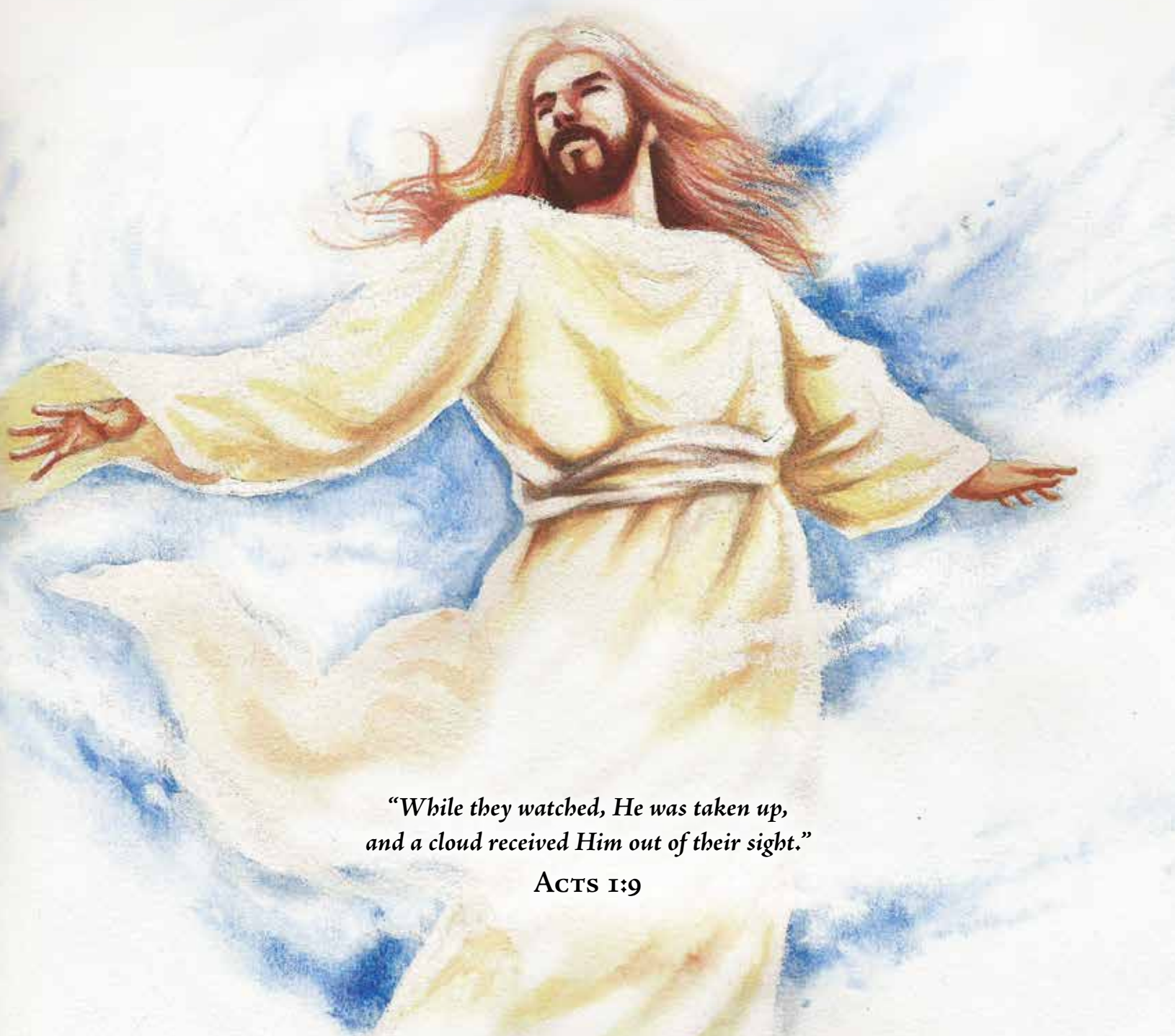


May 2016 VOL 58 NO. 11

# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



*"While they watched, He was taken up,  
and a cloud received Him out of their sight."*

**ACTS 1:9**

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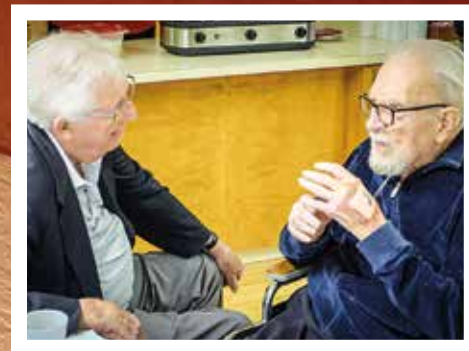


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# The Ongoing Conversation

**L**utheran theologian A.L. Graebner wrote of Christ's ascension into heaven that it was "the glorious termination of His visible conversation with His church on earth" (*Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*). Writing in 1898, he was using the word *conversation* in the older sense of *interaction*. During His time in this world, especially during His three-year public ministry, Christ interacted visibly with His fellow human beings.

Also after His resurrection, He appeared visibly to His disciples and spoke to them during a period of forty days. But then He was taken up into heaven as His disciples watched, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. After that there were only a few extraordinary appearances of Christ such as those to Paul (1 Corinthians 15:8) and John (Revelation 1:10-18).

But wasn't Christ's time in this world also a conversation in the sense in which we use the word today? In His ministry as recorded in the four Gospels, Christ engaged His people in a three-year conversation. That was a conversation that was truly unique, in which the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father declared to man the unseen God.

And it was a true conversation; it wasn't only a series of speeches or monologues. Jesus answered the questions and responded to the concerns of those who approached Him. He talked to Nicodemus when he came to Jesus by night. Jesus also initiated conversations. He turned to two disciples who were following Him and asked, "What do you seek?" He struck up a conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well by asking her for a drink of water. And these were momentous, life-changing conversations. Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and the first disciples

all became believers in and bold confessors of the Lord Jesus.

You and I have the privilege of listening in on these conversations of the Lord Jesus. And as we listen to them, we find that what He says there is addressed to us, too. What Jesus said to Nicodemus, He says to everyone: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). So the conversation between Jesus and

people in this world is an ongoing one. We still hear Him speaking to us in His Word. He calls us to repentance. He comforts us with the Gospel of forgiveness. He fills our hearts with joy with His promises of eternal life.

Not only do we have the privilege of listening to Jesus, we also still have the privilege of talking to Him. He hears our prayers and serves as our Mediator with the Father. He assures us of His presence whenever and wherever we are gathered for worship.

So it is only the visible part of Christ's interaction with the world that came to an end with His ascension into heaven. He is still talking to us and listening to us; we just don't see Him. Sometimes we may think that it would be good if we could see Him. But it is actually better this way. When Christ disappeared from the sight of the disciples that day outside Jerusalem, He "ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things" (Ephesians 4:10). Now He is available to us at all times and in all places. We don't have to travel to get to Him. We don't have to wait to talk to Him. He is, according to His parting promise to His disciples, with us always, even to the end of the age.

**John Klatt** is pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Loveland, Colorado.



**In His ministry as recorded in the four Gospels, Christ engaged His people in a three-year conversation.**



# Making Promises You Can't Keep!

*“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).*

One thing you certainly learn as a parent, if not from other areas of life, is that you shouldn't make promises you can't keep. I'm not saying promises one doesn't intend to keep, but promises one simply can't keep. Often we do this without realizing that we are doing it. Other times we may be living in a bit of denial; we hope to keep the promise, we think maybe we could figure something out so that we might keep the promise, but in actual fact we simply are not able to keep the promise that we made. So it is that we learn a hard lesson in life, and may even warn others who promise to do things for us, “Don't make promises you can't keep!”

And yet that is what we witness every confirmation Sunday. We watch as young people walk up to the front of the congregation and make some very serious promises, promises before Almighty God that they are not able to keep. We have been instructing these young people rather thoroughly, maybe even intensely, to prepare them to make these promises they can't keep. Even as they make them, the rest of us sitting in the congregation are reminded that not only are these young people incapable of fulfilling these promises, but each and every one of us in the congregation is in the same position. We, too, have made these promises to God; and we, too, all lack the strength and the innate spiritual integrity to be always faithful to God and His truth and always faithful in our use of the means of grace, even unto death!

Is it then all just a charade? Is it something that we just do, going through the ceremony as a rite of passage in the church, without actually taking it seriously? By no means! These are very important questions we answer, very important and serious oaths before God in heaven! With the congregation as witness, we are willingly and knowingly promising fidelity to our Savior God and His truth until the day we die! How can this be possible?

We acknowledge how it is possible even in the wording of the questions and promises. It is “Yes, with the help of God!” This is no minor concession, as though we might merely need a little assistance from the Lord from time to time in things spiritual. Rather, it is a full admission that apart from God the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. *“It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).*

Even as it was according to His abundant mercy that we were called to faith and born again by the working of the Holy Spirit, so it is also by the work of God the Holy Spirit that we are kept in the true faith until we are received by our Lord into our heavenly home. *“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).*

This reliance upon the powerful working of the Holy Spirit will lead us to seek out the Word in our lives. It will lead us to search the Scriptures in our personal devotions, to gather with our fellow Christians around the Word in worship services and Bible classes, and to receive the sacrament at every opportunity. It is the deception of self-reliance that leads so many Christians, young and old, to feel little need for the Word or sacrament—to their own harm. Some mistakenly believe that when they have “graduated” from their catechism studies, they then know enough to make it into heaven and have no more need of God's Word. When tempted by such false ideas, remind yourself, “I made promises, promises concerning my own spiritual life and salvation, *promises that I can't keep!*”

**“Come, oh, come, Thou quick'ning Spirit,**

**God from all eternity! May Thy power never fail us;  
Dwell within us constantly. Then shall truth and life  
and light Banish all the gloom of night.**

**Guard, O God, our faith forever; Let not Satan,  
death, or shame Ever part us from our Savior;  
Lord our Refuge is Thy name. Though our flesh cry  
ever: Nay! Be Thy Word to us still Yea!”**

*(The Lutheran Hymnal 226:1,8)*



**Theodore Barthels** is pastor of St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Austin, Minnesota.

## HYMN 216

# “On Christ’s Ascension I Now Build”<sup>1</sup>

**W**hy do we celebrate Ascension Day? Although most Reformed churches today largely ignore the event as a calendar item, we Lutherans do not. Theologians actually have much to say about the doctrine of Christ’s bodily ascension. They use fancy Latin terms like *terminus ad quem* (“the end to which”), *coelum beatorum* (“the paradise of the redeemed”) and *coelum Dei maiestaticum* (“the majestic heaven of God”). The *Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord* addresses Christ’s ascension at length in Sections VII and VIII.

But *I’m not a theologian*; I’m just an ordinary, every-day Christian layman trying to make my way through this sin-spoiled world. I know from my religious instruction that forty days after Easter, Jesus ascended into heaven; but what is that to me? What I want to know is, “What does the ascension of Christ mean to me in my daily life?”

Hymn 216 in *The Lutheran Hymnal* answers (at least in part) that question. Based on John 14:3 (“*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also*”), it doesn’t talk about esoteric points of theology—important though those points are to the faithful teaching of the whole counsel of God. Rather, this hymn reminds Christians that our Lord’s ascension is a guarantee that we, too, shall ascend to be with Him in the “heavenly mansions” (John 14:2) which He has prepared for us. Insofar as this hymn emphasizes that assurance, it is similar to Hymn 206, which we considered in the Easter edition of the *Lutheran Spokesman*.

However, there is an important point of difference between the *resurrection* of Christ and His *ascension*. The resurrection had no eyewitnesses. It didn’t need any, because Jesus “*showed Himself alive after His Passion by many infallible proofs*” (Acts 1:3). But have you ever wondered, “What if there had been no witnesses to the ascension?” Would we not then be asking, “What has

happened to Christ? Why is He not still with us today in the same manner that He was with His disciples after the resurrection? Where did He go?” Certainly, Jesus did foretell His ascension (John 14:1-4), but unlike the resurrection, Jesus also provided for *eyewitnesses* who give us first-hand testimony to the historical reality of that event. The eleven remaining apostles and other disciples (Luke 24:33 & 50-51) all *saw* Jesus visibly ascend. We *know* where He went, and we know why.

Based on His ascension, we can have complete confidence that we also shall have everlasting life in heaven with our Lord: “**On Christ’s ascension I now build/ The hope of mine ascension;/ This hope alone has ever stilled/ All doubt and apprehension**” (v. 1). Christ returned to heaven, He is now ruling over all things; and knowing that, we can have rest for our hearts even in this troubled world: “**Since He returned to claim His throne/ Great gifts for men obtaining,/ My heart shall rest in Him alone,/ No other rest remaining**” (v. 2).

Verse three of Hymn 216 contains a phrase that is striking in its picturesque and simple statement of an important biblical doctrine. That phrase is “**Adorning Thy redemption.**” What jewel is it that adorns Christ’s redemption? It is our life of sanctification. Note well, there is no confusion here of *justification* with *sanctification*; there is no tinge of works-righteousness. Consider the phrase in its context: “**Oh, grant, dear Lord, this grace to me,/ Recalling Thine ascension,/ That I may ever walk with Thee,/ Adorning Thy redemption**” (v. 3). It reinforces the truth that our walk with Christ, as His adornment, is a *response* to what He has done *for us*. As we recall His ascension, to prepare a place in heaven for us, that reminder of our free justification by grace is the Gospel motivation for our seeking to live a God-pleasing life.

May the assurance of Christ’s ascension lead us to “adorn His redemption” in our daily walk.



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

<sup>1</sup> The melody, *Nun freut euch*, was written by Luther for his first congregational hymn (#387, “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice”). It is said that he wrote down the melody after hearing it sung by a traveling minstrel.

## A New Covenant

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them,’ says the LORD. ‘For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days,’ says the LORD, ‘I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying “Know the LORD,” for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” (Hebrews 8:7-13).

### COVENANT = CONTRACT

Anyone who follows sports knows that professional athletes play under a contract. A contract is an agreement established through an agent in which the player promises to play, and the owner promises to pay the athlete. If the athlete’s play surpasses expectation, the athlete may look for a new contract when the terms of the old contract are completed. While we use the word *covenant* far less today, a covenant is a contract.

### THE GREATEST OF ALL

In the Letter to the Hebrews, the Spirit of God repeatedly shows that our Savior Jesus is the “Greatest of All” in a number of different ways. Jesus the Son of God is greater than the angels. Jesus is the Great High Priest, greater than every other high priest. Christ’s sacrifice is greater than every other sacrifice. In order to show that Jesus is the greatest of all, a comparison is made.

### AGENTS AND CONTRACTS

Therefore, in the eighth chapter of Hebrews, the Spirit of God compares both mediators and covenants (or agents and contracts if you like).

### THE OLD CONTRACT

The “Old Contract” is the Law of God, given by God and put in place through the mediator (agent) Moses. This contract was originally hard-wired into every human heart (Romans 2:14-15), but it was reissued in written

form because of sin. This contract required obedience, and in exchange God promised to bless those who kept the contract and be their God.

The Old Testament Scriptures show that time and again the Israelites reneged on their end of the contract and did not keep their promise to be faithful to God and His Commandments. Lest we look down our noses at them, God’s Word reveals the same about us—we have disobeyed His Law.

The problem isn’t that the contract, God’s Law, is imperfect—it was established by the righteous and Holy God (Romans 7:12). The problem lies in those with whom the contract was established (us). Since we are corrupt and sinful by nature, we cannot keep this perfect contract and can rightfully expect no good thing from it.

Even though we have broken the agreement, and despite our unfaithfulness, God still blesses us during our time of grace because He is gracious. But God did even more—He promised a *new* contract for sinners.

### A NEW CONTRACT

God spoke through the Prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34) to relate His promise of a future “contract renegotiation.” In mercy, God promised a new contract, one that would be different in form from the other. The old contract depended in part upon the obedience of man; the new contract would depend entirely upon the faithfulness and forgiveness of God.

While the old contract was established through Moses, the new contract was established through God the Son Himself. The old was established on Mount Sinai and written on stone tablets; the new was established on Mount Calvary and is written on the “parchment” of the cross in blood—the blood of God’s Son. On Calvary the Son of God made atonement for all sins, including those committed against the first contract (Acts 13:38-39).

The old contract still has a place; it reveals the futility of every human attempt to measure up to God’s holiness. The new contract is testimony to God’s amazing grace. While both of these are perfect, once-lost sinners who truly know both contracts recognize that the second is greater by far.

The old contract was fulfilled by *Christ* on our behalf, and the new contract—the contract of grace!—is signed, sealed and delivered to us by *Christ*.



**Andrew Schaller** is pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church in Marquette, Michigan.

# RAHAB

## A Reformed Prostitute

### JOSHUA CHAPTERS 2 AND 6

**S**ex sells, is sold, and enslaves human hearts. Businesses use sexual messages and imagery in their advertisements to sell their products. Human bodies are sold for sex in the age-old trade of prostitution. With the proliferation of pornography, especially on the internet, countless victims are enticed and ensnared.

Satan, the chief enemy of our souls, has found sex to be an effective device to enslave human hearts for his kingdom. Since, as Jesus reveals, “*Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications*” (Matthew 15:19), none of us are immune to the devil’s attempts to reclaim us through the use of immoral sex.

With sexual sinfulness being so powerfully addictive, is there any hope of deliverance for those who are held under its control? We have a wonderful example of such deliverance in a woman named Rahab. By the grace and mercies of God, Rahab—who at one time made a living as a prostitute—became a believer and was delivered from such sinful slavery. The Holy Spirit regards Rahab as a significant example of an Old Testament believer, as He included her in the “hall of faith” found in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 11).

Prior to Israel’s invasion of the promised land of Canaan, Rahab lived in the walled city of Jericho. Rahab was surrounded not only by physical walls, but also by the spiritual walls of sin and unbelief as she plied her trade of prostitution. But even as God mightily caused the walls of Jericho to come tumbling down, so also He removed the walls of sin and unbelief that surrounded Rahab, by working repentance and faith in her heart.

Rahab came to know by faith that the God of Israel was the one true God of heaven and earth (Joshua 2:11). She had heard how He powerfully delivered Israel from their bondage in Egypt, and was defeating all the enemies in their path (Joshua 2:10). And she believed that the Lord would give the whole land of Canaan to His chosen people (Joshua 2:9). Rahab had been led to believe in the Lord not

only as a powerful God, but also as a loving and merciful God who forgives and saves by His infinite grace.

Rahab gave evidence of her saving faith when she received two Israelite spies into her home, prevented their capture by Jericho authorities, and sent them safely on their way (Joshua 2:1-25). And it was because of her faith in the Lord that she and her family were the only ones who were spared in the destruction of Jericho (Hebrews 11:31; Joshua 6:17).

Rahab received the necessary strength from the Lord to leave behind her sinful vocation of prostitution and dwell in Israel in sexual purity. The Lord in His great goodness blessed her in the holy estate of matrimony when He joined her in marriage with a Jewish man named Salmon. To this union He gave the gift of life in the birth of Boaz. The name of Boaz most likely rings more familiar to most of us, because he married Ruth and in due time they became the great-grandparents of King David.

Review the genealogy in Matthew chapter 1, and you will find Rahab listed as one of Jesus’ ancestors. Because she is found in the lineage of Jesus, some in previous years have tried to clean up Rahab’s dark past by claiming that she was not a prostitute in Jericho, but rather a hostess. However, the Bible is quite clear about Rahab’s sordid, sexually-immoral past. The fact that God in His providential will included her in Jesus’ family tree is evidence of His saving grace. The precious blood of Christ shed on the cross washed Rahab clean of all her transgressions (1 John 1:7). And when the Holy Spirit worked repentance and faith in her heart, Rahab was regarded by God as one of His holy children and an heir of eternal life.

Is there hope for those who are held captive in sexually-immoral enslavement? Yes, indeed! Just look at Rahab for a wonderful example of this. Praise be to God for His boundless saving grace in Christ Jesus, and His powerful sanctifying work!



**Mark Gullerud** is pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Bowdle, South Dakota, and Zion Lutheran Church in Ipswich, South Dakota.

# Why Can't Our Sons Belong to the Boy Scouts?

**I**t's a legitimate question, and one that should be reviewed on a regular basis. Organizations change over time. Using outdated materials to evaluate them is both unwise and unfair.

At the moment, there are polarizing differences between us and the Boy Scouts of America. It is not possible, in this brief space, to document them all. Please consider two of them:

**I. While we both believe in a higher being, Scouting intentionally leaves God undefined, while we intentionally state exactly Who He is, what He demands, and what He has done. A Boy Scout can be Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, or anything else, so long as he states that he believes in a higher being.**

The fact that the BSA requires a belief in a deity is not wrong in itself. In Romans 2:14-15, Paul explains, *When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.* The natural knowledge of God is hard-wired into every human heart from the womb. There is nothing wrong with this knowledge, as far as it goes. But it only goes so far. It does not tell us Who the true God is or how He has saved us.

Paul encountered this knowledge throughout the heathen world. In Athens, he noted the many altars to their many deities. He didn't pass this off lightly, thinking, *"At least they worship a higher being."* He seized the moment to proclaim the truth. Paul even explained the purpose this knowledge of God was to serve: *"that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us"* (Acts 17:27).

This is our calling as well. We are ambassadors for Christ, missionaries of the most high God. Our witness



is not to suggest that all religions are equal and good, but to proclaim the truth that all people need to hear. Joining an organization that requires only a belief in a generic god goes contrary to our calling.

**II. The purpose of Scouting is different from our purpose. Scouting is primarily interested in character development and civic righteousness. Our primary interest is in saving souls by preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins in Christ.**

When a troop gathers to meet, its members recite the Scout oath: "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times; to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight." The Scout Law is: "A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent."

The assumption is that people are basically good. The truth is that by nature we are anything but good—sinful from conception, blind to spiritual truth, and enemies of God. Where Scouting appeals to one's own honor to live clean, moral lives, we appeal to the mercy of God in Christ.

When we gather to meet in worship, we confess the opposite of the Scout Oath: "I am by nature sinful and unclean. I have sinned against God by thought, word, and deed." The two professions are light years apart in meaning and purpose. Reconciliation between these two beliefs is not possible.

There are other issues that stand between us and the Scouts. This is something your pastor can discuss more thoroughly with you if you wish.



**James Albrecht** is pastor of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Okabena, Minnesota.



# Arvid G.W. Gullerud, 1920-2015

**A**rvid Gerhard Walter Gullerud was born on January 19, 1920, to Rev. Olaf and Sarah (Tyssen) Gullerud. The family lived about a mile from the small village of Glendorado, Minnesota. In 1934 he was confirmed by his father at nearby Norseland Lutheran Church. Shortly after this, his father passed away, and the family moved to Brookings, South Dakota. Arvid attended Dr. Martin Luther High School in New Ulm, Minnesota. During his days in New Ulm, he worked part-time on a farm. He enjoyed driving horses so much that he thought about becoming a farmer, but the Lord had other plans for him. He decided to study theology at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin. After graduation he spent an additional three years at the Lutheran Theological Seminary of Thiensville, Wisconsin, where he earned a divinity degree.

On July 6, 1947, Pastor Gullerud was ordained into the holy ministry and installed as pastor at the dual parish of East and West Paint Creek Lutheran congregations (of the Norwegian Synod) at Waterville, Iowa. He also raised sheep on fifteen acres of pastureland, which was part of the congregation's compensation for his pastoral work. It was during this time that he was joined in holy matrimony with Eleanore Odegard, whom he'd known from childhood. They were married at Fairview Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, on September 15th, 1948. Their marriage would span sixty-seven years, and the Lord would bless their union with five daughters and one son.

In the Fall of 1951, Pastor Gullerud accepted the call to serve Pinehurst Lutheran Church (ELS) in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. He sold his sheep to finance the move. In 1958, in faithfulness to the Word of God, he and members of his congregation left the fellowship of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod for confessional reasons.



Messiah Lutheran Church was organized, and would become a charter member of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. During his time in Eau Claire, Pastor Gullerud was instrumental in the finding and purchase of the O. H. Ingram estate, soon to become the campus of Immanuel Lutheran High School, College and Seminary. He also served on Board of Regents for the new school.

Pastor Gullerud later served parishes in Houston and Corpus Christi, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Portland, Oregon; Ketchikan, Alaska; Jacksonville, Florida; and Dallas, Texas. In retirement he served for many years as assistant pastor at Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Spokane Valley, Washington. During this time he enjoyed camping at Lake Diamond, woodworking in his shop, golfing and fishing. He kept abreast of synodical events even in retirement, and often served as a delegate to CLC Conventions.

Pastor Gullerud was peacefully led by his Lord into the realms of eternal glory early Friday morning, December 18th, 2015, at the age of ninety-five. He was preceded in death by his brother Carl Monrad Gullerud; and sisters Adele Pfeiffer, Dagny Gullerud and Lois Jordahl. He is survived by his wife Eleanore, daughters Elizabeth Bear, Randi Pomerantz, Joan Gullerud, Rachel Jackson and Heidi Libby, and son Peter Gullerud.

A memorial service for Pastor Arvid Gullerud was held on March 18<sup>th</sup> at Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Spokane, Rev. Robert List officiating. In the words of the inspired writer: *"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." ' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them'"* (Revelation 14:13).



**Robert List** is the former pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church, and was a colleague and close friend of Arvid Gullerud. Pastor List and his wife live in Spokane Valley, Washington.

# Siddhi, Nepal

**D**uring the last couple of weeks of January 2016, I had the privilege of traveling to Nepal on behalf of the CLC Board of Missions. Much was accomplished while I was there. I spent the first several days traveling through earthquake-affected villages to offer the encouragement of God's saving Word, and to assess the relief efforts that have been taking place over the past several months. When I returned to Kathmandu, I was joined by Pastor Rob Sauers, his wife Kate, and Missionary Peter Evensen. I had the privilege of attending and participating in the ordination of five pastors of the Himalayan Church of the Lutheran Confession of Nepal (HCLCN), a pastoral training seminar, and the dedication of the new Himalayan Bible Institute. It was also a very special privilege to be invited to officiate at the wedding of Raju and Sanju Bhitrakoti on January 31.

I also travelled to a far-flung region of Nepal where very few Nepalese—let alone westerners—ever visit. The village of Siddhi is located in the Shaktikor district of Nepal, which is west of the capital city of Kathmandu. The trip to this district takes you up and over several of the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range. The road winds along the picturesque and sometimes wild Trisuli River that cuts a deep path through the very steep hills of this remote district.

Once you have arrived in Shaktikor, you still are not even close to the village of Siddhi. If you have the financial means to rent a four-wheel-drive vehicle, you will be able to cut about three hours off your journey. At the end of the "road" you will find only footpaths that lead you up some of the steepest "hills" you will ever see. The one-hour trek will take you up a series of switch-back trails that hug the side of the hill on rugged steps made of rocks and boulders of various sizes. If you can't find or afford to rent a 4x4 ride, then your trip will take more than four hours: three hours of walking up the gradual incline of

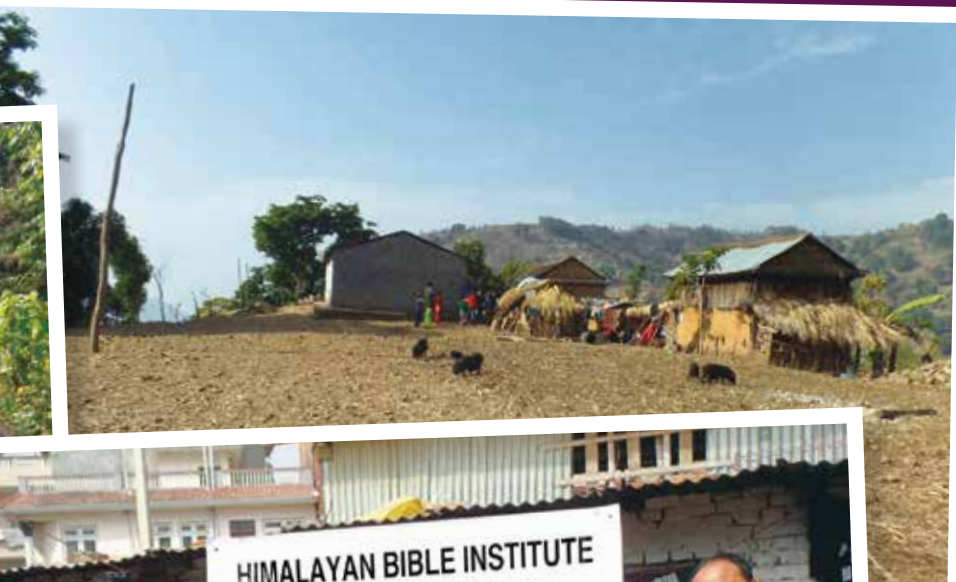


"Road" to the bottom of the "hill" where you begin the one hour trek to Siddhi

rocky roads and trails that don't seem possible to drive, and then the final one-hour hike.

On reaching Siddhi you will find the typical rock-wall homes and outbuildings, scattered among hillsides that have been terraced for farming. The other thing you will find in this particular village is a church building in the most prominent part of the village. How this church building came about is a story of God's grace and love.

This is the third time I have made the long journey to visit the Chepang tribal people of Siddhi. But this is the first time I have heard the whole story of how the HCLCN came to be involved in this region and how the Lord has blessed this effort. Not long before the Lord brought the CLC and the HCLCN together back in 2007, Pastor J.B. Bhitrakoti (Raju's father) had learned of opportunities to spread the Gospel among these tribal villages, and had made several trips to visit the area. What he initially found among this marginalized tribe was a mixture of Hinduism, Buddhism, ancestral worship, and tribal superstitions mixed with a Pentecostal-influenced form of Jesus worship. Apparently the Gospel had come to this very remote region at some point in the past, but thorough training in the Word did not follow. The people were left without a solid foundation in the truths of Scripture. Given the low literacy rate in the region, many were unable to study the Scriptures on their own. Pastor



HCLCN church building sits where Hindu festivals were once held

For centuries, the village of Siddhi had been used as a place to gather for the many Hindu and Buddhist festivals that take place every year. It was not uncommon in the past for thousands of people to gather for these idolatrous festivals. What is truly amazing is that this flat spot among the hills is now the place where an HCLCN church building stands. No longer is this area used in the worship of false gods. Instead, children of God are worshipping in spirit and in truth. No

longer are people gathering there with the false hope of garnering the favor of an idol. Instead, sinners are receiving the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit through the water and Word of Holy Baptism. No longer are tribal people offering prayers to Jesus alongside the long list of Hindu gods who they hope will bring them earthly blessing and a better reincarnated life. Instead, they are gathering regularly to confess their sins and rejoice together in the forgiveness of their sins through the perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ!



Pastor Bhimlal Chepang is sitting on the far left: Rajan and Raju Bhitrakoti standing

J.B. recognized an opportunity to proclaim the truth of God's saving Word. He identified a few young men who had learned to read as prospects for becoming future leaders—and perhaps pastors—in the congregations that were beginning to form under his tutelage. But he also knew that there was much work to be done if these young men were one day to serve as pastors. This opportunity and others like it led Pastor J.B. and his son Raju to search the internet for some assistance in training men to be faithful preachers and teachers of the Word of God. They found references to the CLC offering pastoral training in India. This led to their first email to the CLC, which contained a simple request: "Will you please come to Nepal to offer a pastoral training seminar?" The rest is an amazing demonstration of God's grace, mercy, and blessings.

The pastor of the Siddhi congregation is Pastor Bhimlal Chepang. This man has faithfully made the long trip by foot and bus to attend pastoral training almost every month for the past eight years. He has demonstrated a solid understanding of the truths of God's Word, and has successfully completed a study of Luther's Small Catechism, along with many other doctrinal studies. Pastor Bhimlal graduated from his formal training and was commissioned and ordained as a pastor of the Himalayan Church of the Lutheran Confession of Nepal on January 28, 2016.

Praise be to God Who has opened this door of opportunity to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and all that He has revealed to us in His Word.



**Todd Ohlmann** is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Manchester, Missouri, and serves as chairman of the CLC Board of Missions.

# Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church

## Sister Lakes, Michigan

**W**hen a small Lutheran congregation was organized in the southwest corner of lower Michigan in January 1963, the name *Redeemer* was chosen. Over the years, those who have attended here have been assured that *“It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed . . . but with the precious blood of Christ”* (1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV). May we forever bear the name *Redeemer* to His glory, mindful of the high cost our Savior paid to rescue us from everlasting death.

### Redeemed in the Past

The same Savior who died for us also rose again and ascended into heaven to give gifts to His Church. We recognize that our congregation has been blessed and guided by Jesus. From a small handful of families in the 1960’s, the group now numbers around one hundred. Unlike the days when Rev. R. E. Schaller first met with families at the armory in Dowagiac, Michigan (pronounced *Doe-wah-jack*, from the Potawatomi language), the people have now come to gather in an attractive country church. From an old lumber yard complex that went out of business in the resort community of Sister Lakes (Keeler Township, population 2600), the Lord has re-purposed the office building as a parsonage, the acreage as a playground for Vacation Bible School children, and the leftover wood as the uniquely visible trusses and high ceiling of a beautiful sanctuary.

Christ has also sent ministers to preach to His redeemed. After R. E. Schaller (1963-1973) came resident pastors Paul Tiefel, Jr. (1973-1991), James Albrecht (1991-1998), and David Schaller (1999-Present), grandson of the first pastor.

### Redeemed in the Present

In present days, the congregation has been especially conscious of the great Redeemer’s work, for in a short span of time the Lord took a number of our longtime faithful to Himself. Four funerals in six weeks surrounding All Saints’ Day made each of us stop and think more carefully about how truly important it is that *“we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”* (Colossians 1:14). We have among us now just one remaining charter member. Fast approaching her 105<sup>th</sup> birthday, Elizabeth Wagner (to the best of our knowledge the oldest member in the CLC) is still quick to remind her pastor that *“God will provide,”* in life and in death.

From June-September we see our “summer visitors” in the pews. Many Chicago residents own lake homes nearby, and we get to know a handful of them. One year a gentleman

brought a youth group from Illinois to his cabin for the weekend—and they all showed up in church on Sunday morning. He remarked, *“We shouldn’t miss church just because we aren’t back home.”* Last year we received a card from the daughter of another summer regular. She wrote that her mother had died suddenly of a heart attack, but had spoken often of how glad she was to have Redeemer whenever she visited Sister Lakes.

Our congregation also deeply appreciates its present connection to sister congregations in the area. Faith Lutheran Church of Coloma is only fifteen miles to the northwest. It was this congregation that shared a pastor with us fifty years ago when we were getting established, and we have been blessed by their fellowship ever since. To this day we still plan the occasional outing and worship service together. Far to the north is Cadillac, and somewhat closer are our brethren in Grand Rapids,



Groundbreaking on April 26, 1970 (Rev. R. E. Schaller holding the shovel)



Above: congregation gathers for its 50th anniversary in 2013. Above right: Sunday school children. Right: exterior of church.

both of whose members we enjoy seeing at the area Reformation service customarily hosted by Redeemer. All remain in our thoughts and prayers throughout the year. A bit less than two hundred miles to the east are the congregations in Detroit and Saginaw with whom we join together for youth camp every summer, and for Lenten services in the early spring. Our people in Sister Lakes have come to treasure these Michigan connections that the Lord has made for us.



## Redeemed in the Future

The Lord is always concerned that His Gospel message be communicated to the next generation. Not long ago in the congregation an infant and his great-grandfather were baptized together. *“We will not hide them . . . we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done”* (Psalm 78:4 NIV). Our prayer for the future is that others will come to know Christ and the glory of His redemptive acts. To this end, we have surely been given opportunities. There are currently more than twenty children enrolled in our Sunday School, making about twenty percent of the church membership younger than ninth grade. This ratio has held for the last fifteen years and has been a great joy to us, but it is also a great responsibility. We know that the ten who attended youth instruction classes last week will soon be grown, and by God’s grace we look for them to have the spiritual training they need to go out into the world. We further petition the Lord of the Church to send us more little lambs to feed, that they might someday take the message of salvation to a generation yet unborn (Psalm 22:30-31).

Taking a left out of the church driveway and traveling for twenty-five minutes past the orchards and vineyards of the fruit belt places you on the eastern shore of Lake

Michigan. Sandy beaches for three hundred miles up and down the coast unroll before the eye, and you gaze beyond the St. Joseph lighthouse into a gorgeous evening sunset. He who made the sky and the sea has also redeemed us, and holds our futures in His loving hand. Thus watching the last of one day disappear and anticipating the next, we sing:

**The day You gave us, Lord, is ended;  
The darkness falls at Your request.**

**To You our morning hymns ascended;  
Your praise shall sanctify our rest.**

**So be it, Lord; Your throne shall never,  
Like earth’s proud kingdoms, pass away.**

**Your kingdom stands and grows forever  
Until there dawns Your glorious day.**

(John Ellerton, 1870)



**David Schaller** is pastor of Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sister Lakes, Michigan. He also prepares the ‘Bread of Life’ devotions for the *Lutheran Spokesman*.

*In the latest installment of this series, former choir member Randy Wittorp shares his reflections on traveling with the Tour Choir of Immanuel Lutheran College.*

# Get On the Bus

The time I spent on tour was some of the most memorable of my years at Immanuel. While many have the opportunity to see the concerts, fewer see the preparation and daily effort involved with making the concerts happen. From the practices each week throughout the school year, to the life on the bus, to intermingling and fellowshiping with our Christian brothers and sisters across the CLC, there is much more to the ministerial efforts of the Tour Choir than the concert performances themselves.

Tour properly begins once tryouts have taken place and the Tour Choir lineup is announced. In addition to the Tuesday and Thursday mass choir rehearsals, members of Tour have practices on Monday and Wednesday every week. Practices increase in intensity through the third quarter of the school year as time grows short leading to Spring Break, when the Tour itself commences.

Any member of the Tour Choir will tell you how much anticipation builds as we await Prof. Reim's announcement of the route we will take. Will it be the Colorado Tour? Texas? The Midwest? Florida? When the day finally comes, the choir is bursting with excitement over where we might be heading.

Before departing, each member is given a duty to perform throughout the journey. Loading luggage, unloading luggage, setting up and taking down risers (the platforms the singers stand on), assembling programs, distributing food: all of these duties and more are assigned to the members, and the duties are opportunities to serve one another in Christian love.

Throughout Tour, life on the bus is characterized by daily devotions and singing of hymns, playing games, reading books, and a lot of conversation. Nowhere did I learn more about my Immanuel classmates, especially those in grades above and below my own, than on the

Tour Choir bus. Bus life could also turn quickly to the unexpected; I can recall bus breakdowns, bad weather, and flu season interrupting the regular flow.

As we would arrive at each destination, the entire choir would spring into action; distributing luggage, setting up instruments and risers, and coordinating to get changed into our concert attire. A "riser time" would be announced, when we would be expected to be dressed and ready to rehearse; often this would be set to give us enough time to enjoy a quick meal provided by our host congregation.

The concert itself always goes so quickly! As a coordinated proclamation of the Gospel and an expression of fellowship with the congregation joining in some of the songs, the performance offers a little taste of the Holy Christian Church on earth. Each performance is different, and each offers the edification and encouragement of the Gospel.

That Gospel message and the faith it engenders is then demonstrated in the nightly routine of being invited into the homes of member families. I have many fond memories of sharing

Christian conversation and fellowship with members of congregations all across our synod. Connecting with fellow believers on a daily basis is one of the greatest blessings of being a part of the Tour Choir, and I cherish the many memories I have of doing just that.

Tour Choir is the result of a great deal of work, and work of a type many wouldn't think of at first. Sure, there are the rehearsals and musical preparations. But the daily service of choir members, one to another, and the loving support of fellow members in Christ's body across our church—these are what make Tour truly successful, and without which Tour wouldn't exist.



**Randy Wittorp** was a seven-time member of the ILC Tour Choir. He and his wife Danielle live in San Francisco and are members of St. Stephens, Mountain View.

# “BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS MAY 2016

TLH = The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; WS = Worship Supplement 2000; [ ] = Biblical Events Noted

Date	Biblical Events Noted	Verse	Reading	Comments
May 2		TLH 33	Joshua 4:1-9	It is important to remember from generation to generation what the Lord has done.
May 3		TLH 167	Luke 23:1-46	Pilate could not find any reason Jesus should die, but in the end the Heavenly Father did.
May 4		TLH 447	Joshua 6:1-27	Six days of marching while nothing happened. They had to trust that on the seventh day God would make good, as He said.
May 5	[The Ascension of our Lord]	WS 757	Luke 24:1-53	He is risen and shall reign forever and ever!
May 6		TLH 293	Joshua 8:28-35	After God had promised and then given Israel victory over Ai, they again looked to His word for guidance.
May 7		TLH 451	Joshua 10:1-15	Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!
May 9		TLH 459	Joshua 11:21-23	<i>“Then the land had rest . . .”</i> God is in the business of giving us rest. The best kind, of course, is rest for our souls.
May 10		TLH 487	Joshua 13:14	<i>“Those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”</i> (1 Cor 9:14).
May 11		TLH 215	Joshua 18:1-10	When it came to making final divisions of the lands they had conquered, they left it to the Lord.
May 12		TLH 491	Joshua 21:1-8	They had no inheritance of land like the other tribes, but God set up something of a parsonage arrangement for the Levites.
May 13		WS 795	Joshua 24:28-33	Faithful servants rest with the Lord.
May 14		WS 761	Acts 1:1-23	The Lord of the Church cares for His Church after His ascension.
May 16	[Day of Pentecost, May 15]	WS 739	Acts 2:1-41	The Spirit came early in the morning, but look at what a tremendous day of preaching and faith then followed!
May 17		TLH 187	Acts 3:1-16	Peter and John didn’t have much money, but they had a connection to the risen Christ which was far more important.
May 18		TLH 278	Judges 2:6-23	Sadly, Israel failed to trust in the Lord after they took possession of Canaan, and the results were predictably disastrous.
May 19		TLH 242	Judges 6:1-40	Reminiscent of Moses at the burning bush, isn’t it? Here God calls Gideon to leadership and patiently convinces Him to go.
May 20		TLH 250	Judges 7:1-21	Gideon knew the sword was the Lord’s and that the victory was His.
May 21		WS 785	Ruth 1-2	The Lord knows those who are His and He provides for them.
May 23		TLH 64	Ruth 3-4	In bringing Ruth and Boaz together, God was also preparing to send His Christ into the world.
May 24		TLH 500	Acts 5:12-16	The apostles performed many signs and wonders, but the people believed in the Lord. Mission accomplished.
May 25		TLH 210	Acts 6:8-8:1	The people had rejected God’s Son Jesus. Is it any surprise they rejected God’s messenger Stephen too?
May 26		WS 790	Judges 14:1-20	Samson’s unwillingness to find a believing spouse led to sorrow and tragedy.
May 27		TLH 211	Judges 16:23-31	May the Lord also grant us strength to glorify His name.
May 28		TLH 457	1 Samuel 1:1-20	The Lord hears prayer and used His servant Hannah to bring an important judge and prophet to Israel.
May 30		TLH 465	1 Samuel 7:2-17	Here a rock was a remembrance of God’s help, but there is also another Ebenezer—Jesus Christ, the Rock who is our help.
May 31	[Mary Visits Elizabeth]	WS 797	1 Samuel 12:1-25	The people had sinned, but Samuel comforted them with the Gospel saying, “Do not be afraid. The Lord made you His own.”

## SEEN IN PASSING

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

**Another Far-Reaching Decision Expected from Supreme Court.** In March, a short-handed Supreme Court heard arguments concerning a Texas law requiring abortion providers to have admitting privileges at a local hospital. Upholding the law would have the effect of further reducing the number of abortion clinics in Texas, and would also provide a distinct advantage to pro-life efforts in other states. The last Supreme Court case involving abortion was decided in 2007, when the justices upheld a federal law banning late-term — or partial birth — abortions. Justice Kennedy wrote the 5-4 opinion, noting that “some women come to regret their choice to abort the infant life they once created and sustained.” A decision is expected this summer. Wolf, Richard. “Texas abortion case goes before short-handed Supreme Court.” *Culture*. Religious News Service, 2 Mar. 2016. Web. 3 Mar. 2016.

**Roman Church Issues Puzzling Statement on the Way of Salvation.** In a move seen as conciliatory toward Judaism, the Vatican has officially stated that Catholics should not evangelize Jews. Among other things, the December encyclical entitled *The Gifts and Calling of God Are Irrevocable* made the following

seemingly self-contradictory statement: “From the Christian confession that there can be only one path to salvation . . . it does not in any way follow that the Jews are excluded from God’s salvation because they do not believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel and the Son of God.” That glaring contradiction, the Vatican says, “remains an unfathomable divine mystery.” The statement proved especially unfathomable to protestant evangelicals, many of whom immediately protested that it flatly contradicts what Paul says in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Eekhoff Zylstra, Sarah. “An Olive Branch Too Long?” *Christianity Today*, Mar. 2016:17-18. Print.

**When Wrong Feels Right.** “What does [the Sixth] Commandment say about fornication? Fornication is sexual immorality. It is engaging in sexual intimacy with someone other than one’s husband or wife. God has established marriage, a life-long union of one man with one woman, as the only place where sexual intimacy may be enjoyed in a God-pleasing way. Sexual relations outside of marriage is sin. The fact that it is called ‘making love’ doesn’t mean

that’s what it is. The word *love* is used in an attempt to cover up the ugliness of the sin. In fact, fornication has nothing to do with *love*. Sexual immorality is a very efficient way of committing spiritual suicide. People have the natural tendency to think that what they feel is right *is* right. As the song says, ‘It can’t be wrong if it feels so right.’ But it can. It often is. To disconnect sexual intimacy from marriage is to take what is good and to make it bad. The argument that a man and a woman may engage in sexual intimacy without first getting married if they truly love each other and are devoted to each other sets human feelings over God’s clear Word. It is the argument of unbelief.” Preus, Rolf. “Love Versus Lust.” *The Brothers of John the Steadfast*. SteadfastLutherans.org, 28 Feb. 2016. Web. 2 Mar. 2016.



Students at a one-day “Easter VBS,” held at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Clarkston, Washington. Through the Gospel proclaimed at this event, five new students have expressed interest in St. John’s Christian day school, Valley Bible Academy.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### 2016 West Central Delegate Conference

Our Savior’s Lutheran Church,  
Jamestown, North Dakota.  
May 31-June 2



#### Agenda:

- Warnings against the misuse of social media and effectively using the same for witnessing—Pastor Chad Seybt
- Proper Use of Sacraments, emphasizing they are something God does for us vs. something we do for God—Prince of Peace, Loveland Lay Delegate
- Book Review: “The Cross and the Prodigal” Luke 15 through the eyes of Middle Eastern Peasants by Kenneth E. Bailey — Pastor Frank Gantt
- Exegesis of John 7:39 with a special view toward giving a good testimony to Reformed—Pastor Aaron Ude
- Are all false teachers wolves in sheep clothing? — Pastor Joel Fleischer
- “Imputation of Righteousness” Objective/universal and subjective/personal —Pastor John Klatt
- Study of I Corinthians 13 (with emphasis on vs. 8) —Pastor Thomas Schuetze
- Look or Leap? What does Scripture say to the congregation about planning for the future? —Pastor Michael Roehl
- Communion Service Speaker —Pastor Paul Krause
- Chaplain—Pastor Delwyn Maas —Submitted by Pastor Mark Gullerud