

August 2016 VOL 59 NO. 2

# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



Faith.

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# Faith Is a Gift from God

*“I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”*

(1 Corinthians 1:4-8).

**T**he Apostle begins many of his letters with thanksgiving to God for giving his readers faith in Christ and eternal salvation. How much more shouldn't we thank and praise God daily for the faith which He has given us? Scripture emphasizes over and over that the faith which receives forgiveness and salvation in Christ is a gift of God's grace.

Our conversion was worked entirely by God. It had to be, because by nature we were spiritually blind (Ephesians 4:18), but *“The Lord opens the eyes of the blind”* (Psalm 146:8). We were spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), *“But God . . . made us alive together with Christ*

(by grace you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:4-5). We were enemies of God (Romans 8:7) and could not receive the things of the Spirit, for they were foolishness to us (1 Corinthians 2:14), but “we have received . . . the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God” (1 Corinthians 2:12).

If it were not for God’s grace bringing us to faith in Christ, we would still be lost with the rest of the world that thinks the Bible is foolishness. Thank God every day that He has come to you in His Word “to open [your] eyes, in order to turn [you] from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that [you] may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in [Christ]” (Acts 26:18).

Now, by our God-given faith, we have been “enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge” (1 Corinthians 1:5). And we have been “called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9) We share all things with Christ, including full access to the throne of God and the inheritance of the saints in light.

As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we have even more reason to thank God. In the early fifth century a British monk named Pelagius taught that man by nature was not totally corrupt and dead in sin, but was able (and indeed obligated) to come to God by an act of free will. The Roman Catholic Church,

while officially condemning Pelagianism, has always taught a mixture of grace and good works for salvation. Martin Luther restored the truth of salvation by grace alone, maintaining that even conversion is purely an act of God’s grace.

After Luther’s death, the Lutheran Church was being threatened again by another variation of the same error, called *synergism*. Synergism attributes to a person’s free will the ability to cooperate with God in conversion. The Formula of Concord thoroughly showed the error of all forms of Pelagianism and synergism, and upheld the principle of salvation by God’s grace alone. We thank God that His truth was preserved for us, and that His grace has saved us from beginning to end. May we never lose sight of this precious truth.

*Lord, 'tis not that I did choose Thee;  
That, I know, could never be;  
For this heart would still refuse Thee  
Had Thy grace not chosen me.  
Thou hast from the sin that stained me  
Washed and cleansed and set me free  
And unto this end ordained me,  
That I ever live to Thee. (TLH 37:1)*



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

## CONVENTION ISSUE PREVIEW



## 2016 Convention To Be Featured Next Month

The thirty-second General Convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) was held on June 23-26, 2016, on the campus of Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Pastors, teachers and delegates from CLC churches and schools across the nation gathered to conduct the work of the church body. Attendees drew encouragement and inspiration from fellow Christians—both those gathered with them in the present, and those

faithful believers who went before them in the past, with a particular focus on the heroes of the Lutheran Reformation.

The convention, whose theme was “**In the Footsteps of the Reformers,**” will be the subject of a special treatment in the September issue of the *Lutheran Spokesman*.



# Election Coverage

**E**lection coverage seems as if it has been going on “forever.” But in reality, it was only last spring when candidates began announcing their campaigns to be the next President of the United States. Since then, the news media have been covering the campaigns and discussing things like polls, “favorability,” and “electability.” Such coverage will continue until the election on November 8th.

Let’s consider a much grander, more glorious kind of election. This election really has been from “forever.” The Apostle Paul writes that this election took place “before time began” (2 Timothy 1:9), “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4).

On November 8th, registered voters will elect the next occupant of the White House. Contrast that to the eternal election, which was made by “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:3) for an “adoption as sons” who would “obtain an inheritance” (Ephesians 1:5, 11). This eternal election was about “salvation” (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

## What about qualifications?

Only natural-born citizens of the United States who are at least thirty-five years old and have been living in the United States for at least fourteen years can be President or Vice President. In addition to that, the candidate has to convince the American voters that he is worthy of their vote.

## What about the eternal election for salvation?

Who is worthy of an election unto eternal salvation? No one. That’s right, no one has done anything to be adopted as sons and to obtain the eternal inheritance of salvation, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Paul writes that this holy calling was “not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:9). Also, that it was “according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace” (Ephesians 1:5-6). This eternal election unto salvation is of GRACE—God’s undeserved love for sinners.

Who will the American people elect to be their next President? We’ll have to wait until November 8th to find that out. What about the eternal election unto salvation?

Will we have to wait until we die to find out whether we’ve been elected?

Praise God, no! To the believers in Thessalonica, Paul gives thanks to God because He “from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel” (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). Just as it was with the believers in Thessalonica, the reason you believe in Jesus as your Savior from sin is that God elected you from eternity for salvation.

## This “election coverage” is a most glorious Gospel teaching!

It is about how God was determined to save you and give you an eternal inheritance in heaven. Before He created the heavens and the earth, He chose you to be His child. When the fullness of time had come, He sent His Son to remove your debt of sin through His death on the cross and to give you life by His resurrection from the dead.

Because of what Jesus did, God carried out His eternal election and called you to faith in Jesus through the Gospel. And through the hearing of that Gospel message, God continues to keep you in the faith all the way to your eternal inheritance in heaven.

In the U.S., we may be growing tired of the presidential election coverage. May we never grow tired of hearing about our eternal election unto salvation! May we ever rejoice to hear that God, from eternity, chose us for salvation, through His amazing grace!

*Thou, mighty Father, in Thy Son  
Didst love me ere Thou hadst begun  
This ancient world’s foundation.  
Thy Son hath made a friend of me,  
And when in spirit Him I see, I joy in tribulation.  
What bliss Is this! He that liveth To me giveth  
Life forever; Nothing me from Him can sever.*



AMEN! (TLH 343:5)

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

Before He created the heavens and the earth, He chose you to be His child.

HYMN 387

# “Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice”

Most of those reading this magazine have, in all probability, known the blessed comfort of the Gospel from their earliest childhood. Brought up in Christian homes by godly parents, they have from their youth known the holy Scriptures, which have made them wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (II Timothy 3:15).

### But what if that were not so?

What if your exposure to the Scriptures had been limited only to the Law (in the narrow sense), and you had not known the Gospel? In the second evening lecture of *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, Dr. C.F.W. Walther notes that “[T]he Law uncovers to man his sins, but offers him no help to get out of them and thus hurls man into despair . . . It conjures up the terrors of hell, of death, of the wrath of God. But it has not a drop of comfort to offer the sinner. If no additional teaching, besides the Law, is applied to man, he must despair, die, and perish in his sins.”

This effect of Law without Gospel may be foreign to our personal experience, but it was exactly that which tormented the young Martin Luther. Living in such abject terror and despair of salvation for years, it is no wonder that his joy was so great when he discovered the central truth of the Bible: salvation is by grace through faith, and not through our own good works.

Hymn 387 in *The Lutheran Hymnal* reflects the joy that Luther felt when he at last learned the truth of the Gospel. Written in 1523, this was Luther’s first congregational hymn. It joyfully comforts Christians with the blessed promises of the Gospel. In just the first half of the first verse, for example, we are encouraged to “**Rejoice**,” to do so with “**exultation**,” and to “**Proclaim the wonders God hath done**” with “**holy rapture**.” These are the emotions of someone heavily burdened by the Law apart from the Gospel, when he first realizes the central truth of the Bible. It is like the first deep breath of air of a man about to drown who at last breaks the surface of the water.

We take breathing for granted and don’t rejoice in our



Hymn 387 . . . reflects the joy that Luther felt when he at last learned the truth of the Gospel.

ability to do so—until something prevents it. So also, those raised with the blessed knowledge of the Gospel may fail to fully appreciate the joy that Luther expresses in this hymn. Luther’s congregation at the beginning of the Reformation, however, understood. Like Luther, they had been brought up in the legalistic doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, and the pure Gospel proclaimed in Scripture and preached by Luther was their first breath of sweet and life-giving air. They understood the experiences expressed in verses 2 and 3 of this hymn, for they also had been “**Fast bound in Satan’s chains**.” Their sins had been their “**torment night and day**.” Their lives under Roman Catholicism “**had become a living hell**” due to the preaching of Law without Gospel.

Perhaps because in 1523 many in his congregation were still struggling with the yoke the papacy had imposed on them for most of their lives, Luther used verses 4-8 of this hymn as a teaching tool to point them to the objective facts of the Gospel. They were encouraged by the facts that God “**planned my soul’s salvation**” (v.4), that the purpose of Christ’s earthly ministry was to “**bring to man salvation**,” and that Christ’s sacrifice would “**From sin and sorrow set him [man] free**” (v. 5).

Roman Catholics of Luther’s day heard much about the suffering, death, and shed blood of Christ. The Holy Spirit used Luther to teach them *why* Jesus endured these things: “**The Foe shall shed My precious blood,/ Me of My life bereaving./ All this I suffer for thy good;/ Be steadfast and believing./ Life shall from death the victory win,/ My innocence shall bear thy sin;/ So art thou blest forever**” (v. 8).

May God grant that we who have known the blessed Gospel from our childhood on may also exult in this truth.



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

# Incomparable!

**With His sacrifice, Jesus didn't bring the blood of an animal, but His own blood.**

*“But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:11-15).*

**T**he word *incomparable* is used in at least two different ways. It can be used of something that is truly one of a kind. It can also be used of someone who is without an equal in quality or extent.

In this portion of Hebrews (9:11-15) we note that Jesus, our Great High Priest, is incomparable in the second sense, without equal in quality or extent when compared to the Old Testament priests.

## Perfect Tabernacle

When God established the Old Testament priesthood, He also directed the Israelites to build the Tabernacle (see Exodus 26). It was essentially a tent made from wood, fine linen, and animal skins. The Old Testament priests served God in a tent, and later in a temple, both made of earthly elements. Christ—our Great High Priest—doesn't serve in a dusty old tent, but in heaven, the perfect tabernacle, not part of this creation.

## Perfect Peace

The Old Testament priest's job was to reestablish peace with God through intercession and sacrifice. Christ, our Great High Priest, came to secure for every human being perfect peace with God. He came as High Priest of the good things to come and obtained eternal peace by means of His perfect single sacrifice.

## Perfect Single Sacrifice

One day a year, on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place with the blood of an animal to make atonement for the people (see Leviticus 16-17). God accepted that sacrifice because He had determined beforehand (Acts 2:23) in mercy to send His Son to offer the single greatest sacrifice on the altar of the cross. With His sacrifice, Jesus didn't bring the blood of an animal, but His own blood. Christ's blood is far greater—not because His was human blood, but because He was (is) fully God and fully human, the God-man. While the sacrifices of the Old Testament priests had to be repeated over and over, Christ's sacrifice was offered once for all.

## Perfect Effects

In Numbers 19, God required the external cleansing of those who came in contact with human remains or graves. These “unclean” Israelites were cleansed with a solution of water and the ashes of a sacrificial heifer. This God-appointed concoction offered outward cleansing, but it did not cleanse the soul, heart, or mind. God be praised that Christ's sacrifice cleanses us from all sin (see Isaiah 53:5, 1 John 1:7)! Jesus' sacrifice is infinitely more powerful to cleanse. It also grants a joyful spirit, enabling us to serve Him in faith, out of cleansed hearts.

## Perfect Mediator, Perfect Covenant

God used Moses to establish the first covenant, the Law. Christ, the Son of God, alone established the new covenant of grace. He is the Mediator of the new covenant (1 Timothy 2:5), the covenant of grace. In this covenant God forgives sins on the basis of Christ's perfect and even *incomparable* (that is, without equal in quality) sacrifice!



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

# Following in His Footsteps

II Kings 2:1-15

When selecting a career path, many young people are drawn to the same vocations practiced by their fathers or mothers. This is notable also in the church—sons frequently aspire to become pastors like their fathers, and sons and daughters to become teachers like their parents. It is not a self-chosen calling, but rather a calling from the Lord (see Ephesians 4:11). All a person can do is prepare for the public ministry and wait upon the Lord for such a calling.

Elisha's "father figure" was Elijah, whom he succeeded as a prophet of God. In Elisha's case, we have no indication that he aspired to the high office of Old Testament prophet, for his original vocation was farming—in which he was quite successful (see 1Kings19:19).

That the office of the public ministry is not a self-chosen calling comes across in the case of Elisha. The Lord instructed Elijah to anoint Elisha as his successor (see 1 Kings19:16). It is interesting to note the manner in which Elisha learned he had received this calling, for Elijah simply walked up to this farmer plowing in the field and threw his mantle, or cloak, on him. This was a distinctive garb, identifying the wearer as one who had received the prophetic calling from the Lord.

To follow in the footsteps of the prophet Elijah was undoubtedly quite daunting. After all, Elijah was singled out as one of the truly great prophets in Israel. John the Baptist was likened to the prophet Elijah in his ministry as the forerunner of the Lord Jesus (see Malachi 4:5; Matthew11:13-14; 17:10-13). It was Elijah whom the Lord chose to appear with Moses and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:3). How could Elisha follow in the footsteps of the great prophet Elijah? How could he be successful in such a high calling?

The Lord revealed to Elijah that his work was done and that he would soon be taken up into heaven by a whirlwind. Elijah then went on a "farewell tour" to the religious schools of the prophets in Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho. Even though Elijah told his successor he didn't



need to go along, Elisha doggedly followed in his footsteps. Why was this? Was it because he was concerned about being left behind without receiving from the Lord what was needed to carry on in the important work of a prophet? He certainly didn't like to hear the students of the prophets repeatedly tell him he would soon be parted from Elijah (see 2 Kings 2:3,5).

Finally, in the following exchange between Elijah and Elisha, it is revealed what Elisha was hoping for in his kingdom work. "Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?' Elisha said, 'Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me' " (2 Kings 2:9). What was this all about? Elisha wasn't asking to be two times more faithful or two times more effective than Elijah in the work of a prophet. Considering Elijah to be his spiritual father, and therefore he his heir, Elisha was asking for a double portion of the inheritance (see Deuteronomy 21:16,17). In other words, he was seeking from the Lord all that was needed to successfully carry out the work of a prophet.

When a son follows in the footsteps of his father as a pastor, or when a son or daughter follows in the footsteps of a parent as a teacher in the church, it is important to guard against thinking that one must fill the shoes of the parent. Why? Because those shoes can be bigger than one is able to fill. We each have received a different measure of gifts and abilities. What is needed is to seek the Lord's help in faithfully carrying out our respective work in the kingdom of God according to the abilities He has given us. All this is true whether our vocation lies in the public ministry or in any other calling in life.

To God be all praise, honor, and glory in whatever calling in life we have.



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



# Is It Permissible for a Christian to Use Birth Control?

This is something you should discuss with your pastor, because there are different types of birth control, different circumstances, different motives, and different preconceived ideas about the subject. When the Bible does not speak directly to specific situations, your pastor can help you identify the relevant biblical principles and how to apply them in a God-pleasing way. Some of those principles appear below.

For starters, children are a special gift from the Lord. This is true, whether it is one child or a dozen, whether they are birth children or adopted, whether gifted with health or special needs. *"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them"* (Psalm 127:3-5). All children are God's special gifts, planned or unplanned. Each is a miracle of the Creator and a precious soul for whom Jesus died.

This is hardly news to a practicing Christian, but remember, it is countercultural to our fallen world. In our consumer-driven society, people want things on their terms and according to their timetable. Children are expected to arrive only within the parameters the parents set. While planning is fine, trying to play God is not. Only the Lord knows what the future holds. He alone knows how many children to give and exactly when to give them.

Does that mean that it's wrong to practice birth control? Not necessarily. There are cases where Christian love requires it (the health of the mother, for one). Unfortunately, there are many more cases that are driven by selfishness or lack of faith. Some methods of birth control are inherently evil because they destroy the fertilized egg, and thereby end a human life. At times in history, people have argued that the only legitimate form of birth control is abstinence/



Any decision about birth control should include an honest look at one's motives, a humble submission to God's Word, and prayers for sanctified judgment.

self-control. Is that true? It depends on how we understand God's purpose for sexual relations in marriage.

The Bible teaches that sexual intimacy is not only, or even primarily, for propagation (a common idea, once promulgated by Roman Catholicism). Prior to the Fall, God instituted marriage with the words *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"* (Genesis 2:24). The two becoming one flesh is part of the exclusive nature of the marriage bond. Husband and wife are to be "one-flesh-close" to each other in a way that neither is close with any other person. The fact that this may result in conception and a child is a further blessing of the Lord.

After the Fall, the intimacy between husband and wife would also function as a safeguard. Marriage itself remained sacred (Hebrews 13:4) even though its participants were now sinful. *"Because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. . . . Do not deprive one another . . . so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control"* (1 Corinthians 7:2ff).

Any decision about birth control should include an honest look at one's motives, a humble submission to God's Word, and prayers for sanctified judgment. Be cautious of the advice you receive. The fact that a friend or neighbor is a Christian does not guarantee that his counsel is biblical. Where mistakes have been made, be grateful that these sins, too, were paid for in full on Calvary's cross.

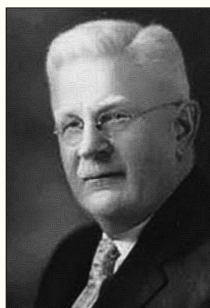


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*As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we take a brief look at the lives of influential and important Lutheran leaders and theologians.*

## J.P. Meyer, 1873-1964

The white-haired man was easily recognized by all as he took his regular walk to the post office in his dark suit and tie, for he seldom wore an overcoat or hat even in the Wisconsin winters. Who was this hardy gentleman? His parents had named him John Peter Carl Meyer, but he often went by J. P. Meyer or, more familiarly, Nixie. (*nix* is Latin for snow.) He signed most of his published articles with a simple *M*.



His father, Johannes, was a German-born pastor trained under Theodore Harms at the Hermannsburg Mission Seminary. He had planned to go to Africa but was persuaded to go to Wisconsin instead, where he served a congregation in Caledonia. He died there when John was only eleven.

John graduated from Northwestern College in 1893, and from the seminary in Wauwatosa, where he studied under Adolf Hoenecke, in 1896. He “bounced around” for his first twenty-four years in the ministry: pastor in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin; dean at Northwestern College; professor at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota; pastor at Oconomowoc, Wisconsin; then back to New Ulm as professor and college president.

In 1920, a vacancy occurred at the seminary in Wauwatosa. Hermann Meyer, John’s younger brother, had died, and John was called to replace him. He would stay there for the forty-four years remaining of his life, and would continue active until weeks before his death. During that time, he taught classes in Christian doctrine, introduction to the New Testament, the interpretation of various books of the Bible, church history, and the Lutheran confessions. He also preached once a month at a nearby congregation.

These were not easy years. He was very active in what has aptly been called “The Thirty Year Controversy” between the Missouri and Wisconsin synods. Missouri had been pursuing the praiseworthy goal of Lutheran unity among the many synods in America, but lost its way when it agreed to joint resolutions with the American Lutheran Church that did not truly settle their differences on a broad spectrum of issues, including such important matters as election and conversion. Missouri also began

engaging in unionistic practices in such areas as the military chaplaincy and Boy Scouts. Nixie was in the thick of all these discussions.

Professor Meyer was known as a patient and humble scholar, but these frequent meetings could become taxing. At one meeting between the seminary faculties, Nixie had had enough of the condescending attitude of some St. Louis professors. For his presentation, he began making frequent use of Latin and even responded to questions in that language, driving home the point that his scholarship was second to none.

This scholarship, and his tremendous energy, can be seen in the more than 250 articles he published in the *Quartalschrift*, the synod’s scholarly magazine. That number rises to nearly 800 when book reviews and comments on news are included. Then there were numerous conference papers and several series of articles written for the *Northwestern Lutheran*, the magazine for the laity.

Meyer’s humility is often commented on and was shown in several ways. He declined an honorary doctorate degree. He would not put his name to his articles, but only that simple *M*. Once he was asked to comment on his prominent former colleagues and he said with humor, “Now all that’s left is *Nichts*” (German for “nothing” and a homonym of *nix*). When repeatedly asked (even through Convention resolution) to put his class notes on Christian doctrine into book form, he resisted. He did complete the scholarly introduction, but got no farther. He insisted that people go to Scripture for their answers and not just say, “Nixie dixit” (Nixie says).

Pastors’ libraries could benefit from his commentary on Second Corinthians, *Ministers of Christ*. Church libraries will benefit from having his *Studies in the Augsburg Confession*. It was written for the lay person and provides a thorough study of that fundamental Lutheran confession.



**Norman Greve** is pastor of St. Peter’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Iron River, Michigan.

# Keith Olmanson 1929-2016



Keith Nolan Olmanson, longtime pastor of the CLC, was taken to be with the Lord on May 26, 2016. A victory service was held on June 2, 2016 at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota.

Keith Olmanson was born in St. Peter, Minnesota, on July 28, 1929, to Bennett and Helen (née Jacobson) Olmanson and was baptized on September 15. He was the oldest of seven children. Keith graduated from St. Peter High School in 1947. He attended Bethany Lutheran Junior College in Mankato and Northwestern Lutheran College in Watertown, Wisconsin. He graduated from Bethany Lutheran Seminary in 1955.

He served for forty years as a Lutheran pastor. His first call was to the Jerico-Saude parish in northeastern Iowa. There he met Sonja Johnson, who became his wife on August 11, 1957. In January of 1958, Keith began serving Ascension Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. During his time in Eau Claire, Keith became a founding member of the CLC, and remained a member until his death. He served in several CLC congregations over the years, including Messiah in Eau Claire, Wisconsin; Faith in Nicollet, Minnesota; Salem in Eagle Lake, Minnesota; Immanuel in Mankato, Minnesota; and Faith in New Ulm, Minnesota. He also filled vacancy positions in Texas, Florida, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

Keith was a devoted father, who led his family and congregations with the Word of God. By his faith in Christ as his only Savior, and by his example as a man devoted to his Lord, he led many others to follow the path to eternal life. He enjoyed reading, gardening, hunting, fishing, and watching football and other sports. He belonged to a local Norwegian club and the Hedmark Lag. He translated Civil War letters written in Norwegian by his great-grandfather, Bernt Olmanson, a soldier in the Union army. He had opportunities to travel in Scandinavia as well as throughout the United States.



Top: the former Faith Lutheran Church of Nicollet, Minnesota, served for many years by Pastor Olmanson. Bottom: Pastor and Mrs. Keith and Sonja Olmanson.

He is survived by Sonja, his beloved wife of fifty-eight years; eight children, twenty-two grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents and his brother Evan.

# Waiting to Come Home

## Milimani, Kenya

**“Patience is a virtue.”** This expression has reportedly been in use since the fourteenth century. It seems that the only time a person is reminded of this is in one of his least virtuous moments. One of the best ways for a person’s patience to be taxed, tested, and tried is to transition from the “time is money” American culture to rural East Africa. The pace of life there is markedly different. The Kenyans have even coined a different expression, “Westerners have watches, but Africans have time.” When was the last time you walked to the store for bread, stopped to greet and converse with nearly everyone along the way, and made it back home in three and a half hours? Have you ever been invited over for dinner and had it turn into a six hour, neighborhood-wide social gathering? Do you remember showing up for church fifteen minutes late only to discover that you were one of the first members of the congregation to arrive? Would you run short on patience if it took you five hours to cover one hundred miles?

All this and more is everyday life in in places like Iganga, Moi’s Bridge, Busia, and Etago. It’s enough to drive an American mad. We like our high-speed internet, fast food, stand-up meetings, sermons of less than twenty minutes, and days scheduled to maximize every fifteen-minute increment. Don’t get me wrong, there’s something to be said for making the most of the time that you have. When it comes to digging a well, no one wants to wait too long, since the welfare of a community may depend on the effort. Jesus said, *“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work”* (John 9:4). The Apostle Paul reminds us that we should

**The Kenyans have even coined a different expression, “Westerners have watches, but Africans have time.”**



Anna Sagala, center, flanked by Anna Gurath and Pastor Michael Gurath

walk *“not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil”* (Ephesians 5:15-16).

What our brothers and sisters can teach us, though, is of great importance. By their example we can learn the truth of such passages as *“Be still, and know that I am God”* (Psalm 46:10), and *“those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength”* (Isaiah 40:31). These times of waiting, though they may be forced upon us, offer the opportunity to sit down with one another, conversing and sharing, all the while strengthening the “tie that binds our hearts in Christian love.” While waiting in the line at the bank for three hours, one has ample time to reflect, and to remind himself to *“Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!”* (Psalm 103:1).

Anna Sagala comes from the small village of Kona Mbaya, meaning “bad corner” due to the sharp bend in the road. You may know her as being from Moi’s Bridge. Anna was raised in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya and was confirmed at a young age. Upon getting married, she moved away to a place where there was no Lutheran church within a two hundred kilometer radius. She attended a Quaker—or “Friends”—church, as it was called. She patiently waited for the time when she could



Some members of the Lutheran congregation at Milimani, Kenya.

return to her Lutheran roots, a wait that lasted over fifty years! Anna's first visit to the U.S. to see her son and his family proved to be the first step in her homecoming journey back to the church of her youth.

A few months of attending a quiet little church on the side of a mountain in Phoenix transported her back to her earlier days of worshiping in a Lutheran church. This is what she had waited for! She hadn't realized she had missed it so badly. You never know what you might find when you travel to the other side of the world, and you also never know who may be walking into your church on any given Sunday!

Anna's visit to Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Phoenix eventually led to the foundation of a church and school back in Milimani, Kenya, on a piece of land that she herself donated. The waiting had been long, but the final result was a partnership that has lasted for seven years and counting. An entire congregation completed

**An entire congregation completed adult instruction over the course of a year and a half; they were confirmed together, and celebrated the Lord's Supper together in their very own Lutheran congregation!**

adult instruction over the course of a year and a half; they were confirmed together, and celebrated the Lord's Supper together in their very own Lutheran congregation! Those who had waited to have their children baptized because they couldn't afford it in other churches didn't have to wait any longer.

As she saw her years on earth begin to dwindle, Anna Sagala wanted to leave something behind. But she had no desire that people should remember *her*. Rather, her prayer was

that the many men, women, and children of this village in Kenya might know and remember *their Savior!*



**Michael Gurath** is pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Arizona, and a visiting missionary to Africa.

# “BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS AUGUST 2016

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

Date	Verse	Reading	Comments
Aug 1	TLH 297	Ecclesiastes 5:1-7	Close your mouth and open your ears, for in His Word, God blesses you.
Aug 2	TLH 456	Ecclesiastes 8:10-17	We cannot know God’s deepest ways, but why must we? The important thing is that He knows us.
Aug 3	TLH 203	1 Kings 12:1-20	[The Women Visit Jesus’ Tomb] Rehoboam foolishly rejected the word of his elders, but the Lord used the incident to fulfill His own word.
Aug 4	WS 788	2 Corinthians 9:6-15	Giving to those in need was an act of faith, an expression of thanksgiving to God for His own indescribable gift in Christ.
Aug 5	TLH 423	1 Kings 15:1-8	Judah turned away from the Lord, but the Lord did not turn away from His promise to the house of David.
Aug 6	TLH 524	1 Kings 16:8-28	These were dark times in Israel, a reminder to us that the natural heart of man is wicked and deceitful.
Aug 8	TLH 525	1 Kings 17:1-24	A breath of fresh air—God’s gracious Word comes to thirsting souls through His prophet!
Aug 9	TLH 464	1 Corinthians 12:12-31	The Spirit has made us one in Christ, having the same gift of salvation, so let’s use our individual gifts to work together.
Aug 10	TLH 405	1 Kings 20:13-43	The Lord showed Ahab that He was the true God, but Ahab made a covenant with the enemy instead. So it goes today, too.
Aug 11	TLH 291	1 Kings 22:1-23	Ahab didn’t want the truth, but would only hear what he wanted to hear. May God’s Spirit help us to accept the truth.
Aug 12	TLH 483	2 Kings 2:1-14	Elisha wasn’t proudly asking to be better than Elijah was, but to inherit his ministry as a first-born son inherits from his father.
Aug 13	TLH 408	Romans 1:16-32	The righteous live by faith in Christ, but the wicked revel in their unrighteousness.
Aug 15	TLH 387	Romans 3:9-31	By law, we are all guilty; but we have a righteousness from God that is apart from law.
Aug 16	TLH 433	Romans 4:1-25	[The Sacrifice of Isaac] Abraham was counted righteous, but he didn’t have to work for it; neither do you.
Aug 17	TLH 413	2 Kings 4:8-37	The Shunammite woman turned to the Lord in her distress, and so did Elisha. He answered them both with a resurrection!
Aug 18	WS 789	2 Kings 8:1-6	God watched over the Shunammite her whole life, even as He continually cares for us.
Aug 19	TLH 290	2 Kings 10:1-11	It’s a gruesome account, but it teaches an important lesson: Not one word of the Lord can ever fail (v. 10).
Aug 20	TLH 296	Romans 5:6-11	[The Call of Samuel] When was the right time for Christ to die? While we were weak and powerless. Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!
Aug 22	TLH 380	Obadiah 15-18	Run to Mount Zion for safety, dear friends. That is, turn to Christ and trust His holiness, for He is the way of escape.
Aug 23	WS 729	Jonah 1:17-2:10	As Jonah was in the fish for three days, so Jesus was three days in the earth and then rose. Salvation belongs to the Lord!
Aug 24	TLH 280	Amos 5:1-6	There was terrible sin in Israel to lament, yet the gracious invitation still rang out: “Seek the Lord and live.”
Aug 25	WS 771	Romans 10:4-17	Righteousness comes by faith, and faith comes through the message preached.
Aug 26	TLH 334	Amos 9:8-15	Judgment would rightly come upon a sinful nation, but God’s blessing and mercy would follow when Christ came.
Aug 27	TLH 386	Hosea 2:2-16	The sinful one who leaves the Lord is like an adulterous woman who leaves her husband, yet tenderness wins her back.
Aug 29	TLH 61	Hosea 7:11-15	[Death of John the Baptist] See God’s weeping heart. He longed to redeem them, but they were not willing. Later, Jesus cried for Jerusalem (Mt 23:37).
Aug 30	TLH 580:4, 8	Romans 13:1-7	God establishes authority for our good, so we can live in peace and safety and have opportunity to grow in Christ.
Aug 31	TLH 399	Romans 15:1-7	Christ died for you and for your neighbor, therefore bear with one another and treat each other with understanding.

## From our Foreign Fields, An Update on the CLCI

**O**ur brethren in the Church of the Lutheran Confession in India (CLCI) have approximately five hundred congregations and preaching stations, with fifteen thousand members, served by over three hundred ordained pastors. Here is a brief glimpse at the work the Lord is doing through them.

**Orphanage** - The CLCI operates an orphanage which currently cares for 35 children with the help of sponsors through Project KINSHIP. The goal of the orphanage, according to its administrators, is “to share the hope of Jesus with these children by caring for them” and “equipping them with Word and faith in the Lord.”

**Seminary** - Over the past fifteen years, 146 fully-trained pastors have graduated from the CLCI seminary, and all of them are now providing valuable services in various CLCI congregations. At present there are forty-two students in the seminary. Three pastors assist Pastor Jyothi Benjamin with teaching duties at the seminary. Sponsorships for seminary students through Project KINSHIP provide assistance for the training of these men for the work of the Lord in the bountiful harvest of souls in India.

**CLCI VBS** - The CLCI holds an annual one-week vacation Bible school. Last year 1,855 children participated in VBS, including 265 children from a non-Christian background. Jyothi writes: “We thank all the CLC USA children and members who supported and prayed for this wonderful VBS program. Their sincere prayers and faithful support has been giving great success to the CLCI VBS ministry here in India. We pray that the Lord may use this CLCI VBS ministry to bring

CLC members support the work of our missions through their offerings to the CLC General Budget and through the CLC Mission Development Fund (MDF). This year we hope to assist the CLCI with the purchase of a new vehicle for their work MDF. Other projects funded through the MDF include India VBS, church roofing, purchase of bicycles, motorbikes for pastors and evangelists, Bibles, and more.

many into His kingdom and to call some into full-time Christian service.”

**Outreach and Evangelism** - The CLCI conducts tract evangelism, distributing hundreds of tracts in schools, colleges, hospitals, railway and bus stations. They also conduct public Gospel meetings in rural slums and tribal villages. Last year they conducted fourteen such meetings, with nearly 8,500 people hearing the Gospel.

**Challenges** - The CLCI has also faced increased challenges due to rising persecution. Jyothi writes of one specific occurrence: “We have been facing many threats



Children at a CLCI congregational meeting.

and dangers during these meetings and evangelism programs. At one tribal village, two young men rose up with knives, scolded us with loud voices, aggressively opposed, verbally abused and tried very hard to stop our CLCI prayer meeting. One young man damaged our camera. . . . Even though we are facing constant threats of dangerous incidents like this, we praise the Lord for the successful prayer meetings and outreaches and for His work, which is moving forward in several tribal areas during this year. All praise and glory goes to the Lord Jesus Christ.”



**Nathanael Mayhew** is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Sleepy Eye, MN and Faith Lutheran Church in New Ulm, MN, and a member of the Board of Missions of the CLC.

## SEEN IN PASSING

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

### State of Wyoming Seeks to Oust Lutheran Judge for Views on Marriage.

It all began in 2014 when Ruth Neely, a longtime municipal and circuit court judge in Pinedale, Wyoming, responded to a question by a local reporter. Judge Neely, a Missouri Synod Lutheran, said that her religious beliefs would not allow her to perform same-sex marriages (a service that no one had requested and that is not among her normal duties anyway). Nevertheless, a critical newspaper article soon appeared, and before long a state judicial oversight commission was seeking her removal from the bench. One of the state attorneys on the commission characterized the traditional Lutheran view of marriage as “repugnant.” The case highlights growing concern that LGBT advocacy is becoming a *de facto* litmus test for those seeking to hold public office, serve as teachers, or pursue other professions that require public accreditation or licensing. A decision on Neely’s removal is pending. Drinnon, Roger. “Synod joins court brief for judge under fire for marriage view.” *Reporter Online*. LC-MS News and Information 26 May, 2016. Web. 1 June, 2016.

### Methodist Church Reverses Its Stand on Abortion.

In a surprise decision, the United Methodist General Conference, meeting in May 2016 in Portland, Oregon, voted to quit the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC), a Washington-based interfaith abortion rights lobby that the United Methodist Church helped found in 1973. Methodists also voted to rescind their forty-year-old resolution affirming *Roe v. Wade*. Observers cited growing representation by third world Methodists, who are more conservative, as well as changing attitudes toward abortion on the part of moderate (and some liberal) U.S. church members. Tooley, Mark. “The Methodist Surprise in Portland.” *Opinion*. The Detroit News 23 May, 2016. Web. 24 May, 2016.

### Lutheran School Under Attack for Resisting President’s Bathroom Edict.

The atheist group “Freedom From Religion Foundation” has brought a formal complaint against St. John Lutheran School (WELS) of Baraboo, Wisconsin, for policies it claims discriminate against LGBTQ students. These policies include having parents provide a birth certificate (with the child’s sex on it) and signing a handbook that gives the school the right to discipline students for exhibiting sinful behavior. The fact that the school receives federal school lunch aid, claim critics, means that the school must comply with the president’s sweeping order that schools allow transgender students to use the bathrooms “that match their gender identity.” Sheer, Holly. “The Left Is Now Targeting Christian Schools In Its Potty Crusades.” *Education*. TheFederalist.com 23 May, 2016. Web. 24 May, 2016.

### Church of Scotland to Offer “Online Baptism.”

In a bid to keep pace with advancing technology, the Church of Scotland is taking “virtual” worship to extremes. A paper presented to their recent General Assembly suggests re-examining issues regarding people who are “not physically present in the congregation,” including voting rights at congregational meetings, people joining remotely, and even allowing “access to the sacraments” (i.e., virtual Baptism and Lord’s Supper). Unlike Lutherans, the Church of Scotland views Baptism as merely symbolic, representing the believer’s spiritual union with Christ. Bingham, John. “Church of Scotland ‘to introduce online baptism’ in bid to boost membership.” *News*. Telegraph.co.uk 17 May 2016. Web. 1 Jun. 2016.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

In accord with our usage and order, Joseph Naumann, who was called by Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota, to the office of associate pastor, was ordained and installed on June 19, 2016. Pastor David Naumann preached; also participating were Pastor Paul F. Nolting and Teacher Douglas Libby.

—Pastor David R. Naumann

### 2016 Great Lakes Pastoral Conference

Morning Star Lutheran Church, Fairchild, Wisconsin — Sept. 27-29, 2016

#### Agenda:

- Old Testament Exegesis: Selection From the Book of Job—Pastor David Ude
- New Testament Exegesis: Romans 5:1ff (continued)—Pastor Andrew Schaller
- Presentation of the Existing Critical Reviews of the ESV. Is This a Translation We Should Recommend? What are Its Strengths? Weaknesses?—Pastor Michael Wilke
- Analytic vs Synthetic Preaching: Comparison and Analysis —An ILC Professor
- A Study of the Resurrection as Presented in the Old Testament —Pastor Richard Kanzenbach
- Church History with a View to Reformation Celebration—Pericope/Bulletin/Special Services—Pastor Caleb Schaller
- Bible Study Materials (13 Lessons or Less) Taking up the Gospel of John and Revelation Together in Considering Jesus’ Humiliation and Exaltation—Pastor Paul Tiefel (suggested by Walter Schaller)
- Chaplain—TBA
- Communion Service Speaker—Pastor Michael Schierenbeck

—Submitted by Pastor David Pfeiffer, Secretary

