

December 2015 VOL 58 NO. 6

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

"...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken." (John 10:35)

Surely
I AM
coming
quickly.

AMEN.

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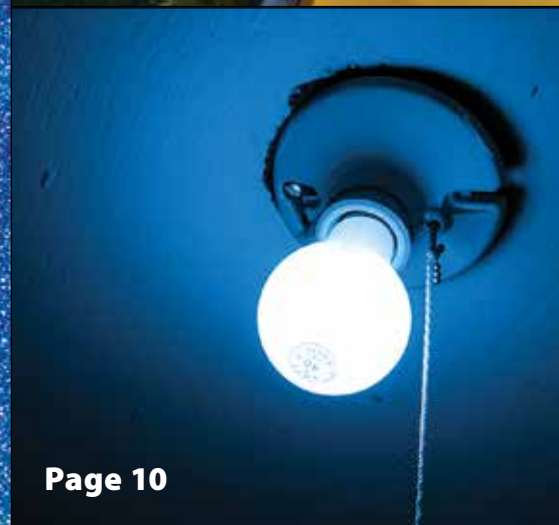
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Waiting for More than Christmas

The outcome is always the same. Christ and His Church always come out victorious and all His enemies will be judged.

“Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).

John was in exile, banished to the island of Patmos where he was isolated from the people he loved and prevented from preaching the Word of God to them. Many of those whom he calls “my little children” were suffering terrible persecution. Some were fed to wild animals or slaughtered by gladiators, others were burned as human torches or crucified. Still others lost homes and businesses and wandered as fugitives, despised by all.

In such terrible times, one longs for and prays for deliverance. As the Children of Israel prayed for God’s deliverance from their cruel slavery in Egypt, so also John pleads with Christ, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

Our lives are much easier. We don’t suffer physical persecution as early Christians did. What a blessing to be able to worship God freely and confess His name without the fear of being cast to the lions! However, like Lot (2 Peter 2:7-8), our souls are being tormented by all the evil in the world, and by the sins in our own lives.

Christ revealed to the exiled apostle what we can expect in this world. Satan will be attacking God’s Church in every way possible. He will use world governments, worldly philosophies, a myriad of false prophets; all to undermine the truth of God’s Word and destroy faith in Christ. He has raised up the great Antichrist—the Roman Catholic papacy—to usurp the power and rule of Christ in the hearts of many.

However, the outcome is always the same. Christ and His Church always come out victorious and all His enemies will be judged and condemned to the lake of fire. Revelation culminates in the great glory that all believers will have in the new heavens and the new earth where Christ will wipe away every tear and give the fullness of

joy in the presence of our glorious and gracious God. The whole book of Revelation really presents the truth that Jesus told His disciples before He was crucified, “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

In the last chapter of Revelation, Jesus promises three times, “Behold, I am coming quickly.” John can hardly wait. He cries out, “Amen!” YES! It shall be so! Then adds, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” He and his people longed for Jesus’ coming, His Advent.

This is what the Advent Season is all about. It is more than just eagerly waiting and preparing for Christmas. It is waiting and longing for Christ to come again and finally deliver us from all evil and bring us into our eternal home of glory.

Repentance is a vital part of our Advent waiting. For we receive Christ and all the blessings He gives (forgiveness, life and salvation) by faith—faith which confesses our sins and trusts Jesus for complete forgiveness and salvation. Repentance itself is a longing to be cleansed and a hungering for the righteousness of Christ. We have His righteousness already now by faith, but oh, for the day when we will actually BE holy, free from all sin! We live in repentance now, longing for the day when Jesus will deliver us from all sin and receive us into His glory forever.

We may enjoy our lives in this world and give thanks and praise for God’s blessings, but let us never forget that the best is yet to come. Jesus promises to come quickly. May

our Advent prayer ever remain, “Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!”



David Reim is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Vernon, British Columbia.

Prepared by John the Baptist

We are in a season that involves a great deal of preparation. We prepare our homes and our church buildings with decorations for Christmas. In northern climates, the local hardware stores offer “winter survival [or preparedness] kits.” Such kits are suggested for a driver who might become stranded in his car during a blizzard.

Such preparations are external. The “winter survival kit” includes blankets to protect our bodies from the bone-chilling cold. Our Christmas decorations are hung to make our homes and church buildings appear more beautiful.

So what are we doing to prepare for the greatest (and last) event to affect this world, namely the promised return of Jesus Christ to judge the living and the dead? What are we going to use to “cover ourselves” from Him who knows our thoughts? What are we going to use to decorate our lives to make them look more appealing to Him who says, “*You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am Holy*” (Leviticus 19:2)?

Two thousand years ago, God’s people were preparing for Jesus’ first arrival. At that time, many people thought that external preparations were enough. Some clung to their ancestry, saying that since they were physical descendants of Abraham, they looked good enough to God. Others thought that by an outward keeping of God’s Commandments (not working on the Sabbath, not killing anyone, not stealing, and so on) they were prepared to go to heaven.

Therefore, God sent John the Baptist ahead of Jesus to prepare the people to meet Him. John’s work might best be summarized with the word *prepare*. The angel Gabriel told a doubting Zacharias that his son’s work was to “*make ready a people prepared for the Lord*” (Luke 1:17). Hundreds of years before his birth, both Isaiah (40:3) and Malachi (3:1) prophesied of how John would “prepare” the people for the arrival of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. After his birth, Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to his newborn son, “*You will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways*” (Luke 1:76).

John the Baptist was born to prepare people to meet the most holy God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. What a daunting calling! Where would John even begin? Where would you begin?

Repentance is a 180-degree turn.
It is a turning around as you realize
you were headed in exactly the
wrong direction.

Preparing to meet the Lord begins with the heart. John came preaching, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*” (Matthew 3:2) Repentance is a 180-degree turn. It is a turning around as you realize you were headed in exactly the wrong direction. John used the Law of God like a mirror to show the people the reality of their sins and to call them to a repentance of heart which was to be reflected in actions. “*Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance*” (Luke 3:8). Through the Law, John showed the people their desperate condition and their need to be rescued from sins of the heart and sins of the mind. They were then prepared to hear of “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:19).

As we prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus, we need to hear John’s call to repentance. The mirror of God’s Law needs to show us when we are headed in the wrong direction and have made sinful choices. Through such preaching, hearts are being prepared to meet the Lord who comes in the Gospel with His saving love announcing, “*Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool*” (Isaiah 1:18).



May the message of John the Baptist continue to prepare us to meet the Lord.

Nathan Pfeiffer is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Spokane, Washington.

When God Gave His Oath

“For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 6:13-20).

Jewish Christians would understand the certainty of God’s promise by looking to Abraham as an example. But what a miraculous message of God’s grace in Jesus He gives us, assuring us of His love and mercy in this Scripture! “*Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us!*” That “hope” is the certainty of unconditional forgiveness and life eternal, freely given to us through the work of Jesus and God’s promise in the Gospel.

God makes His Gift, if possible, even more than certain by placing His own perfect and unchangeable seal on it. He gives us strength and comfort to hold patiently to that promise, and not to become discouraged no matter what the world throws at us. After all, “*Neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 8:38-39). God, Who cannot lie, has given us His own personal oath. Nothing can change that! God removes all doubt from our hearts even as He did from Abraham’s. “*For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.*” He accomplished this in the context of a human custom. Wanting to demonstrate beyond any possible uncertainty, He gave an oath! The Lord, knowing our

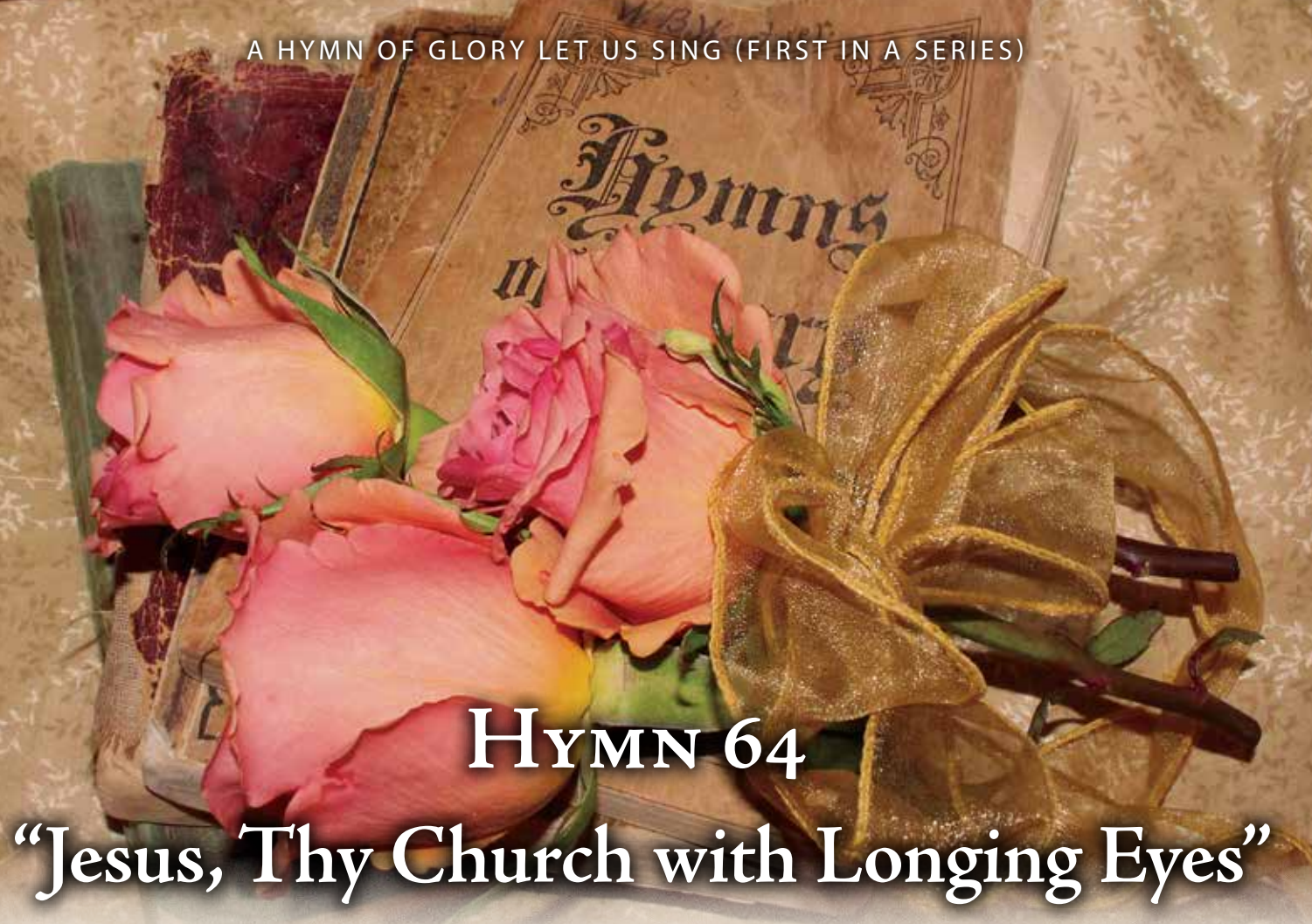
weakness, gave more than a promise—He demonstrated His unchangeableness, the absolute inevitability of His promise, in Jesus, Who “*is the same yesterday, today, and forever*” (Hebrews 13:8). He didn’t want anyone to be tortured by doubt.

Since it is impossible for God to break His Word, we have a solid and unfailing promise, that no one and nothing in all creation can change. As a result, we can be patient in faith, knowing that this life will not be easy, but nonetheless guaranteed of its outcome in Jesus! Abraham—the father of faith—was patient, knowing the certainty of the promise. He was rewarded in time by a son. But far more important than Isaac’s birth was God’s guarantee to Abraham that, through his descendants, a Savior would be given. “*For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’*” Abraham, having witnessed a fulfillment of God’s promise in Isaac, was also assured that the promise of a Savior would come true. God would redeem and bless all nations through one of Abraham’s descendants. We have the same assurance!

“*This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.*” Jesus is our anchor! Just as the anchor of a ship holds it safe and secure against a deadly storm, so also our faith is anchored securely in the promises of the Lord. Jesus is also in the very presence of Almighty God, “*where, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek,*” He continually intercedes for us. As our High Priest, Jesus is even more peerless than was the enigmatic Melchizedek, mentioned in Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalm 110:4. Alone among High Priests, Jesus offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. Since our great High Priest intercedes for us, salvation is certain. Relax, take a deep breath, and rejoice! Beyond any doubt our Lord will see us safely through this life to our eternal home. “*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*” (1 John 3:1).



Jay Hartmann is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Coloma, Michigan.



HYMN 64

“Jesus, Thy Church with Longing Eyes”

ADVENT



Hymn 64 is an Advent hymn. Advent is a “three tense” season: the past and the future unite in our present worship.

In the *American Heritage Dictionary*, the first part of the definition for the word *advent* is “The coming or arrival of something or someone that is important or worthy of note.” In the Advent part of the church calendar, we look back to the first Advent (coming) of Christ, His birth in Bethlehem, when God came to mankind as a man in order to redeem the

world to Himself. But even more than this sacred past, Advent is a time when we look forward to a sacred future, when this same Redeemer of mankind will return—not this time as a lowly manger-born infant—but rather as the One to Whom every knee shall bow and about Whom every tongue shall “confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Philippians 2:11).

Distinctively Scriptural hymns are an important part of our Lutheran heritage. Hymn 64, for example, is based on Revelation 1:7, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so,

A HYMN OF GLORY LET US SING

This is the first article in a series to be based on selected hymns from *The Lutheran Hymnal*, with each hymn chosen for its connection to the theme of the issue. Martin Luther once famously remarked, “Music is an outstanding gift of God and next to theology.” We hope in this series to give our readers a deeper insight into, and appreciation of, the hymns used in our worship services to edify the spirits and gladden the hearts of believers.

We have two suggestions: First, have a copy of *The Lutheran Hymnal* to which you can refer, because the length limitations of the articles will mean that not every part of a hymn can be treated on this page. Second, listen to the music for the hymn. The musical settings of the hymns are designed to complement the thoughts expressed in the verses. An excellent way to hear the music is to use the website Pastor Paul Naumann has prepared, on which you will find MP3 files of all the hymns in *TLH* except for 86 and 180 (which are still under copyright). That website is <http://lutherantacoma.com/hymns/>

We pray that the God Who created music will bless you as you study these wonderful gifts to His Church.



¹ Born August 28, 1796, died November 25, 1877. Bathurst was an Anglican (Church of England) clergyman whose best-known published work was *Psalms and Hymns for Public and Private Use*. This book contained 205 hymns and 150 Psalm versifications. Bathurst wrote all the hymns, and 132 of the metrical versifications of the Psalms. In *The Lutheran Hymnal*, he is the author of Hymns 64 and 396.

Amen.” From that text, William Hiley Bathurst¹ distills the ardent yearning of the Christian for that second Advent. He writes (v.1),

“Thy Church with longing eyes
For Thine expected coming waits.”

We need this reminder, don’t we? We need it especially in times such as ours, when much of our society is becoming

not merely indifferent, but actively hostile, to Christians and Christianity. In times such as ours, we are comforted that

“E’en now, when tempests round us fall
And wintry clouds o’er cast the sky,
Thy words with pleasure we recall
And deem that our redemption’s nigh.”

(v.2)

Do you remember what it felt like to be a young child as Christmas day approached? Do you remember your eager impatience for what you wanted **right now**, and how hard it was to wait? And do you also recall the feelings you had a few days after Christmas? For many, the joys of Christmas are followed by a “let down” because that happy time has passed, and will not come again for another entire year.

Advent is like the first part of that sequence, but without any of the last part. We may be somewhat impatient for the second Advent of Christ—and the greater our sorrows and troubles in this world, the greater will be our impatience for His return. We may be impatient, but still we know that the coming of Christ in glory at the proper time cannot fail, because it has been promised by Him Who cannot lie. Moreover, there will be no later “let down” after His return. Rather, we shall experience joy and love far beyond what we can presently even imagine, and we shall do so eternally, solely by God’s grace to us in Christ Jesus. So we pray along with Bathurst,

“Teach us in watchfulness and prayer
To wait for the appointed hour
And fit us by Thy grace to share
The triumphs of Thy conquering power.”



Craig Owings is a retired teacher and serves as assistant editor of the *Lutheran Spokesman*. He lives in Cape Coral, Florida.

Our Great Commander

And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?" So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy." And Joshua did so. Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. And the Lord said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor" (Joshua 5:13–6:2).



We fight many battles in life—financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual. How can we be victorious in these struggles, especially when the odds against us seem overpowering?

Conquering the Promised Land was an enormous mission. Forty years earlier, the Israelites lamented, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. . . . We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them" (Numbers 13:32-33 NIV). The doubters accurately observed that the Canaanites were bigger and stronger. Yet, in spite of these obstacles, Joshua and Caleb were ready to enter into Canaan, trusting the Lord to give them the land as He promised. Disbelief and rebellion on the part of the majority resulted in a detour that lasted four decades.

With seemingly insurmountable obstacles ahead, Joshua and the people of Israel set out to face the first Canaanite stronghold: Jericho. As Joshua ponders the daunting fortifications, a Man suddenly appears with His sword drawn. Joshua responds with a challenge, "Are

You for us or for our adversaries?" The Man answers, "No." As He speaks, Joshua falls on his face to worship Him. Why? Because the Commander of the army of the Lord is the Lord Himself!

Coming face-to-face with the Lord, especially with His sword drawn, is a harrowing experience for Joshua. The Lord's holiness reminds us that we are flawed and sinful, and His sword bespeaks the judgment we deserve. Yet, the Lord beckons Joshua to stand up with confidence, as He has marvelous plans for the battle ahead.

Joshua's army lacked the power and the means to take the city, but the Lord promised to give Jericho, its king, and its mighty men of valor into his hand.

The Lord drew His sword not to terrify Joshua but to assure him of the victory that awaits him—true for all who trust in the Lord. What joy and peace He gives when He stands before us, ready to save us from seemingly insurmountable obstacles!

The same Lord who often took the form of man in the Old Testament ultimately became fully incarnate to win for us the greatest victory of all. As Commander of the Lord's army, He could have called on more than twelve legions of angels to assist Him, but He went forth alone. Shortly before He was betrayed, He said, ". . . for their [His disciples'] sakes I sanctify Myself" (John 17:19). He set Himself apart. The great Commander, the One who commanded men like Moses and Joshua to take off their sandals before Him, humbly placed Himself into the hands of His own enemies to take on sin, death, and the devil—ultimately defeating all three and winning everlasting victory!



He came to do what you and I can never do for ourselves—win the victory of our salvation!

Delwyn Maas is pastor of Gift of God Lutheran Church in Mapleton, North Dakota.

"Why is Our Church So Strict about Divorce?"

Strictly speaking, the appropriate word for the issue of divorce is *serious*. We are serious about divorce because we strictly adhere to the Word of God. The seriousness of divorce is not determined by "our church," but rather by what God has said in His Word. God is serious about His institution of marriage, and therefore He is also serious about that which tears apart what He has joined together. Just as one cannot murder without setting himself above God, neither can one tear apart a marriage without setting himself above God.

In Genesis 2:28, God said of Adam, "It is not good that man should be alone." Marriage was instituted by God for the benefit and blessing of man. Divorce is the result of man spurning that benefit and blessing for his own sinful appetite. For the Christian, marriage takes on an even higher status as it becomes an opportunity for the Christian husband to reflect the love of Christ toward his wife, and for the wife to reflect toward her husband the submission of the Church to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-33). Divorce mars that beautiful picture of marriage that compares it to the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Still, we haven't gotten to the heart of the issue which, of course, is the heart. Divorce, as well as the sins that lead to it, is the product of a heart that has been corrupted by sin. Jesus tells us, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person" (Mark 7:20-23 ESV). What this means is that no divorce has ever occurred except as the result of some sin that has been committed by one or the other spouse, or even by both. Divorce is serious business because sin is serious business. The Church is serious about sin because



The Church is not in the business of getting rid of sinners, but rather of calling sinners to repentance.

the Lord is serious about sin.

Please don't misunderstand. The Church is not in the business of getting rid of sinners, but rather of calling sinners to repentance. The Church doesn't make herself holy and without spot or blemish by getting rid of sinners. Christ makes the Church holy by forgiving sinners. The Church, in respect for her Head, calls her children to repentance in accord with her Lord's Word. Just as the Lord does not desire the death of the wicked, neither does the Church. It is sin that brings death, and the only remedy for sin is the forgiveness that comes through the cleansing blood of Christ.

Sadly, there are two views of divorce in the world today that are contrary to the Gospel. One is that divorce is a "mortal sin," leaving one without the grace of God. The other is that divorce involves no sin at all so that the grace of God is unnecessary. In either case, the one who commits the sin that leads to divorce finds himself in the same boat—without grace. The truth, though, is that while divorce is serious business to God, inasmuch as it occurs only because of sin, with God there is forgiveness in Christ Jesus. For the one who turns from his sin and trusts in Christ as his Savior, God promises to remember the sin no more (Jeremiah 31:34). So we, too, are serious about divorce because we are serious about preaching the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ.

There can be many side issues that come up on the topic of divorce, so you may have some other questions not answered in this brief response. If so, be sure to contact your pastor and he will help you, through a study of God's Word, to find answers to your questions.



Frank Gantt is pastor of St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lemmon, South Dakota.

IN THIS SERIES, THOSE INVOLVED WITH CLC FOREIGN MISSIONS PROFILE ONE ASPECT OF OUR OVERSEAS ENDEAVORS.

Iglesia Luterana Confesional—Mexico

Following the Light

The things we take for granted—like light. During our last mission visitation to Torreón, Mexico, CLC Board of Missions Chairman Todd Ohlmann and I were privileged to join some of the members of the Iglesia Luterana Confesional (ILC-Mexico) in an evening worship service. The service was conducted by Pastor Juan José Olvera, but there was a problem—the one light bulb owned by the congregation was not located in the room they used as a sanctuary. Their solution was to follow the light by moving the service to the adjoining room—the one with the light bulb.

This simple action was actually very symbolic of the journey of this small, confessional group in Mexico. When Pastor Olvera recognized that the darkness of false teaching and practice had crept into his former church body, he followed the light of God's Word and sought out fellowship with the CLC. The struggles and challenges were significant—both for Pastor Olvera and his family, and for the faithful members who made the journey with him. In an effort to lighten their burden, the CLC through our Board of Missions has been supporting these fellow Christians with a small monthly subsidy since 2014.

Seeking to follow the lighted path of the Holy Spirit's leading, Pastor Olvera recently made the difficult decision to relocate from Torreón in central Mexico to Juárez (located some 530 miles to the north—directly across the border from El Paso, TX.) Pastor Olvera had previously served a promising group in this area but was forced to relocate due to the dramatic increase in drug-related and gang-related violence. That violence has, by God's grace, diminished somewhat of late, thus allowing Pastor Olvera to return.

Since resuming his ministry in Juárez, the Lord in His wisdom has allowed Pastor Olvera's family to be presented with a new challenge: his wife Claudia has been diagnosed with cancer. This is yet another reason for us to remember



Simple altar in Torreón where the Iglesia Luterana Confesional worships.



Sanctuary in Juárez. How does it compare with yours? What's important is the Word!



Pastor Juan Jose Olvera, his wife Claudia, daughters Johana and Maria, and son Daniel.

When Pastor Olvera recognized that the darkness of false teaching and practice had crept into his former church body, he followed the light of God's Word and sought out fellowship with the CLC.



Member Pablo Garcia (left) with his mother Magdalena, Pastor Olvera, and visiting CLC representatives Pastor Michael Roehl and Pastor Todd Ohlmann

He has also undertaken to train two men in Juárez who are studying for the pastoral ministry

Yet still God's light shines. Though we can only imagine that the temptation to seek out other area churches must have been great, the congregation in Torreón has remained faithful. They continue to be served at a distance by Pastor Olvera, while Pastor-in-training Braulio continues to conduct services and to share the light of God's Word as he is able. While regular visits to Torreón would be extremely beneficial, and while Pastor Olvera would very much like to make the twenty-two-hour round trip more frequently, they lack the financial wherewithal to do so. By phone, internet, and mail, the various members of the ILC-Mexico continue to share with each other the light of the Gospel of the Savior they treasure.

It would be both understandable and not unreasonable for this tiny conservative group of fellow Christians to regularly petition the CLC for additional financial support—those who have been given so much thereby sharing with those that have so little. Yet what they regularly solicit is the precious contact of fellowship, together with the ongoing prayers of their new brothers and sisters in the Lord. Their simple request is that we continue to ask the Lord to protect and preserve their humble effort, to the end that

they may continue to be bearers of the one light that alone can lead others to their Savior.



Michael Roehl is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bismarck, North Dakota.

the Olvera family in our prayers. Her prognosis remains uncertain; what is not uncertain is the continued grace and care of our loving Good Shepherd.

Despite the many demands on his time, Pastor Olvera, while conducting regular services in Juárez, continues to make return visits to Torreón as time and finances allow.

The Invisible Hand

In the study of economics, I think it was Adam Smith who first coined the term “the invisible hand” to refer to the operation of economic markets in which thousands and thousands of decisions are made daily, buying and selling, supply and demand. The point is that no government or group of people could possibly make these decisions as well as the multitude of individuals can, given their own individual situations. It is as if an invisible hand were at work to advance the business of people.

Of course we know that in the spiritual realm there is THE Invisible, and His hand involves Him in all affairs on this earth and into the next life for us. We celebrate the way His invisible hand works to further the outreach efforts of the CLC. work.



1

Uganda—Pastor Jeremiah has been working with contacts in Uganda for some years now, and part-time Missionary Michael Gurath continues to visit there periodically.

2

Zimbabwe—Correspondence with the Board of Missions by an individual in Zimbabwe opened a door for Pastors Ohlmann and Ude to visit that country recently.

3

Zambia—In the Lusaka area Pastor Ibrahim (see article in the March issue) has been working, coming from Tanzania. In the Kitwe area Pastor Yumba from the Congo CLC has been working.

4

Kenya—Pastor Gurath worked at Moi’s Bridge to establish a true Lutheran congregation there, supported by the CLC congregation in Phoenix, Arizona.

5

Peru—The CLC congregation at Mankato, Minnesota, has been working in Lima through its member, Daniel Pfeiffer. Even though that work is currently in hiatus, we pray for further progress.

6

Sudan—Not long ago work started—also through the Mankato congregation—among the people in this newly-independent country. At the same time Pastor Panpani from Kenya has been traveling up to Juba to work there.



Samson Otieno Preaching at Moi’s Bridge



Pastor Ibrahim

7

Thailand—We continue to pray that we will be able to resume work here.

8

Liberia—There has been much news about Ebola in this part of Africa. Grace Lutheran Church in Fridley, Minnesota, has been working with a Liberian, Alvin, to help set up a Christian school there. This is good news. Pastor John Hein of Fridley also conducts classes with Liberians over the internet, and he and I are planning a visit there in the near future.

9

Sweden—Pastor David Reim currently conducts internet classes with several people in Sweden, and he and I are planning a visit there in the near future.

We could not possibly as a group plan and carry out what God’s invisible hand does.

What a joy to be co-workers with Him! We are but the earthen vessels that carry the treasure to others. The treasure is His to share. He sends us to the recipients. He blesses the reception.



David Koenig has served as a foreign missionary in Africa, India, and elsewhere. Though officially retired, he continues to be active in the synod’s mission endeavors.

SNAPSHOTS OF CONGREGATIONS FROM AROUND THE CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

Peace With God Evangelical Lutheran Church Onalaska, Wisconsin



Onalaska is a city in La Crosse County, Wisconsin. The population was 17,736 at the 2010 census. Onalaska is built on a slightly elevated ridge above the Black River. Natural areas include both river bottom land and high, heavily wooded, scenic bluffs. A man-made reservoir at the city's western edge is known as Lake Onalaska. Onalaska is known as "The Sunfish Capital of the World." *Wikipedia*



The coulee area was rich in forests. Logging and sawmill operations were the early industries. Fertile farmland became available as the coulees and plateaus atop the ridges were cleared by loggers. Wheat farms sprang up and were followed by dairy farms. The Norwegian and German immigrants who came to the area formed the beginnings of Lutheran churches. First Lutheran in La Crosse (WELS) was founded in 1856. St. Paul Lutheran in Onalaska (also WELS) was founded in 1888. (Much of the background information above is from *Sawmills to Sunfish: A History of Onalaska, Wisconsin*, by John and Joan Dolbier, 1985.) To this day there is a strong

The "Coulee Region" of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa extends approximately fifty miles on either side of the Mississippi River for a distance of about two hundred miles. In the heart of this Coulee Region lie Onalaska, Wisconsin, and its larger, more famous twin sister, La Crosse, Wisconsin. Onalaska is on the Black River. La Crosse is on the Mississippi River. This Coulee Region is filled with deep valleys or "coulees"—both narrow and wide—separated by steep ridges. The coulees appear to have been formed by water erosion. The ridges and peaks along the river are known as the Mississippi bluffs.

Both La Crosse and Onalaska, approximately five miles apart, were settled in the 1850's. La Crosse (population 52,000) received its name from the game the Native American boys played with curved sticks—the French word for curved stick is *la crosse*. The city did not get its name from being a location where the pioneers could cross the river! Onalaska (population 17,000) received its name from the poem "The Pleasures of Hope," written by Scottish poet Thomas Campbell in 1799, in which the small Alaskan island of Oonalaska (Unalaska) is mentioned. The city's founder considered this enchanting name appropriate for this beautiful location in the wooded hills on the ridge above the river. He removed an "o," and the name became "Onalaska."



Left: Sunday afternoon worship service. Right: Some younger members of Peace With God Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Lutheran, and particularly a strong WELS, presence in the Onalaska and La Crosse area.

Our CLC's presence began in 1959 when Pastor John Lau and a group of members left St. Paul's and the Wisconsin Synod, to form St. Mark's. Unfortunately, St. Mark's was also divided. In 1997 the congregation voted to leave the CLC; however, a small remnant remained. The remnant began worshipping at the home of Elsie Pabst in nearby Brice Prairie. The group became part of Messiah congregation in Eau Claire and was served by CLC pastors from various locations. The group organized in 2000 with a membership of twenty-five, taking the name Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran Church. Pastors Robert Mackensen, John Hein, Mark Gurath, Michael Sydow, Paul Gurgel, and Arthur Schulz, plus others, all served from a distance in these early years. From 2005-2011 retired pastor/professor David Lau, living in Eau Claire, served Peace with God. The congregation is now served by Pastor Richard Kanzenbach as part of a tri-parish arrangement with Morning Star of Fairchild, Wisconsin, and Trinity of Millston, Wisconsin. Membership stands at eighteen.

It would seem that the members of Peace with God have not had much "peace." The congregation is but a remnant of a remnant. Growth in numbers has been a struggle in spite of outreach efforts. CLC members have moved away; few CLC members move in. None of the members live in Onalaska. The closest are from Brice Prairie, south La

Crosse, and Holmen, WI. Others are thirty miles away living in Genoa, WI; Melvina, WI; and Caledonia, MN. The pastor is not local either. The congregation does not have a church building, but rents an office space. Services are not held Sunday mornings, but Sunday afternoons at 1:30. These conditions, by earthly standards, are less than ideal.

Yet the congregation and its members have PEACE. They rejoice to gather together in Jesus' saving name. They gather faithfully! The message of Word and Sacrament, "JESUS, THE CRUCIFIED AND RISEN REDEEMER, HAS RESCUED YOU FROM SIN, DEATH, AND HELL" gives them faith, confidence, and joy for each week. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). "The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). They do have peace—peace which "passes all understanding."



Richard Kanzenbach is pastor of Morning Star Lutheran Church in Fairchild, Wisconsin, Trinity Lutheran Church in Millston, Wisconsin, and Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran Church in Onalaska, Wisconsin.

Joe Naumann

Age: 25

Program: Seminary

Year in School: Senior

Where were you born?

Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.

Where did you grow up?

Ketchikan, Alaska, until age ten. Then Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, until age 20. Eau Claire since then.

Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family.

My parents are Pastor David and Mrs. Desirae Naumann of Clarkston, Washington. I am the oldest of five children, four boys and one girl. My wife, Rachel (Sydow), and I were married in September, 2014. We are expecting a baby in December, 2015.

What hobbies, sports or extracurriculars interest you?

I enjoy hunting, camping, weight lifting, running, playing guitar, and watching the Green Bay Packers.

Tell us one thing about yourself that most people don't know.

I grew up wanting to be the very first man to walk on Mars. I even spent two years studying astronautics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison before the Lord led me back to Immanuel. The heavens still remain a fascination of mine.

Which academic subjects especially interest you?

Greek, Practical Theology, Homiletics, and Liturgics.

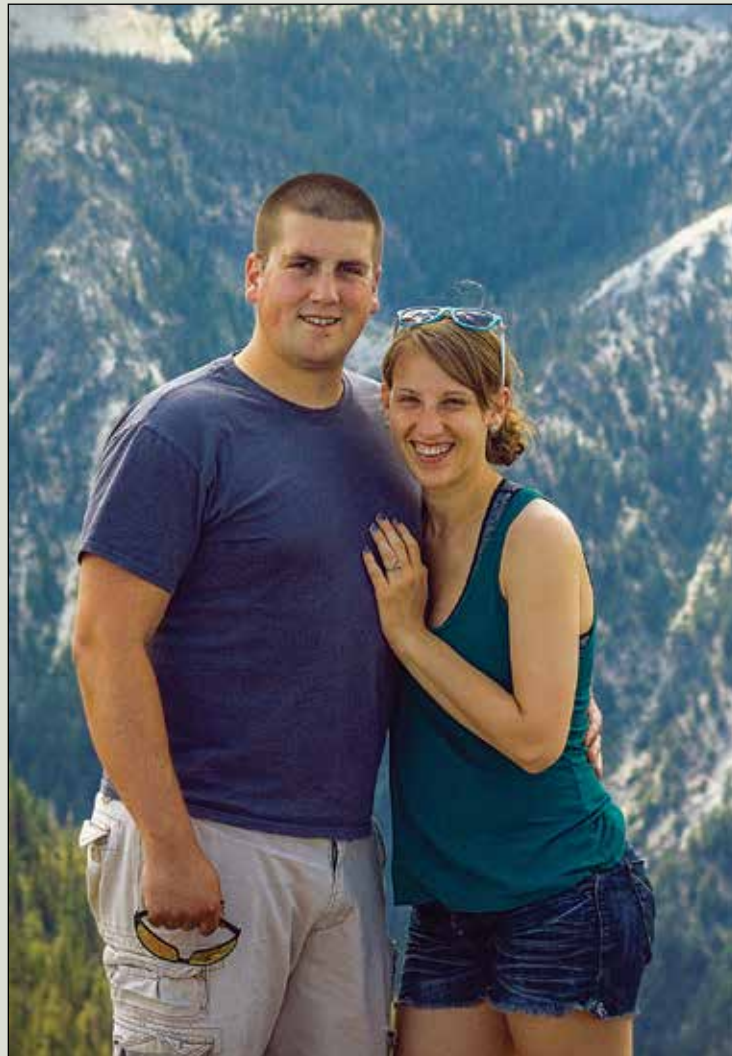
How did you first come to consider the public teaching or preaching ministry as a career?

As the son of a pastor, it is something that I have always considered. However, it was especially after the death of my grandfather, Bertram Naumann (also a



Want to meet the person who may be your next pastor or Christian day school teacher?

This series profiles the men and women who are preparing for the public teaching and preaching ministry at our Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



pastor), that I began to evaluate the gifts and abilities that the Lord has given me with a view toward the ministry. The support and encouragement of so many people—including parents, grandparents, friends, and others—has led me to the desire to serve to serve the Lord in the best way that I am able. Most of all, I believe that the Lord has led me to this point in my life and I pray that He will continue to lead me to serve Him as He wills.

Hope for Every Child in the Child of Hope

“Would you like to hold her?”

Those are some of my favorite words to hear when I visit new parents. So with that invitation I carefully cradled all 6 lbs. 10 oz. of a precious little girl barely seven hours old. I never grow tired of seeing the wonder firsthand of a child “knit together” by the Lord Himself.

What happens, however, when the glow of the moment is gone and Mom and Dad take their little one home? What does the future hold for her? In some ways she will face a world more complex and dangerous than that of her grandparents. What new terrorist organizations will spring up in her lifetime? How much farther from decency and morality will society stray? What sadness will she have to endure? What pain will her own sins cause her? St. Paul warned Timothy: *“There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive—without self-control”* (2 Timothy 3:1-3 NIV84). Such thoughts have caused parents to fear for their children or even to wonder whether it is wise to bring them into the world.

But then we remember another Child, the Seed of the woman promised by God from the earliest days of the world. He would be a true child, born with ten fingers and toes, and yet at the same time be the eternal Lord of all. He would be precious to His mother and Joseph. They would carefully protect and care for Him. Still, they could do nothing to prevent the harm that would come to Him. For He came into the world to take on the worst of enemies: sin, Satan, and death. He would “set His face” to go to Jerusalem where He would suffer in mankind’s place for all the sin of all time. The serpent would “bruise His heel.”

The hope of every faithful Old Testament parent for



...then we remember another Child, the Seed of the woman promised by God from the earliest days of the world... the eternal Lord of all.

their child lay in that Child. The celebration of each birth was a reminder of the even greater joy to come when the fulfillment of prophecy could be announced: *“For to us a Child is born, to us a son is given . . . And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”* (Isaiah 9:6 NIV84).

It is no different for us today. We can truly rejoice at the birth of a child and be confident of that child’s future because of the Child of Hope born in the fullness of God’s time. He was born, lived, died, rose, and now rules forever. He says, *“Let the little children come to me, . . . for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these”* (Matthew 19:14 NIV84). He welcomes them as

His own in Holy Baptism and keeps them safe and close to Him as they grow up in His Word and follow Him in faith.

That little one I’m holding in the hospital may look helpless and vulnerable, but she has a mighty Protector and Savior! She is safe and sound in the care of the Good Shepherd. As His precious lamb, she can join King David, her parents, and all of us in saying, *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever”* (Psalm 23:6).

It is a wonderful thing to hold a newborn child. It is even more precious to be held by the Child of Bethlehem. *“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”* (2 Corinthians 9:15 NIV84). Blessings to you and yours in His name!



Michael Eichstadt is pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Hales Corners, Wisconsin, and president of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

December 2015

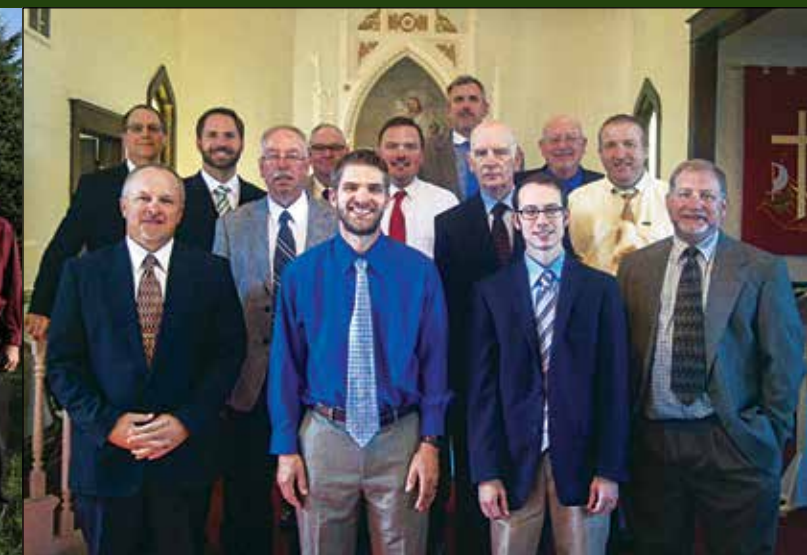
TLH = The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; WS = Worship Supplement 2000; SC = Martin Luther's Small Catechism;
 [] = Minor Festivals or commemorations in the Christian Church Year

Date	Reading	Verse
Dec 1	Jeremiah 33:14-16	TLH 645
Certainly Jesus does what is just and right, but more than that, He is our righteousness.		
Dec 2	Luke 21:25-36	PS 76
Because of Christ, we will not only stand on the Last Day, but we will lift up our heads in excitement, too.		
Dec 3	Mark 13:24-37	WS 703
Keep watch, for you do not know when Jesus will appear again.		
Dec 4	Isaiah 64:1-9	TLH 65
We see our sins and we cry to the Lord, "Come down from heaven and help us!" And He has.		
Dec 5	1 Corinthians 1:3-9	PS 4
Speaking, knowledge, faith—and all else you need to wait for Christ's return—has been given to you.		
Dec 7	Luke 17:20-25	TLH 56
Do not be deceived: Jesus will not reign here like the kings of the earth, and when He comes again it will be obvious to all.		
Dec 8	Romans 1:16-20	PS 100
There is salvation for everyone who believes in Christ, for the righteous will live by faith.		
Dec 9	Isaiah 40:1-11	TLH 69
First the prophet speaks tenderly of the forgiveness of sin, then he urges the people to make straight the way for the Messiah.		
Dec 10	2 Timothy 3:10-17	WS 704
How precious are the Scriptures, which point us to the One born for us, making us wise for salvation!		
Dec 11	2 Peter 3:8-14	PS 42
Our new home will be a home of righteousness, so let's live holy and godly lives as if we're there already.		
Dec 12	Isaiah 61	PS 110
"Instead of . . ." See how many in this chapter Christ replaces something bad with something good.		
Dec 14	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24	TLH 60
Praise God we don't have to sanctify ourselves, rather He Who called us and is faithful will do it!		
Dec 15	Luke 3:3-14	PS 38
The crowds did not understand at first what "fruits of repentance" might look like, so John showed them.		
Dec 16	John 1:19-28	PS 24
John prepared the way, but it was all about Jesus.		

Date	Reading	Verse
Dec 17	Isaiah 7:10-14	TLH p. 120 ("Benedicite")
[Daniel and the Three Men] "And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man" (Nicene Creed).		
Dec 18	Isaiah 52:7-10	WS 715
At Christ's birth, God's salvation could be seen with the eyes. Now tell of it with your mouth, too.		
Dec 19	Luke 3:23-38	TLH 103:3-4 [Adam and Eve]
Jesus Christ is a son of Adam just like you are. That makes Him your brother.		
Dec 21	John 14:1-6	WS 710
[St. Thomas, Apostle] Yes, Thomas, you do know the way, because He knows you.		
Dec 22	John 1:1-18	PS 46
God Himself came and made His home with the likes of us. It's hard to imagine, but in Christ, that is just what happened.		
Dec 23	Titus 2:11-14	TLH 646
Jesus appeared to redeem us from all wickedness.		
Dec 24	Luke 2:1-20	TLH 98
"Now He shines, the Long-expected; Let creation praise its Lord Evermore and evermore" (TLH 98:4).		
Dec 25	Isaiah 9:2-7	TLH 94
This is your Baby to hold and to cherish. That's what it says. Unto us a child is born.		
Dec 26	Acts 7:51-8:2	PS 27
[St. Stephen, Martyr] Stephen dies for the Christ Child because the Christ Child died for Him.		
Dec 28	Matthew 2:13-23	TLH 273
[The Holy Innocents, Martyrs] Jesus' death would not be by Herod's hand. Jesus would give His life into death when the time was right.		
Dec 29	Romans 16:25-27	PS 8
God establishes us in the faith by the gospel. To the only wise God be glory!		
Dec 30	Galatians 1:3-5	WS 746
The Father willingly sent His Son into death to rescue us. To Him be glory!		
Dec 31	2 Timothy 4:18	TLH 112
No evil attack is so great that the Lord cannot deliver us from it. May He continue to keep us in the new year.		



Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church, Middleton, Wisconsin hosted the Fall Great Lakes' Pastoral Conference, Sept. 29-Oct. 1. Pastor's attending the conference were L-R: N. Greve; D. Pfeiffer; P. Evenson; Prof. P. Schaller; D. Schaller; C. Schaller; M. Schierenbeck; W. Schaller; N. Radichel; A. Schaller; M. Eichstadt; P. Tiefel; B. Naumann; R. Kanzenbach; D. Ude; M. Wilke; M. Bernthal



Attendees at the fall West Central Pastoral Conference, Sept. 8-10, hosted by Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Hecla, South Dakota. Front row, left to right: Pastors Michael Roehl, Aaron Ude, Chad Seybt and Frank Gantt. Back row: Pastors Thomas Schuetze, Luke Bernthal, Rick Grams, Mark Gullerud, James Naumann, Joel Fleischer, John Klatt, Delwyn Maas and Paul Krause.



The 2015 CLC Teachers' Conference, Oct. 14-16, was hosted by Berea Lutheran School in Inver Grove Heights with the theme "Build on the Rock." This conference utilized reading experts from Berea congregation, who presented on the topics of reading strategies, diagnoses, and classroom management. They also shared their own extensive research into the new Lutheran hymnals. You can see their work at the website <http://bereaclc.org/hymnal-presentation/>. The conference also featured an anti-bullying panel, a paper on disciplining with love, and another paper on the fruits of the Spirit. Once again, we are blessed to have the opportunity to fellowship with our long-distance faculty of teachers around the country and build each other up in the common bond of Christ.

The Fall 2015 Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference was held Sept. 29-Oct. 1 in beautiful Vernon, British Columbia. It was hosted by St. Paul congregation of Vernon. Unfortunately, several of our brethren were ill or otherwise unable to attend this conference. Nevertheless, for those who were able to make it, the conference was a refreshing experience, rich in scholarship, good-fellowship, and many other blessings. Pictured, left to right, are Pastors David Reim, Paul Naumann, Mark Tiefel, David Naumann, Terrel Kesterson, and Nathan Pfeiffer.

SEEN IN PASSING

Items of interest from various sources of religious news and opinion, in print and on the web.

More Evidence for Intelligent Design

Discovered in DNA. "Researchers have found a second layer of information embedded in DNA, refueling a debate between proponents of Darwinism and intelligent design. Since the 1960s, scientists recognized that the order of molecules in DNA represented a particular code that governs the development of gene-forming proteins. Now, researchers from the University of Washington have discovered a second set of instructions in DNA that governs how those genes function. The fact that DNA contains two separate sets of instructions that cannot interfere with each other reveals something greater than just random chance, intelligent design advocates argue. 'Usually one thinks of a spy or prisoner of war who can conceal a second message with meaning B in a message with meaning A as showing unusual skill and intelligence,' said Dr. Angus Menuge, a professor at Concordia University Wisconsin who has studied the intersection of science and theology. 'Both messages have to make sense in their own terms and not somehow interfere with each other.' Menuge realizes that scientists with an almost religious adherence to Darwinism may not be able to see what that complexity points to: 'Of course, the more obvious the evidence for design is, the more some will say isn't it amazing what natural selection can do.'" Yow, Jesse. "DNA discovery illustrates creation's complexity." *Daily Dispatches*. WORLD, 7 Jan. 2014. Web. 8 Oct. 2015.

Atheists Criticize National Motto on Police Cars

A decal saying "In God We Trust," displayed on the back of Childress, Texas, police cruisers has drawn the ire of a militant atheist group. The Wisconsin-based "Freedom From Religion Foundation" registered a complaint about the decals, as they have against police departments in Missouri, Florida, Arkansas, Kentucky, and elsewhere. Gary Parsons, a sheriff in Lee County in Virginia, said his office spent a total of \$50 to have the decals added to about twenty-five vehicles. He said

many people feel their belief system is being trampled and that adding the phrase is a way of pushing back. "It's not only a symbol of moral values but also a symbol of patriotism," he said. "In God We Trust" began appearing on federal coins in the Civil War era, and Congress in 1956 approved it as the national motto. Warren, David. "Police cars' 'In God We Trust' decals draw complaints." *The Big Story*. Associated Press, 6 Sep. 2015. Web. 8 Oct. 2015.

Now Football is a Matter of Conscience?

The United Church of Christ has called on its one million members to boycott Washington Redskins football games and merchandise until the team drops its controversial name and mascot. The resolution passed on June 29 at the denomination's biennial summer convention in Cleveland. Grossman, Kathy Lynn. "United Church of Christ to boycott Washington Redskins." *Religious News Service*. RNS, 29 Jun. 2015. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.

Joel Osteen Has Two Words For You. In a new book that appeared in bookstores October 6, megachurch pastor Joel Osteen says he is trying to influence people to think positively about themselves by focusing on the words, "I AM." Called *The Power of I Am: Two Words that will Change Your Life Today*, the book aims to show the way the words "I Am" can help individuals find confidence and success. Osteen claims the book is filled with life-changing messages, including "the secret that changed Oprah's life." *The Power of I Am*, though, has not been universally well-received among Christians, many of whom hold the traditional view that it is Christ Who should be the focus of faith, and not the individual believer. It was, after all, Jesus who said, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58), and, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Hochwald, Lambeth. "Can Two Words Can Change Your Life? Joel Osteen Says 'Yes'." *Parade Daily*. Parade Magazine, 6 Oct. 2015. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOMINATIONS FOR ILC PRESIDENT:

The Board of Regents invites nominations for the office of President of Immanuel Lutheran College. The current term of Professor Steven Sippert expires June 30, 2016. All pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of the CLC are entitled to nominate a man from the faculty of Immanuel Lutheran College to serve a two-year term beginning July 1, 2016. Nominations must be written or e-mailed no later than midnight January 5, 2016 to: Mr. Craig Ryan; 499 Country Lane; Fulda, MN 56131; E-Mail: cryan@page1printers.com



Chris Gatties, a member of Redeemer Lutheran, Sister Lakes, Michigan, was driving his truck near Marshall, Minnesota when he saw this rainbow and cross. He pulled over and was able to capture it on his cell phone camera. "I was in awe when I saw it," Said Gatties.