes every-



I
am the
RESURRECTION
and the
LIFE.

He who
believes in
me will
LIVE,
even though
he dies.

John 11:25

thing vanity or worthless. Death is the elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about.

That is why Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Jesus is the Bread of Life. His words give life. Jesus alone has the answers that satisfy our deepest needs and thoughts. Jesus’ words tell us how He came down from heaven as the Bread of Life. They reveal that anyone who eats this “bread” will live forever.

Jesus came to do the unthinkable, to give His perfect life for miserable sinners who were subject all their lives to the fear of death. He even suffered eternal death for us on the cross, as

God loaded all the sins of the world upon Him and forsook Him.

As He proclaims to Martha, Jesus has the words of life: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live” (Jn. 11:25). Jesus conquered death by His glorious resurrection victory for us. He will not leave us behind in the grave when He returns in glory.

This resurrection gift of everlasting life gives meaning to our lives. Now we can enjoy to the fullest the blessings God gives us in this world, knowing that death is not the end.

Solomon spoke of the vanity of a life without God.

Psalm 23 reminds us not only that goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives, but also that we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

St. Paul speaks of the purpose-filled life of the believer through Jesus’ physical resurrection and our own resurrection, when he says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

To whom else could we go? Only Jesus has the words of life. Jesus is the Bread of Life.

—*Pastor John Schierenbeck*



West Central Conference pastors in Cheyenne (Sept. 2005): l-r: James Sandeen, Paul Fleischer, Matt Gurath, Peter Reim, Timothy Wheaton, Nathan Pfeiffer, Michael Roehl, James Naumann, Roland Gurgel, Andrew Schaller, Mark Gurath, Vicar Ben Thurow, George Dummann, Pastor & Mrs. John Klatt

NOTE: Prof. Paul Schaller delivered this devotion at chapel for the student body of Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. It was forwarded to the *Spokesman* by another member of the faculty. Though dated New Years (January 12, 2006), the reader will find it fitting for any time of year.

The Aaronic Benediction

(A chapel devotion)

The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons, ‘This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: “The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”’ “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.” (Numbers 6:22-27)

In Jesus’ name,

When we begin a new semester, or a new year, it is very much like ending a semester or a year. We stand on the threshold of time, and behind us lies a trail of joys and sorrows. Ahead of us lies a journey of unknown joys and sorrows—and that “unknown” part may also add some fears to our anticipations. As we look back, repentance and thanksgivings fill our hearts. As we look forward, we seek our Lord’s assurance and blessing, much as a bride and groom might, or Mary and Joseph with the newborn Jesus.

We stand on the threshold of time, just as the Children of Israel did at the foot of Mount Sinai. They were facing a “new semester” of work and struggle as they prepared to journey to the promised land, a land already inhabited by Canaanites. They were numbering their armed forces, in itself an ominous suggestion of what the future held in store.

And then, as God was spelling out their duties in the days and years ahead, He came with this blessing for them:

“The LORD bless you and keep you...”—

The words are so familiar to us that we are tempted to skip over them and think about what we are going to do next hour or next week; but what an amazing blessing this is!

The word “bless” comes from an old root that means “to bend.” To bend the knee in worship is to bless the LORD. But here the LORD bends the knee to stoop down to us in whatever lowly (or exalted) position we might be! He sees the future that we cannot. Our times are in His hands and He says that He will stoop down to keep, to watch over, to see us in the coming semester, the coming year, the rest of our life.

All our needs, troubles, and desires are seen and will be seen by Him, and we will be kept, guarded, in dangers that we were not even aware of, just as He sent His Son to die in our place when we had not the sense even to request it.

“The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious...”—

If God is going to watch carefully everything that we say and do in the



Peace Be with You!

new year—as He has carefully watched over everything we did (or failed to do) in the past year—we could be in big trouble. But His blessing continues by assuring us of His loving-kindness as He watches over us. He does see all those things we have done in the past which now bring us sorrow to remember them. But He has already punished us for them when He punished Jesus our substitute on the cross. Now His face shines on us and warms us like the sun on a warm spring day. He is gracious!

“The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

God does not simply watch, but He also takes action. He took action when He made His face to shine upon us through the doing and dying of Jesus, and He takes action when He lifts up that smiling countenance, turns it toward us so that we may know the peace which delivers us from every fear, even if death lies on our path in the coming year.

You have just come from Bethlehem, where you heard again the angels’ song of “peace on earth,” and where you were reminded again that God never promised peace apart from Jesus Christ, who would save His people from their sins. Now this peace

remains your blessing for every new week and every new day that may lie ahead of you.

As you know, God did not speak these words directly to the children of Israel. He gave them to Moses, who gave them to Aaron and his sons, who then pronounced them upon the people. You see, it did not matter how many agents these words passed through. In the end God says, “So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.”

Bless—keep—shine—be gracious—lift up—give peace—

As wonderful as those words are, the most important word for our future is the name of the LORD which was put upon us in Baptism. That is when He washed away our sins and claimed us as His own children, bearing His name—the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This is the blessing He would renew to us every time these words are pronounced: “They will put my name on (them)”...

Now we can confidently turn our faces toward 2006, not because we have chosen the name “Immanuel” to put upon ourselves, but because He has put His name upon us and said, “I will not leave you, or forsake you.”

***The LORD bless you and
keep you;
The LORD make His face
shine upon you,
and be gracious unto you;
The LORD lift up His
countenance upon you,
and give you peace.
Amen.***

The Discourses of Christ

Another Helper Promised—John 14:15-24

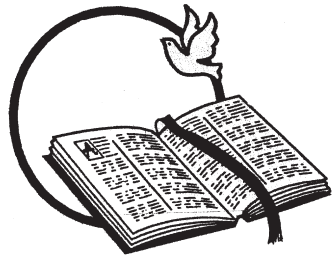
Never Left Alone

It was late evening of what we have come to know as Maundy Thursday. Everything in the lives of the disciples was about to change, and change dramatically. The hours which lay ahead for them were to be among the most distressing and confusing that they would ever face in their lives. Not the least among the distressing events was to be Jesus' arrest, His leaving the disciples with the perception of being without Him, being left alone to cope—or fail to cope—with the troubles that suddenly came upon them.

The following comforting words spoke directly to their false perception that when Jesus was needed the most, they would be left alone. He assured them, “I will not leave you orphans” (v. 18).

That is a blessed assurance for us in our lives also. When distressing and uncertain times come into our lives, we also may fall victim to the false perception that the Lord isn't there. When we need Him most, we may feel like we are left alone.

Jesus reminded the disciples of the loving relationship they had with Him. He encouraged them to continue in that love. Continuing in that love meant to continue in His instruction. He reminded them to “keep My commandments” (v. 15), and again, “He who has My



commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father” (v. 21). Jesus said yet again, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word” (v. 23).

What Jesus is emphasizing for the disciples is not their maintaining of a sinless life in perfect obedience to the law, but rather that when they abide in His Word and in the saving will and merits of Him, their Lord, they are not alone—not ever alone!

Another Helper

Jesus promised that the Spirit would be given as another Helper for the disciples and for all believers. The specific term referring to the Holy Spirit depicts Him as one who accompanies another, walking along at one's side as a Counselor, as a Helper, giving guidance and direction. This counsel of the Holy Spirit is according to the Word of the Lord, as He works through that Word to instill in us the saving wisdom

of God.

Continually abiding in the Word reminds us of the greatest love Jesus revealed for us in saving us from sin and death by His own death and resurrection.

Yes, the disciples would be distressed beyond words to see Jesus' death, but they were also to be witnesses of His resurrection. They would know that Jesus lives.

Abiding in the Word gives us the same blessed assurance of a living Savior, the same hope of future glory; for Jesus assures us, "Because I live, you will live also" (v. 19).

As wonderful as this hope of future glory is, as comforting and reassuring as it is, there is something more. The wonder of God's continuing presence comes to us through the Word. Jesus promises us, "If anyone loves Me, he

will keep My Word; ...and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (v. 23). The Lord, working through the Word, makes us His dwelling place. He abides with us through the Word.

With all of life's challenges and distresses, don't be fooled into believing that we have to face any of this alone. Not even death can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39).

As did the disciples before us, so we find ourselves facing life without Jesus' visible presence—but never without His presence, without His life, without His Spirit, without His Father. As we dwell in His Word, we have His absolute assurance that we are NEVER LEFT ALONE!

—Pastor Theodore Barthels



Concerning Trust in God Alone

People say it all the time—husband to wife, politician to constituents, salesman to buyer: "Trust me!" But words alone do not validate our trust, for we need consistent action that supports our trust.

We as believers are invited to do the same—not to trust in a person or a thing, but in God. In Proverbs 3:5 we read: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart." Can we trust Him? In Psalm 91 we find the unmistakable answer "Yes!"

In word picture after word picture the psalmist relates the Lord's ability to deliver. His protection covers us in the way that a bird's wing shelters its

young from harm. In cases of extreme distress (pestilence and destruction, v. 6) that seem to come twenty-four hours a day (the terror by night and the arrow that flies by day, v. 5), we need not fear, for we are safe in God's care as He sees to it that no enemy, be it spiritual or otherwise, will cause us harm.

<p>THE PSALMS THE CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER BOOK —Please read Psalm 91—</p>

The Lord also “gives His angels charge over [us], to keep [us] in ALL our ways” (v. 11). This is not license to abuse God’s protection as the devil tempted Jesus to do (see Matthew 4:5-7). Our God offers us His protection and He encourages us to trust in Him in any and all situations; but that does not mean we are free to take unnecessary and foolish risks, daring the Lord to deliver us.

Return to the Scriptures!

What does this mean? When we go through difficult times, the devil would have us think that God is no longer our refuge and fortress (v. 2) and is no longer trustworthy. That’s when we need to go to the Scriptures again to read the Lord’s Word regarding His care for us. And what we find there is that the Lord delivers and protects in several ways. Sometimes it is as we read here in Psalm 91. He keeps us safe from evil by keeping us safe from Satan, by turning Satan’s work to our good (Romans 8:28), and finally by delivering us from this evil world into heaven.

In Psalm 91 we have the psalm writer’s encouragement to realize what a God we have in whom we trust—a God who delights in delivering those who “set [their] love upon [Him]” (v. 14). As the good news of

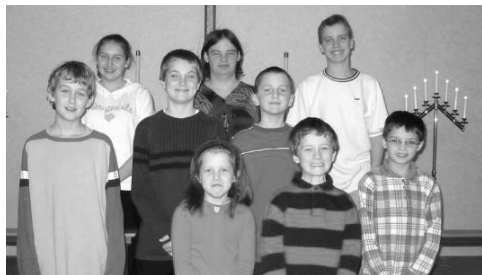
deliverance sinks in and takes root in our hearts, we can join the psalmist in affirming that the Lord is “MY refuge and MY fortress; MY God, in Him I will trust” (v. 2).

As the Lord works in our hearts through His Word, leading us to deeper trust in Him, may it be that we also learn to express our trust, so that others may come to know our trustworthy God.

For example, when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego stood before a furious King Nebuchadnezzar, the king had given them one more chance to bow down to the statue he had made. The king said, “If you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?” The three men answered, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Dan. 3:15-18).

God grant us so to believe and so to express our trust in Him and His deliverance!

—*Pastor Paul Krause*



**Sunday School children at
Grace Lutheran Church,
Sleepy Eye, Minnesota**



CROSS PURPOSES



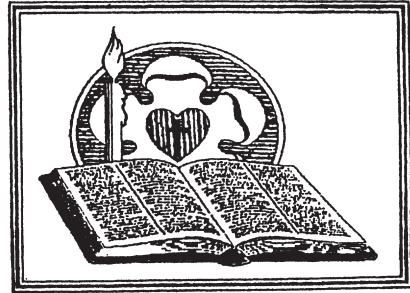
CONFESSING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Sometimes our faithfulness to the Scripture is interpreted as being too “strict” by people who do not share with us the same respect for the Word of God. It is however, not “strict” to stand in the Truth and confess it against everything that is contrary to it. It is called “being faithful.”

As we confess the truth of God’s Word, we do so with no illusions of perfection in ourselves. We are people of flesh, people who sin, people with weaknesses that are inherent in all humans. We do not claim to be better students of the Word than others. We make no claim to being better interpreters of God’s Word than others. Indeed, we do not believe that we are the interpreters of God’s Word. Scripture is its own interpreter. It is our responsibility only to study the Word with due respect for the Word as the message from God. As we study the Word, we are to do so with the attitude that God knows what He said, and we are only studying to learn what He said—and then be silent. And then we will proclaim it as He proclaims it.

As what we learn in our study under the Spirit enlightens us, we are compelled to speak the truth. And since truth and error cannot occupy the same stage, we must come down on the side of truth, confess it, and reject what is contrary to it.

Confessing the truth necessarily means pointing out the prevalent errors contrary to the Word; it means we must



alert God’s people to those whose teaching and practice promote error.

Love for God’s Word demands such honesty. Love for the sheep in our care demands it. And yes, love for our neighbor demands that we be honest in this regard.

We do not ask that those who teach or believe differently from us agree with us, unless they have compared what we teach and believe to Scripture and are convinced of this in their own hearts. In other words, we ask only that our teaching be judged on the basis of Scripture.

Representatives of the Savior!

In our witness we will remember Who it is that we represent. We are representatives of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are representatives of the Savior of our souls, Whose love for those to whom we speak is as deep as His love for us. He desires their salvation no less than ours.

Our confession and firmness in the truth serves a purpose only as it is in the cause of the gospel! Therefore in

firm confession of the truth, we will want to let our “speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:6).

Defending the faith and speaking the truth is serious business, but in so doing we will guard against heavy-handedness. Our purpose is to win the one in error; therefore we will not want to undo our witness to the truth by antagonizing the hearer through an attitude of self-righteousness or an air of superiority.

Putting it another way, we cannot control how others will hear us; we can, however, control what we say and how we say it. Speaking the truth in which we stand calls for a firm and unyielding resolve, yet if the hearer is “turned off” and rejects our testimony, let it be because of the truth which has been spoken, and not the manner in which that truth was presented.

Our Savior spoke the truth to the rich young ruler. Mark tells us, “Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him...” (Mk. 10:21). It was the young man’s loss that

he ultimately rejected the truth.

In exposing and rejecting error and in our confessing the truth we are confronted with many challenges.

One is that we study the Scriptures faithfully, so that we know the truth and can confess it. A second is that we ourselves stand in the truth and not waver from it. A third is that we be bold—the Spirit of God helping us—to speak the truth in love.

We are not up to the challenge in any way of ourselves, therefore we pray as did Luther when he ended one of his well-known pulpit prayers, “...Only do Thou not forsake me, for if I am left to myself, I will certainly bring it all to destruction.”

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the world of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

—Pastor Daniel Fleischer



The Christian Citizen —Ninth & Last in a Series—

A CITIZEN OF ANOTHER COUNTRY

The elections are now over (*this was first written following an election season—editor*). You may be disappointed or delighted by the results. As Christian citizens of our country, it is now our personal responsibility to “be subject to the governing authorities,”

whoever they may be, and to give “honor to whom honor” is due (cf. Rom. 13:1,7). Let us pray for all who are now in authority, even as God commands, so that we all might “lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

What is most important for us to realize as Christians, however, is that while our earthly citizenship is an important blessing from God, He has given us an even greater blessing through our citizenship in His heavenly kingdom. The apostle Paul writes, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Php. 3:20-21).

We are citizens of our country by divine providence, while we are citizens of heaven by divine grace! But why is it that our heavenly citizenship is a greater blessing than our earthly citizenship?

First of all, our earthly citizenship is temporal, while our heavenly citizenship is eternal. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us, “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (9:27-28).

We live on Earth but for a short time, after which we will stand before God’s throne of judgment. Citizenship in heaven, which is ours through faith in Christ Jesus, assures us of eternal salvation!

Secondly, earthly citizenship focuses on the material, while heavenly citizenship focuses on the spiritual. Jesus once said, “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Mk. 8:36) Elected officials might establish economic policies which greatly enrich our nation, but if

“...We are citizens of our country by divine providence, while we are citizens of heaven by divine grace.”

we lose our faith in Jesus and our souls along the way, ultimately what will we have gained?

Thirdly, through our earthly citizenship we serve men, while through heavenly citizenship we serve God. Both are important, but remember that the first and greatest commandment is, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Mt. 22:37).

Fourthly, earthly citizenship is based upon law, while heavenly citizenship is based upon the gospel. Laws are important. They are necessary to preserve order and to prevent men from sinning. Laws are necessary to provide direction. Law, however, is limited in its usefulness, for law cannot change men’s hearts. The apostle John states, “The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1:17).

The gospel reveals God’s grace—the truth of His love for us sinners through Christ Jesus. The gospel can and does transform hearts, leading people to faith and moving them to love without fear and without the law’s threat of punishment. The gospel alone can and does give eternal life!

Fifthly, earthly citizenship promotes civic righteousness, while heavenly citizenship provides Christ’s righteousness. Civic righteousness is crucial for the success of our society. If people do not live honest and decent lives; if they do not abide by the laws of the land; if they are unwilling ever

to sacrifice their personal interests for the public welfare, we could not continue to exist as a civil society. Yet, the individual who—guided by the law—promotes and practices civic righteousness, still cannot measure up to the demands of God’s law. God’s law demands perfection.

It is the gospel alone which provides the only righteousness that can stand before God—the righteousness of Christ. God says, “By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe” (Rom. 3:20-22).

Finally, law-abiding earthly citizenship improves life, while heavenly citizenship instills life! If all of the most qualified candidates are elected to office; if all of the best policies are fully implemented; and if the life of our entire citizenry were improved, you would still be confronted by the inevitability of death.

God provides the solution. Jesus says, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall

give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (Jn. 4:13-14). Jesus Christ, the world’s Savior, comes to us and offers us not an improved life in this world, but everlasting life in heaven.

God in His wise providence has made each of us citizens of our earthly country, while by His grace He has called us to be citizens of His heavenly kingdom. Our calling as earthly citizens can and will at times become frustrating, yet in view of His calling us into heavenly citizenship, the Christian citizen can approach matters in this life with the confidence of a biblical perspective.

The apostle Paul says, “We do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

—Pastor Paul Nolting

This concludes the series. We thank the writers for their edifying and instructive comments on the Christian’s role in society.—Editor



Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, Mankato, addresses the CLC Teachers in Conference in Okabena, Minn. (story, p. 21)

NOTING A 300 YEAR ANNIVERSARY.
"INDIA'S CORAL STRAND"
1706-2006



Third in a Series—

Roman Catholic Mission work in India

From the Editor:

Reporting Roman Catholic mission work in India can be a worrisome thing. While we may hope that souls were and are saved via the work of the Antichrist, we do not salute the Papacy and we choose not to laud Catholic dedication to the people of India.

Our interest is always the salvation of souls, which the Holy Spirit accomplishes through the means of grace—the gospel in Word and sacrament. Insofar as Catholic missionaries used the means of grace, souls were saved. Insofar as souls became victims of falsehood, they were lost or badly injured. Only in heaven will we know, finally, how God worked this out during the three hundred years of Catholic missionary activity in India.

With the rise of Islam around 632 we see the crushing of Christianity in Asia. This affected India especially in the North, but less so in the South. Being slain or subjugated/enslaved were the two nearly exclusive options that Mohammed's followers offered those outside Islam.

Our focus next is on the Church of Rome's efforts in India. While the Muslims killed or converted, the Roman Catholic Church brought the gospel to the more southern part of India, though of course it was accompanied by the baggage of Mariolatry, etc. In the United States we are familiar with the Spanish missions, especially in California. All along the El

Camino Real (the King's Highway) the missions were a day's travel apart. The American Spanish were more receptive to Catholic priests than were the Portuguese along the coast of India. The Portuguese were far more interested in financial gain to the exclusion of outreach. Thankfully though, God found ways to have His gospel go into the Portuguese commercial enclaves in India and to the natives.

Two Catholic missionaries were most prominent, and each was distinctively different in his approach to the work.

Francis Xavier (1506-1552)

Xavier has to be the greatest of the Roman Catholic missionaries, compressing so much work and such a geographical coverage into such a relatively short time. He labored for only ten years. His approach was to go to several countries, one of which was India. This pioneer of Jesuit missions in East Asia landed in 1542 in Goa, India. A voyage to India in those days could take six months. His took thirteen months due to a forced layover in Mozambique.

When he began his work, it was out

among the people. He would go about in Goa streets ringing a bell to have the people send their sons and daughters and slaves of both sexes to be taught God's love. When he taught, he would sing the lessons which he had rhymed and he would have the children sing them also. Very significantly, his work was not just among the Portuguese or Indo-Portuguese, but also among the natives. His death in China ended a rather full ten years of teaching and travel.

Wolf, a General Synod Lutheran, wrote, "St. Francis Xavier said: 'If the lands of the savages had scented woods and mines of gold, Christians would find courage to go there, nor would the perils of the world prevent them. Shall love be less hearty and less generous than avarice?'"

Of all others, we of the Lutheran Church should be the very last to show a lack of courage in carrying on the work of the world's evangelization. Of all others we—who have our ecclesiastical descent from the indomitable, much-enduring, and storm-braving hero of the Reformation days—should

not be found wanting in bone or sinew, in moral grit and iron in blood.

Robert de Nobili (1577-1656)

De Nobili came to India and stayed, going to Ceylon only near the end of his life. He arrived in Madura in 1606. Note that he served a long time. His approach was to be one with the people as much as possible. He lived in a little mud-walled house with a chapel built nearby. Here he became a guru (teacher), with a strict ascetic regime (eating one meal a day).

He taught that man did not have to leave his caste to be a Christian—viewing caste as a social distinction that could be continued. There were those who did not agree with him and caused him trouble. He practiced what we would call cultural accommodation. Anything clearly contrary to God's Word would have to be given up. Not all agreed with him, and those caused him problems.

Today in India there is the question about the 'bindi' (the red dot on the woman's forehead). Some Christians

continued p. 23



Some CLC teachers enjoyed an old-fashioned hayride on the streets of Okabena

Annual CLC Teachers' Conference



The Teacher-Group spread itself out behind St. John's Lutheran Church

The Teachers Conference this year was hosted by St. John's Lutheran Church, Okabena, Minnesota, on October 18-21, 2005.

This conference started off with a young man laying hold of the Scriptures and inspiring, encouraging, and motivating us to SERVE in the name of Jesus. Teacher Neil Bernthal, the conference Chaplain, set the tone for our three days: the harvest is white—who will go and work? But what we all appreciated was his interactive style of presentation. We all had to think, speak, and share our faith and knowledge with one another.

How does a teacher balance family and teaching? This topic was examined by Teacher David Bernthal. He reminded us that balance in life comes from the balance we have with the Lord.

Guest speaker Isaac Wales gave each person some advice on "Building a Nest Egg." It's never too late to start saving. Do it now! On the same theme Teacher Michael Wheaton gave a plug

for Sparrows of the Father's LLC Investment Club (This is a small group of CLC teachers and laymen who are doing their own research and investing).

Wednesday evening host Pastor James Albrecht conducted a communion service for the congregation and visitors. We sang to the Lord of harvest in thanksgiving for our material and spiritual blessings. After the worship service, many talented organists gave a recital on the newly refurbished organ of St. John's Lutheran Church.

Brain research has been a buzz word for quite a few years now. Teacher Jay Sydow gave new ideas to think over, admonishing us to filter all brain development literature with the Bible.

The Hurried Child by David Elkind, reviewed by Teacher Kirsten Gullerud, gave information on the adverse effects of not letting children be children.

Our computer guru, Prof. Ross Roehl, demonstrated how a grading program would work for most schools. He used First Class Software as an



**Left:
Kirsten Gullerud
addresses the
teachers;
Below (l-r):
Jay Sydow,
Isaac Wales,
David Bernthal**



example. A few interested people had the opportunity to try out the program on St. John's school computers.

After a lively picnic in the park on Thursday evening, many brave souls went raccoon hunting—while gentler souls did some scrap-booking. The temperature was a bit cool, but the moon was out to make all things magical. All three parties treed raccoons!

On the last day we had two guest speakers, Pastor Wayne Eichstadt and his wife, Tina, from Mankato. Pastor Eichstadt gave ideas on how to encourage students to do their own Bible Study. We all need to develop a love of the Word. This love and personal study stands as a beacon to our young people. The Word is sweet to the soul

(Prov. 16:24).

The topic of Speech Pathology had Mrs. Tina Eichstadt speaking at high speed. Our conference ran out of the time, but all of us wanted to hear as much as we could. Tina handed out forms for quick analysis on when children make certain sounds. All in all, the energetic Eichstadts put us in a go-getter mood as we headed to our home congregations.

I can't forget to mention the wonderful service of the men and women of St. John's congregation. They fed and housed us, and sang and worshipped with us, and for that we are truly thankful.

—Mrs. Barbara Gurgel

—The Bread of Life—
Daily Bible readings for home devotions
May, 2006

<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Thought gleaned from the text</u>	<u>Hymn</u>
1	Acts 5:33-42	If it is of God, you cannot overthrow it	428
2	Acts 6:1-7	Misled clergy can be rescued too	390
3	6:8-15	A bogus trial on trumped-up triple charges	406
4	7:1-60	Stephen's rebuttal, supported by the Scripture	259
5	8:1-8	Scattering seed is a God-supported method	411
6	8:9-25	God does not sell His Spirit-gifts at retail 403	
7	8:26-40	Hallelujah to Jesus; He IS the Son of God!	346
8	9:1-19	Three days and three nights on tenterhooks!	279
9	9:20-31	And then he could really preach Jesus!	489
10	10:1-16	After three tries, Peter caught on to the message	370
11	10:17-48	Wondering=> reaching out=> conversion	202
12	11:19-30	Jews came first but do not come last	491
13	12:1-19	Does God attend to our prayers? You know it!	457
14	12:25-13:12	Not a Mediterranean cruise, but better	447
15	13:13-41	Bible history tells <u>His story!</u>	40
16	13:42-52	Jews first, and Gentiles a strong second	245
17	14:1-28	God goes after Jews and gentiles alike	269
18	15:1-35	God doesn't need our help to save us	247
19	16:1-15	Step-by-step, and soul-by-soul	495
20	16:16-34	Bad spirits vs. the Holy Spirit	246
21	17:1-15	The world needs to be turned upside-down	231
22	17:16-34	Satan does not easily release his grip	241
23	18:1-17	Is eighteen months enough time?	118
24	19:21-41	gods made with hands are bogus deities	39
25	Ascension 20:17-38	Take heed to yourselves, Christians!	442
26	21:37-22:21	God chooses a reject for His service	383
27	22:22-23:10	Drama in the courtroom	604
28	23:11-35	Roman military protocol was OK	119
29	24:1-27	Without offense toward God and men	123
30	25:1-27	Paul's appeal to the Supreme Court was OK'd	18
31	26:1-23	To turn them from the power of Satan to God	236

Continued from p. 20.

say that when a woman becomes a Christian, she should not display the bindi. Others say that it is a cultural thing and that a converted woman could still wear it. There is something to this in not purposely alienating the rest of the family who are not Christian. One does want them to hear the Word from the convert. Things neither commanded nor forbidden by God should not get in the way. The 'bindi' may seem like a tiny point. Yet it is

part of a larger issue in connection with outreach.

We thank God that the gospel did go forth to India through these missionaries, even though they cluttered it up with Rome's false teaching.

—*Missionary David Koenig*



Announcements

Change Of Address

Pastor David Koenig
D-7 Alsa Deer Park
108 Velachery Road
Chennai
India 600032

Home Phone: 011-91 (India code) 4422300139

Cell Phone: 011-91 9840551873

Immanuel Lutheran College Eau Claire, Wisconsin TOUR CHOIR 2006

(Printed here belatedly as information)

March 12, Millston, Wis. 10:30 a.m.
March 17, Batavia, Ill. 7:00 p.m.
March 18, Coloma, Mich. 1:00 p.m.
March 19, W. Columbia, S.Car. 7:00 p.m.
March 20, Winter Haven, Flo. 7:00 p.m.
March 22, Live Oak, Flo. 7:00 p.m.
March 23, Lawrenceville, Ga. 7:00 p.m.
March 24, Manchester, Mo. 7:00 p.m.
March 25, Hales Corners, Wis. 7:00 p.m.
March 26, Fond du Lac, Wis. 10:00 a.m.
March 26, Markesan, Wis. 3:00 p.m.
April 2, Eau Claire, Wis. 7:00 p.m.

From the Board of Regents for Immanuel Lutheran College

Professor John Pfeiffer was the only name placed in nomination for the office of ILC president for a two-year term beginning June 1, 2006. The Call Committee for CLC Institutions will meet on Tuesday, April 25, 2006. Comments may be sent to the secretary:

Pastor Ted Barthels
2200 16th St. SW • Austin, MN 55912
6slehtrab@charter.net

Send Change of Address to :
Lutheran Spokesman
2750 North Oxford Street
Roseville, MN 55113

CLC Convention 2006

Event: The 27th Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession

Place: Immanuel Lutheran College, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701

Dates: June 19-23 (First Session: June 19—1:00 p.m.)

Theme: *The Fields are White for Harvest! (John 4:35-38)*

Essays:

God Establishes the Fields—Pastor Nathanael Mayhew

God Provides the Workers—Professor Joseph Lau

God Effects the Harvest—Pastor John Hein

Convention Chaplain: Pastor Frank Gantt

Convention Communion Service:

Liturgist—Pastor Luke Bernthal

Speaker—Pastor Michael Roehl



COVER: Matt Schaser