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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



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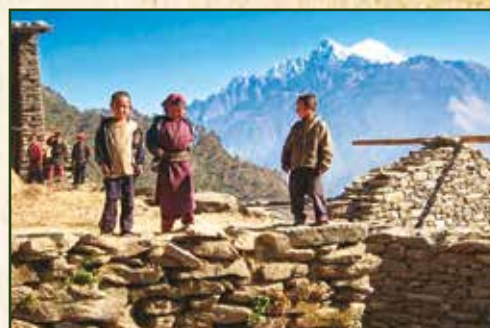
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Our “New Wine” Reformation Heritage

“No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made.

Neither is new wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed.

But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved”

(Matthew 9:16-17 ESV).

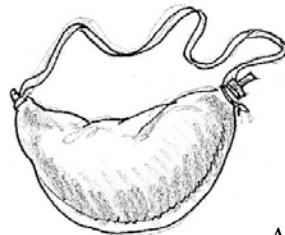
This parable is a practical example of taking good care of household items. Patching an old garment with unshrunk cloth would make no sense—as soon as you would wash it, the patch would shrink and you would be worse off than you were before. Putting new wine (which is still expanding) into stiff old wineskins would only result in a wasteful mess.

What was Jesus’ point with this parable? The religion practiced by the self-righteous Pharisees was an old wineskin. *“Follow our rules, be as holy as we claim to be, and God will reward you”* was their message. This old wineskin was all works and pride, but the new wine that Jesus brought was the opposite. It was confession of sin, and trust in Christ for forgiveness of that sin. Jesus’ point was that *works* and *grace* are incompatible. You can’t “patch up” a religion of works. You can’t pour the Gospel of grace into a heart that claims its own righteousness. It’s one or the other, as St. Paul makes plain: *“And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work”* (Romans 11:6).

This lesson had to be learned again in the days of the Lutheran Reformation. By the 1500’s, the Roman Catholic Church had become an old, dry wineskin. Forgiveness of sins was allegedly for sale; just buy an “indulgence.” Meritorious prayers to Mary and the saints, the demand for good works before forgiveness could be granted, and the teaching that believers would be punished for their sins in purgatory before

entering heaven were all presented as ways that a person could earn at least a part of his own salvation.

Dr. Martin Luther was led by God to the “new wine” of the biblical teaching of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, revealed by Scripture alone. Hearts made new by the true Gospel were joined in a fellowship of churches that took the name *Lutheran*, not to glorify a man but to follow his lead back to Bible teaching.



It has been five hundred years since those days, and we still are blessed by that new wine (God’s free gift of grace) in new wineskins (hearts set free from self-salvation). How will we care for this precious legacy? It begins in our own hearts.

A personal, ongoing reformation means that we use God’s Word to daily convict our own hearts of sin, and to find in Jesus our only Savior from those sins. Next, we will have concern for our fellow Christians, and especially for the coming generation, that the truth of the Gospel may always be taught among us according to the Bible alone. Finally, what better goal could we have than to do everything within our power to spread this Gospel truth far and wide? The earthly effort and cost may be great, but the results for God’s kingdom will be priceless!

Our message, our heritage, and our mission are not based on “salvation by works,” nor “works plus believing,” but rather this blessed truth: *“We conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law”* (Romans 3:28). May God make us faithful stewards of this new wine!



Bruce Naumann is associate pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

The Old Evil Foe STILL Means Deadly Woe

As evidenced in the famous Reformation hymn he wrote, Martin Luther was one person who did not have to be convinced of the existence of the devil, nor of the great danger that Satan poses to the souls of men. The monstrous nature of our old evil foe is aptly depicted in Revelation 20, where he appears as a dragon: “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished” (1-3).

Two things to notice about the dragon are the expanded description of who he is, and what has happened to him because of Christ. In Revelation 12 we see the dragon as a monster on a warpath of destruction. He tried to destroy Jesus when He was just an infant. When that didn't work, he went after the Church through an onslaught of persecution. When that didn't work, he set his sights on individual believers, which still makes him a threat to us all. But he doesn't actually appear as a monster. He disguises his dragon self so that he can set a trap. The trap often comes as a lie of some kind—just as Satan did through the serpent, lying to Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Sometimes the lie gets us to think that this sin or that sin is OK for us to do. Sometimes the lie tricks us into thinking that we don't need to repent, that we're fine just the way we are. Sometimes the lie comes from the other direction, tempting us to think that we have sinned too much, that we are past the point of being saved. In that way the dragon-serpent lives up to his name, Devil and Satan. *Devil* means “false accuser” and *Satan* means “enemy.” Satan is the enemy looking to accuse us

before God, and he has six thousand years of experience in setting the kind of trap that works on so many people. First he tricks the person into doing something contrary to God's will. Then he leads the person to feel guilty about it and run away from God's presence.

*The old evil Foe
Now means deadly woe;
Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight;
On earth is not his equal.*

(TLH 262:1).

If the clash came down to you, a sheep, versus Satan, the dragon, you would simply be another devoured victim in a long line of victims. But you have the Good Shepherd on your side, the conquering King, who slams the door shut on the devil. Because of Jesus, the dragon is locked up, waiting for the day of his eternal condemnation. Because of Christ who died and rose, the traps won't work on us. Satan's two best ploys—the guilt of our sins, and the fear of death

and judgment—are decisively overturned by the Savior. His sacrifice has removed all our sins from God's sight, so that the devil's accusations are empty and overruled by the God Who forgives His people completely. As for the problem of death, which for many is still a monster, the risen Christ has turned it into heaven's doorstep and a temporary separation of the soul from the body.

That is our victory won by Jesus, the Good Shepherd, Who beats the dragon for us. That is our victory to be claimed by faith in the gospel. The devil can't touch you when you follow the Good Shepherd, who says: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life.

And they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27-28).



Steven Sippert is president of Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

HYMN 263

“O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe”

Thousands would die that day in Lützen, Saxony. Everyone on both sides knew it. November 6, 1632. The Thirty Years’ War between the Roman Catholic Imperial forces and the Protestants had been raging for fourteen years. Camped in the fields of Lützen, the Protestant army of Sweden was awakened and assembled. They would attack the formidable Roman Catholic Imperial forces of Duke Albrecht von Wallenstein. Wallenstein was prepared for them with well-sited and well-defended positions.

The weather was foreboding. There was such a heavy fog that the word *Lützendimma* (“Lützen fog”) remains today a part of the Swedish language. The Protestants’ military leader, King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, ordered that his court preacher Jakob Fabricius and all the army’s chaplains hold prayer services. During those services, they all sang “Verzage nicht, du Häuflein klein,” our “O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe.” It was the king’s battle hymn. Before personally leading the troops into battle, Adolphus commanded that “Ein feste Burg” (“A Mighty Fortress”) be played on the kettledrums and trumpets. The soldiers loudly sang along as they marched to battle, with King Adolphus himself leading the first line of cavalry on the right wing.

The Swedish attack was largely successful—at first. But when the Imperial forces launched a counterattack on the center of the Swedish line, the Protestant army was forced into a chaotic retreat. Jakob Fabricius began to sing a psalm, which roused the Swedish officers to regroup the troops and rally against the Catholic forces. In the end, with daylight fading, the Protestant forces captured the main Imperial artillery battery, and Wallenstein ordered his army to retreat to Leipzig. It was an important victory for the Protestants, but it was also a costly one. Gustavus Adolphus was killed in battle with the enemy.

We have our own “religious” battles today. It should not surprise us. In this world, we are and will remain in the Church Militant. Our battles are less dramatic, but certainly longer lasting, than the one-day Battle of Lützen. Culturally, American Christians today face an unprecedented secular

onslaught against biblical doctrine, biblical morality, public expressions of Christian faith, and fundamental societal institutions such as marriage and the family. Americans kill well over one million unborn babies per year—legally! We face the increasing threat of terrorism from militant Islam as well as corruption within our own government. Church attendance and the cultural influence of Christianity have both dramatically decreased in our country. With what attitude, then, shall we engage the enemy in these innumerable battles?

We have our own “religious” battles today. It should not surprise us. In this world, we are and will remain in the Church Militant.

Hymn 263, Gustavus Adolphus’s battle hymn, answers our question. Our foes may seem frightening, the battles we face may tend to discourage us or even cause us to despair; but we are reminded that our fight will eventually end, and it ends with our victory. We therefore fight with

optimism and courage: **“O little flock, fear not the Foe/ Who madly seeks your overthrow;/ Dread not his rage and pow’r./ What tho’ your courage sometimes faints,/ His seeming triumph o’er God’s saints/ Lasts but a little hour” (Verse 1).**

Verse 2 adds the thought that it is not our own cause, but the Lord’s, for which we fight. We therefore know that we are “on the right side” even when we seem to be a small minority, and we know also that the outcome is in His almighty hands; we can therefore be optimistic. **“Be of good cheer; your cause belongs/ To Him who can avenge your wrongs;/ Leave it to Him, our Lord.”**

Our ultimate victory is guaranteed: **“As true as God’s own Word is true,/ Not earth nor hell with all their crew/ Against us shall prevail” (Verse 3).** My friend Don Bishop put it more succinctly. At the end of Revelation in his Bible, he wrote in the final outcome: “We win.”

Be of good cheer, fight the good fight, know that the victory is ultimately ours through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In the end, we win.



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

The Priesthood of Believers: God's Choice

Tension was running high. The air was thick with anticipation. On the one hand, 250 men, censers in hand, burning incense, ready to prove their worthiness to serve the Lord. On the other hand, a lone elderly gentleman; Aaron, the High Priest of Jehovah. They stood before the Tabernacle, awaiting the judgment of God.

In Old Testament times God had very specific instructions as to who should serve Him, when, where, and how. In order to be a servant of God in the temple, one had to be born to it. Only male members of the tribe of Levi had the privilege of carrying out the Lord's work in His house. Even more specifically, a priest had to be of Aaron's bloodline. Korah, a Levite, incited rebellion against Moses and Aaron, accusing the brothers of taking too much authority upon themselves. *"All the congregation is holy, every one of them,"* asserted Korah, *"Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the Lord?"* (Numbers 16:3). Thus the stage was set. Korah's 250 men, men of renown, versus Aaron, the Lord's appointed one.

In New Testament times the Lord Jesus still provides us with called servants. These servants, though, are not born to their service. Rather, the Lord Himself calls the men for the pastoral ministry, and the women and men for the teaching ministry. *"And He Himself [Jesus] gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers"* (Ephesians 4:11). However, this is not the only area in which the ministry of Christ is to be carried out. In fact, it is the duty of the called servants to be about *"the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:12). It is the calling of Christian pastors and teachers to prepare the people of God in their care for their own ministries. We, the individuals of the church—men, women, and children—are to be "Christs" to our fellow

We have been chosen for the ministry of our God just as surely as Aaron and his sons were born into the priesthood long ago.

men. We are to be servants of the most High God, showing Christ's light and love to others. Calling men to repentance and granting forgiveness in Jesus' name should be our daily bread.

Lest we feel unfit or unqualified for such a task, we do well to heed Paul's encouragement to Timothy, *"you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (II Timothy 3:15-17). God does not send us out to do a work for which He has not prepared us!

Peter asked his readers to think of themselves as "living stones," able to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ. He concludes the section with, *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (I Peter 2:9).

We have been chosen for the ministry of our God just as surely as Aaron and his sons were born into the priesthood long ago. Just as Korah and his rebellious crew would have done well to honor the God-ordained order of the priesthood of their day, so let us take seriously the Christ-given directive to preach the Gospel to all nations and encourage one another in our personal ministries—doing all to His Glory!

David W. Bernthal is the principal of Luther Memorial School in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.



The Great Uncompromiser

“Politics is the art of compromise.” Thus politicians and pundits advise that the way things get done is through compromise. No one gets everything they want, but both sides get something. Compromise is necessary and good for the country, it is said.

Perhaps, but not always. The founding fathers compromised on the issue of slavery so that they might forge a nation. Later the *Missouri Compromise* was added to the stew already bubbling. But soon thereafter the mess boiled over, and the nation suffered through a terrible Civil War. The slaves were finally freed, but the ramifications of those earlier compromises are still felt today.

Moses was one who did not compromise. Sent by God to deliver the Hebrews from their slavery in Egypt, Moses had one God-given demand for Pharaoh: “*Let My people go, so that they may serve Me*” (Exodus 8:20).

But Pharaoh acted like a hardboiled, Machiavellian politician. The Egyptian prince refused Moses’ demand, but three times offered a compromise: “Go sacrifice to your God, but do it here in Egypt, in the desert. And make sure you all come back.” Moses responded, “No! Get ready for a pestilence.” Pharaoh then said, “Go, but only the men; women and children have to stay behind.” Moses answered, “No! Enjoy the locusts.” Pharaoh negotiated, “Go; men, women and children, but your flocks and herds have to remain.” Moses again said, “No compromise! We demand total freedom.” (Read Exodus 7-10 for the full account.)

If Moses had compromised on any point, he would have disobeyed God, giving Pharaoh a continuing hold on the people, nullifying their freedom. Moses was a faithful uncompromiser, for the deliverance of his people and the glory of God.

Centuries later the heavenly Father sent His own Son to deliver the world of sinners from their slavery to sin, death and the power of the devil. Like Moses, Jesus also was repeatedly tempted to compromise. His own relatives wanted Him to slow down in His ministry. A close disciple forbade Him to go the way of the cross. His enemies insisted that He modify His message to fit their traditions. Satan tempted Him

with repeated compromises and outright abdication. Even in Gethsemane He did not yield. Jesus was truly the Great Uncompromiser—never yielding an inch or a single word from His Father’s will in working out our blessed redemption and atonement.

Daniel, Peter, John, Paul, Athanasius, and many unnamed martyrs are known for their uncompromising faith and defense of God’s Word. Martin Luther’s “Here I stand” still rings mightily in our ears, as well as his refusal to budge a verb from Jesus’ words, “*This is My body*” (Matthew 26:26). As a result, we have been bequeathed the pure Gospel of salvation by grace alone, the central doctrine of justification by faith alone and the true understanding of the Holy Sacraments.

Today we are being tempted to compromise on many fronts, including creation, abortion, marriage, inspiration of Scripture, and fellowship. The prince of this world would assure us we can have our freedom—only not completely. The world tells us to get lost, but to be sure to come back. The wise of this age tell us we have to give a little to get along. The ecumenists encourage a church where we all agree to disagree on God’s Word. But all this can lead to is freedom lost.

Jesus, the Great Uncompromiser, instructed us “*to observe all things I have commanded you*” (Matthew 28: 20), and said that true and faithful disciples “*abide in My Word*” (John 8:31). St. Paul challenged, “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free*” (Galatians 5:1). Can it be any clearer? No Compromise!

Perhaps in heaven there will be a greatly expanded Book of Fame, even as Hebrews 11 gives us a listing of the ancient heroes of faith. Perhaps we will meet the owners of purple hearts, silver stars, medals of honor—won in the fight of faith. Perhaps also we will see a long, golden wall, simply called “The Hall of the Steadfast Uncompromisers.” We pray that our names will there be engraved.

David Fuerstenau is pastor of Holy Truth Lutheran Church in Ketchikan, Alaska.



If Moses had compromised on any point, he would have disobeyed God.

A Necessary Death

“For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.’ Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:16-22).

Jesus foretold His death several times. He spoke of being lifted up on the cross (John 12:32), of being buried for three days (Matthew 12:40), of giving His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45), and of offering His body and blood for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28).

As His death drew near, His forewarnings became more frequent and detailed. We’re told in Matthew 16:21, “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.” The Greek word for “must” in this verse means necessary.

It was necessary for Jesus to die in order to redeem us from our sins and to mediate all the redemptive blessings of the New Covenant—indeed, so necessary that, when Peter objected, saying, “This shall not happen to You,” Jesus responded in the strongest terms: “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (Matthew 16:22-23).

Consequently, the death of Jesus was no accident. He did not die on Good Friday because the religious leaders of Israel lied, or because Pilate chose political correctness over justice, or because the crowd went from singing “hosanna” to shouting “crucify.” These events were instruments, not accidents. God used them to carry out His plan of salvation; as Peter explained in Acts 3:18, “But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.”

But for the unbelieving Jews, the concept of a crucified Messiah was scandalous (1 Corinthians 1:23). The Messiah they anticipated was to restore Israel’s former glory, oust the hated Romans, and institute social programs: free food, free miracles. And when Jesus made it clear that His kingdom was

not of this world, and that saving the world meant dying for it, many Jews rejected Him.

As the first readers of Hebrews wavered between the Old Covenant and the New, they too may have questioned the benefits and necessity of Christ’s death. The writer of Hebrews clearly explains the purpose of Christ’s death throughout the epistle: “that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone” (2:9), “that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (2:14), “this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (7:27), and “with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (9:12).

In 9:16-22, the author further shows the necessity of Christ’s death by using the analogy of a last will and testament. A will specifies the distribution of an inheritance. Yet, a will is never in force, and an inheritance is never distributed, until the death of the testator.

In the same way, all the blessings of the New Covenant—forgiveness, salvation, peace, joy, eternal life; indeed, everything belonging to Christ Himself, whom the Father “appointed the heir of all things” (1:2)—became ours only through the once-for-all death of Jesus.

When the Old Covenant was dedicated at Sinai, it too required the shedding of blood. But the New Covenant—in a sense, God’s Last Will and Testament—required a far greater sacrifice and far more precious blood; the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, which “cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

Christ’s death was a necessary death. His victorious life guarantees that the blessings of the “will” shall be ours forever.

Mark Weis is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, with locations in North Port and Fort Myers, Florida.



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.

Edmund Reim 1892-1969

Edmund C. Reim finds a place in this Spokesman series because he was called to leadership positions in the church during times of crisis.

When Professor August Pieper neared retirement from the Wisconsin Synod seminary, the listing of nominees favored importation of a German theologian who could help perpetuate a strong German Lutheran culture. With others, Reim urged calling someone who could help transition to the training of pastors for ministry in English-speaking America. He was called.

While seminary president, Reim also served as secretary of a special inter-synodical relations committee, which provided leadership to the synod in the crisis time of fellowship relations with the Missouri Synod. When the 1957 synodical convention of WELS deferred action, Reim resigned as president of the seminary.

As the Church of the Lutheran Confession was organized (“born of necessity”), it called Reim to start a seminary as part of Immanuel Lutheran College. The first classroom was a table behind the furnace in the undercroft of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mankato. From that beginning has sprung a stream of faithful, committed pastors. God be praised. Reim continued a leadership role in the course of



ILC development until his last days. On his sick bed, he was laying out the course of his Latin class for the new semester.

How successful?

Evaluations of Reim’s leadership vary. To some, he was a “troubler of Israel,” and his resignation from the WELS seminary a relief. To many others, he was simply the right man for the needs of the hour, a gift from the Lord to His church. “So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:12).

The making of the man

Edmund Reim’s mother died in his early infancy. His father, Adolph, was a pastor and teacher at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. His grandfather, Gottlieb, also a pastor, came to America as a medical missionary. His beloved wife, Selma, was the daughter of John Schaller, President of the Wauwatosa seminary and descendant of three generations of Lutheran pastors.

It’s in the blood, you might say.



These informal recollections are from **Rollin A. Reim**, 94. With brothers Robert and Norbert—all pastors—he joined his father in the formation of the CLC. Rollin Reim currently lives in Belmont, California.

[Editor’s Note: The following is an excerpt from an obituary that appeared in the September 1969 issue of the Lutheran Spokesman, reflecting the very high regard in which Professor Reim was held by all.]

“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.” In Professor Reim, the Lord gave much to the CLC. Much has now been taken away. Professor Reim was our theologian, and thanks to the Spirit of God, he was a biblical theologian of the first rank. Before he spoke, he always listened with a carefully trained ear to what his Lord was saying in the Scripture.

We can never measure his influence upon the new church body. His spirit imbued it from the beginning. It was his courage and boldness in 1957 at New Ulm, Minnesota which strengthened others to separate from their former synods. For the honor of God’s Name he was willing to give up the presidency of the Wisconsin Theological Seminary at the zenith of his career.

His boldness at that hour was not the boldness of a fighter, for a fighter he was not. He was one of Jesus’ peacemakers. He worked with all his energies to prevent the CLC from becoming a belligerent sect. In the formative years, he warned again and again of the dangers of legalism and pride.

He truly worked tirelessly for his Lord who died for him. After the age of retirement he came to Mankato to establish a seminary – or should one say – create. For it was established without facilities and resources. Even in the last year of his life, after he knew that he was dying of cancer, he continued to give of himself, teaching in the seminary and writing articles for the Journal of Theology and the Lutheran Spokesman. “Lord, Thou hast given us much and we were not worthy. Now, Thou hast taken away. Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us.”

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church Clarkston, Washington

Four years have already gone by since St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Clarkston was blessed with the celebration of one hundred years of God's grace as an organized congregation. It all began in the late winter and early spring of 1912, when several Lutheran families sent a letter to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) asking to be considered as a mission outreach effort. This was done, and two months later, on April 30, 1912, over fifty people assembled to officially organize the congregation. The sermon that Sunday was preached by the President of the Wisconsin Synod, Pastor G.E. Bergemann.



Through the years, the Good Shepherd has sent this orthodox Lutheran congregation twelve called servants to serve as under-shepherds to tend and feed His flock. St. John's has continuously been gifted with a core of faithful and active laymen and women whose earnest prayers have always requested the Lord of the Church to bless them through pure Word and sacrament.

On October 6, 1957, the congregation withdrew from the WELS, in faithfulness to Scripture's teaching on the doctrine of church fellowship. They joined the Interim Conference, which later became the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

In April of 1962 the congregation celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. Shortly after this, a new location was sought, and a new church building was erected at the current location of Fourteenth and Birch Streets. The new church was dedicated

Worship was held in rented facilities until the construction of the first church building, on the corner of Seventh Street and Diagonal in Clarkston. The new facility was dedicated on November 18, 1923.



Children of the 2015 Vacation Bible School, held at St. John's Lutheran Church.



Above, left to right: Pastors David Schaller, Paul Schaller, David Naumann and Paul Krause at the church's hundredth anniversary celebration

in September of 1965. In 1980 the property to the south of the church was purchased, and a new parsonage was built and dedicated to the Lord in September of 1981.

The seventy-fifth anniversary celebration was held October 4, 1987. The theme for the day was “*God’s Word Is Our Great Heritage.*” The guest speaker was the Reverend Leland Grams, who had served St. John’s as vacancy pastor in 1947-48 and again in 1990. He preached the sermon based on 1 Kings 8:57, “*May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us.*”

The one-hundredth took place on May 27th, 2012, with former Pastor Paul Schaller and his son Pastor David Schaller as guest speakers. The text of the day was from 1 Peter 2:1-10, “*You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house.*” This 2:00 P.M. worship service was followed by a meal and a special centennial program. Former Pastor Paul Krause and family also traveled to be with us for this once-in-a-lifetime celebration. The Word of God preached that day reminded us all of our Triune God’s plans of grace carried out in the

The Word of God preached that day reminded us all of our Triune God’s plans of grace carried out in the past, given in the present, and promised for the future.

past, given in the present, and promised for the future. The building swelled with songs of praise and joyous laughter from the dozens who joined us, including visitors from our sister congregations in Seattle and Spokane. A pastor’s choir sang an anthem, as did the regular church choir. A delicious meal was served by the Ladies of St. John’s, and an afternoon program featured three speakers and a DVD presentation highlighting many of God’s blessings in the last one hundred years.

The Christian education of our young people has long been on the minds and hearts of the members here at St. John’s. In 1957 there was serious discussion on starting a parochial school, but a committee decided against it at that time. In 2005 a great effort was put forth to begin a Christian grade school, but again the congregation decided to wait. Finally the Lord granted the heartfelt desire of His people, and in 2014 work began on bringing St. John’s existing classroom facilities into compliance with local building codes. The name *Valley Bible Academy—St. John’s Lutheran* was adopted in 2015. Our first teacher, Desirae Naumann, was called, and school opened that fall with six students. To date, eleven students are enrolled for the 2016-17 school year.

We close with a prayer Pastor Bertram Naumann wrote to this congregation nearly thirty years ago, a prayer that truly still applies to all those who may read this series of articles in the *Lutheran Spokesman*:

“May the Lord of the Church, who by purest grace moved your forefathers to establish your congregation in times past, also continue to inspire you with that same undeserved love and mercy until the Great Day when the Church militant shall be transformed into the Church triumphant.”

To God alone be the glory!



David Naumann is pastor of St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Clarkston, Washington, and Peace Lutheran Church in Orofino, Idaho.

“What are the Concerns for Christians Regarding ‘Legalized’ Marijuana?”

The chief concern for Christians in all things is to glorify God. Scripture says, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV). The issue of legalized marijuana is no different. The answer was simple when the use of marijuana was illegal in all states. Since God’s will for us is to be subject to the authority which He has ordained (Romans 13:1), that settled the matter for Christians.

Now that some states have legalized the use of marijuana, the issue is becoming more complex. We now have separate authorities (federal and state), both ordained by God, but with conflicting laws. We aren’t going to delve into constitutional authority in this article; we’ll leave that to the lawyers and courts to figure out.

This article also isn’t primarily about cannabis as a *medical treatment*. Opinion is divided on the risks and benefits of such treatment. Some doctors think it useful to treat seizures, chronic pain, or the nausea produced by chemotherapy, for example. There are even some cannabis-based medicines that do not include the high-inducing chemical THC. A Christian suffering serious illness will obviously consult his conscience as well as his doctor in making an informed decision on such matters.

This article is about the *recreational* use of marijuana, which is now legal in four states (and more are considering it). Our main concern, as Christians, is the spiritual side of the issue. As with the use of alcohol, there is no Scripture verse to which one can point to definitively answer the question, so we are left with applying various statements of God’s Word to this topic. We start with this one from Genesis 1:12 (ESV): “The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.” Among the plants which God created and called good was the marijuana plant. The plant, of itself, therefore is not sinful.

This, however, does not mean that every use necessarily glorifies God. As was mentioned in a previous article on the use of alcohol (April 2016), any use of marijuana that results in the dissipation of spiritual discernment (“getting high”) does not glorify God (see Ephesians 5:18). Neither does any use that results in any harm, whether physical or spiritual, to our neighbor (see Exodus 20:13 and 1 Corinthians 8:9-11). Many will argue that marijuana affects only the individual using it, and therefore doesn’t fall into either of the above categories. That’s the same argument that many use about alcohol. Yet, it doesn’t hurt anybody *until it does*, and then it’s too late. It doesn’t result in the dissipation of spiritual discernment *until it does*, and then it’s too late.

The main reason that “recreational” marijuana use is an issue is that the salvation of your soul is an issue to your God. He takes no pleasure in the death of a sinner (Ezekiel 33:11). Whatever is a danger to the gracious will of God, our salvation, is certainly something about which the Christian should think seriously. A little bit of oblivion, a little bit of pleasure, a little bit of fun is not worth giving up heaven. God valued your presence in heaven so highly that He gave His only-begotten Son to suffer death and hell for you. If you or someone you know has been caught up in the reckless abuse of marijuana, know that there is forgiveness from God for Jesus’ sake. God’s desire is for you to turn from your sin and to find release from all your burdens and pains in heaven, not in a joint.

Please speak with your pastor about this if you have further questions. As in every other circumstance of life, God has placed him in your life to help you as you strive to live to God’s glory.



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

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS OCTOBER 2016

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

Date	Verse	Reading	Comments [Festivals of the Church Year]
Oct 1	TLH 267	Psalms 46	With God as our fortress, we find safety amid any turmoil.
Oct 3	TLH 340	Psalms 92	We “bookend” our days with the Lord’s love and faithfulness (v. 2).
Oct 4	TLH 570	Psalms 136	A refrain for the ages.
Oct 5	TLH 339	2 Chronicles 9:13-23	Solomon’s riches and wisdom were as great as we can imagine. But think now—one even greater than Solomon is here (Luke 11:31).
Oct 6	TLH 658	1 Timothy 6:3-16	Even as Christ fought the good fight of faith before Pontius Pilate, we as Jesus’ children flee the world’s evil and pursue eternal life.
Oct 7	TLH 266	Titus 2:1-8	Here we have a Christian mentoring program. Elder and youth both take note so that the Word of God may be glorified!
Oct 8	TLH 435	2 Chronicles 14:2-7	Asa sought the Lord and found blessing under His loving care.
Oct 10	TLH 335	2 Chronicles 15:1-15	The people’s oath and commitment here to seek the Lord may well remind you of your confirmation vows.
Oct 11	TLH 269	2 Chronicles 20:20-22	Judah is invited to put her confidence in the Lord, and the armies go out praying, “Oh, give thanks . . .”
Oct 12	WS 794	2 Timothy 4:1-8	As he neared the end of his life, Paul’s confidence and hope was clearly in the Lord’s promised crown of righteousness.
Oct 13	WS 755	Joel 1:1-15	The locust invasion was also a reminder that an even greater judgment was coming. God’s message was, “Repent!”
Oct 14	TLH 336	Joel 2:12-14	Repentance is not a matter of outward show, but it is an attitude of the heart.
Oct 15	TLH 206	1 Peter 1:1-25	We have a living hope through the resurrection of Christ, and we live reflecting that hope.
Oct 17	WS 738	2 Peter 2:1-10	The Lord knows how to rescue His own from their trials.
Oct 18	TLH 397	Isaiah 1:10-18	The people of Judah offered their sacrifices, yet gave clear evidence of their unbelief. Oh, how the Lord desired their cleansing!
Oct 19	TLH 69	Isaiah 2:1-5	When Christ came, hearts would be changed. He would bring justice and forgiveness.
Oct 20	TLH 260	Isaiah 5:1-7	A sad tale here: The Lord did so much to cultivate the “garden of His delight,” yet the people ruined it by their sin and unbelief.
Oct 21	TLH 385:1-7	Hebrews 11:1-16	As we approach our Reformation celebrations, understand that the righteous live by faith.
Oct 22	TLH 481	Hebrews 11:17-12:3	Be encouraged by those who have gone before you and lived by faith. Fix your eyes on Jesus so you do not lose heart.
Oct 24	WS 772	Isaiah 6:1-8	May the Word of the Lord go out into the world with power.
Oct 25	TLH 106:5-7	Isaiah 9:1-7	Now two months from Christmas, the prophecy stirs our hearts. [Lydia Welcomes the Apostle Paul]
Oct 26	WS 768	Psalms 115	Children of God, stand firm, for He is your help and your shield.
Oct 27	TLH 263	Hebrews 13:6	Martin Luther and all Christians who face those who oppose the truth surely take up this verse as their banner.
Oct 28	TLH 377:1	Isaiah 12:1-6	The Holy One of Israel is among us, opening the wells of salvation that we might taste the waters of forgiveness and life.
Oct 29	TLH 251	Isaiah 25:4-26:4	The Lord God is our Rock eternal, the God of our salvation.
Oct 31	WS 731	John 1:5, 15-17	Five hundred years ago the Christian church was losing sight of the Light, but grace and truth through Christ would win the day.

Persecution of Christians in Nepal

According to the World Watch List*, there are twenty-five countries where Christians are currently experiencing extreme or severe persecution. On that list you will find Nigeria (number twelve), Kenya (number sixteen), India (number seventeen), and Myanmar (number twenty-three). You might recognize these countries as places where the CLC is actively involved in mission work through fellowship with foreign church bodies, and with either a full time missionary or regular visits by part time missionaries.

Though not on the World Watch List, persecution has also been on the rise in Nepal. Over the past few months, the Nepalese government has been enforcing a law in its constitution which prohibits forced conversions. One who is convicted can be sentenced to serve a term of three to six years in prison and to pay up to a 50,000 Rupee fine. The government has been using this law to target Christians and to treat Christian organizations as illegitimate bodies.

In June several Christians were arrested for “committing an act of religious conversion” because they distributed a handkerchief and Bible handbook to school children. They were not charged, and were released ten days later, but they must report to the police daily.

In August the offices of a WELS-affiliated church body was raided. Documents, laptop computers, and other office equipment were seized.

Raju Bhitrakoti is one of the leaders of the CLC-affiliated church in Nepal (HCLCN). Concerning the recent persecution, Raju writes, “Who knows [if] the government doesn’t do the same to others or us. It is a difficult situation for us. They are confining our work.” He also writes, “The government is creating a problems for Christians, churches

to operate. They just want to stop the work for the Kingdom which is unstoppable.”

Raju said that the Lord has so far spared the HCLCN from any persecution, and for that we give thanks. In spite of the government action, Christianity is growing by leaps and bounds in Nepal, especially in remote areas. It reminds one of Luke’s account of the growth of the early

Christian church under persecution in the book of Acts, where we are told that “*the Word of God grew and multiplied*” (Acts 12:24).

Please remember our brethren in Nepal, and these other countries, in your prayers. Pray that the Lord would protect them, that He would give them strength and faithfulness to proclaim the truth in

the face of persecution, and that His Word would grow and multiply thereby.

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.



“The government is creating a problems for Christians, churches to operate. They just want to stop the work for the Kingdom which is unstoppable.”

Raju Bhitrakoti



*www.opendoorsusa.org

“Reform” Can Go Too Far

If two aspirin tablets take the edge off a headache, then four must be even better. If sixty minutes on the treadmill is good for the heart, then logging three hours nonstop will be especially beneficial. At least, that’s the thinking of some. Yet experience and common sense say otherwise. Too much of just about anything can be harmful or even fatal.

The same can be said of reformation. Martin Luther was a man whose convictions of faith grounded on Scripture compelled him to take action. He didn’t do things halfway. He wouldn’t sacrifice even a word of Holy Scripture in the name of compromise to keep outward peace. Where there was error, he pointed it out and called for reform. He wasn’t afraid to toss the papal bull of excommunication into the bonfire. At the Diet of Worms, rather than temper his replies to questions in ambiguous generalities, he refused to recant the truth of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. His steadfast, “Here I stand!” still echoes in the confessional Lutheran church today. These will always be vital lessons to pass down to new generations of believers.

But history also shows that reform can go too far. One of Luther’s most ardent supporters was Andreas von Karlstadt, a colleague at the University of Wittenberg. Like Luther, Karlstadt was not afraid to speak out and take action. Unlike Luther, he impatiently pushed reform faster and farther than he should have. While Luther was in hiding at the Wartburg, Karlstadt wreaked havoc in Wittenberg. Without instructing the people first, he instituted a new form of the Mass, conducted services in German rather than Latin, and officiated at services without traditional vestments. He proclaimed that religious images, pictures, crucifixes, and statues of the saints and the Virgin Mary were sinful and should be removed from churches. He attacked music as well, saying, “Relegate organs, trumpets, and flutes to the



Andreas Karlstadt

Be aware of the danger of pushing back so hard against false teaching that we end up going beyond Scripture.

theater.” (*Here I Stand*, Roland Bainton, p. 208). By forcing reform on the people and by insisting on things which Scripture does not mandate, Karlstadt incited rioting in the streets, burdened consciences unnecessarily, and caused spiritual harm to countless souls.

What Karlstadt lost sight of was the proper motivation and guiding principle for God-pleasing reform—love for Christ and love for those whom He redeemed with His blood. St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. . . . If I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. . . . If I give all I possess to the poor . . . but have not love, I gain nothing*” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3 NIV84).

We surely need to stand our ground and not be afraid to take unpopular positions in defense of all the Lord reveals to us in His verbally inspired Word. On the other hand, we also want to be aware of the danger of pushing back so hard against false teaching that we end up going beyond Scripture and insisting on things the Lord doesn’t—whether it be a liturgy, Bible translation, forms of music, or some custom or practice—and so act in an unloving manner by restricting the amazing freedom Christ won for us on Calvary.

Let’s never hesitate to clearly point out sin, rather than defend or excuse it. Like Luther, may we find joy and courage in the exciting, life-giving news that the righteousness sinners need to stand innocent before God is the righteousness of Jesus credited to them by faith. That Gospel good news is the source and life of the Reformation then and now. Let’s keep our eyes on it and never stray from it.



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

Lutheran Spokesman

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

Sophie's Song

One Sunday during worship, everyone noticed a loud, discordant voice issuing from the rear of the church. It began during the first hymn and continued in subsequent hymns and sung portions of the liturgy. Whoever it was was not singing the same words as the rest of us, nor in the same key, nor at the same time. Following worship, several people were found chuckling about it. It turns out that it was the two-year-old daughter of a young Navy lieutenant and his wife who had recently transferred to our congregation. Little Sophie could not yet read, nor even speak more than a few words. But could she ever sing! She sang loudly and joyfully, to a rhythm all her own and in a language known only to her and the LORD. Since then we've noticed visitors occasionally glance in her direction, but it doesn't bother us, nor yet them for very long. Because even the least sensitive listener can detect, in her insistent voice, the echo of the psalmist, “*My heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him*” (Psalm 28:7).



Sophie is a member of Ascension Lutheran Church, Tacoma, Washington.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In accord with our usage and order, **Jeffrey Karnitz**, who was called by Gethsemane Lutheran School, Spokane Valley, Washington, to be teacher and principal, was installed on August 7, 2016. —Pastor Wayne Eichstadt

In accord with our usage and order, **Andrew Roehl**, who was called by Messiah Lutheran Church, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, to teach in grades two and three, was installed on Aug. 21, 2016. —Pastor Paul Tiefel

The **Minnesota Area CLC Reformation Festival** will be held at 4:00 p.m. on October 30 at Berea Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights, MN. The theme will be “The Lutheran Confessions: A Great Reformation Blessing.” A fellowship luncheon will be served following the service. Everyone from the area is invited to join us.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Judge Says Christian Dating Sites Must Allow Same-Sex Searches. In a June settlement of a three-year legal dispute, a California court ruled that the online dating site ChristianMingle.com must accommodate gays and lesbians looking for partners. The decision settles a lawsuit brought by two gay men in 2013 who claimed that the site's restriction of “men looking for women” and “women looking for men” constituted discrimination. The decision also applies to sites such as CatholicMingle.com and AdventistSinglesConnection.com. Gershman, Jacob. “ChristianMingle Opens Doors to Gay Singles Under Settlement.” *LawBlog*. WSJ.com, 30 Jun. 2016. Web. 7 Aug. 2016.

Secularism is a Religion. Those who ridicule Christianity have routinely scoffed at the assertion that secularism (sometimes called materialism) is, itself, a religious belief. “Secularism is a

religion like ‘off’ is a TV channel,” quipped one atheist. But Lutheran columnist Scott R. Murray argues compellingly that materialism is indeed a religion, and furthermore may soon become the state religion. He says, “So-called ‘secularity’ is now being imposed on Christians. This is beginning to be seen in laws such as the California law (SB1146) that would forbid Christian universities from using religious criteria in hiring professors. . . . What makes this position religious is that it is held against all other evidence. Ask a materialist if there is any evidence that could be offered to them that would lead them to reject their materialism, they will likely answer, ‘No, there can be none.’ We would answer the same about giving up faith in Christ. Both are religious positions.” Murray, Scott R. “The Myth of Secular Neutrality.” *News and Information*. Lcms.org, 29 Jun. 2016. Web. 7 Jul. 2016.

Pastors' Wages Rising Faster than Other Professionals. Non-Catholic clergy made \$4.37 more per hour in 2013 than they did in 1983, according to data from a recent Current Population Survey. That figure is more than double the wage increase of the average worker with a college degree. In fact, the study found clergy are gaining ground financially faster than more than nine in ten Americans with college degrees. Not everyone is better off: the study found many individual clergy serving small rural or urban churches who work for low wages and without benefits. Catholic priests are by far on the low end of the scale, earning about half as much as other clergy. Overall, however, the picture for protestant ministers is generally one of improvement in both wages and working conditions. Briggs, David. “Are clergy underpaid? New study reveals rising wages, shorter hours and a diminishing wage gap.” *Ahead of the Trend*. Association of Religion Data Archives, 4 Aug. 2016. Web. 7 Aug. 2016.