

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

JESUS SACRIFICE GRACE FORGIVENESS HOPE JESUS REDEEMER
HOPE LOVE FAITH HOLINESS
REDEEMER LOVE FAITH HOLINESS
RIGHTEOUSNESS GLORY
HE IS RISEN
FORGIVENESS HOLINESS JESUS
GLORY FAITH LOVE GRACE
RIGHTEOUSNESS LOVE FAITH GLORY
JESUS SACRIFICE HOPE LOVE
FAITH JESUS GRACE HOPE LOVE
REDEEMER





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A Day of Deliverance and Hope!

*“Then the ark rested
in the seventh month, the
seventeenth day of the month,
on the mountains of Ararat.”*

Genesis 8:4

What a joyful day of deliverance and hope. It had to have been a terrifying five months being tossed about in the torrential flood. For five months the angry hand of God was destroying every corruption of mankind together with every living thing that lived on dry land. Now at last the ark came to rest on Mount Ararat. The fierce judgment of God was past, and the ark was now back on solid ground. It would be another seven months before Noah and the others could leave the ark and make a new life in the new world, but landing on solid ground gave them the promise and hope of the new life that lay ahead.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH EASTER? Ask yourself why God identifies the specific day the ark landed. Is there anything special about the “*seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month*”? The Children of Israel left Egypt in the seventh month. Moses told Israel, “*This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.*” (Exodus 12:2) Every year after that they were to sacrifice the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of that month. Jesus and His disciples, together with all Israel, sacrificed and ate the Passover lamb according to the command on the fourteenth day, the Thursday of Holy Week. Count it out! Friday was the fifteenth, Saturday the sixteenth, and Easter Sunday—the day Christ rose from the dead—was the seventeenth day of the month. Yes, Jesus rose from the dead on the very same day that the ark came to rest on Mount Ararat.

THAT CERTAINLY IS NOT A COINCIDENCE! That monumental day in the life of Noah and his family was pointing ahead to the most monumental day of all history, the

day of Christ’s resurrection. That was a joyful day of deliverance and hope. The fierce wrath and judgment of God over our sins was past. It burned against Jesus Christ on the cross until

every last sin was destroyed. With our sins paid for and removed, Christ now places us on the solid ground of God’s grace. Forgiveness is won! Eternal life is given!

NOW WE WAIT. Like Noah, we remain on the ark of this world for a time, anticipating the new life in the new heavens and new earth which Christ has prepared for us. How did Noah spend those remaining days on the ark? In anticipation: sending out birds, waiting for their return; taking off the roof to see, ever more eager for the day of departure. Judging by the fact that the first thing he did when they got off the ark was to offer sacrifices of praise, one can easily imagine that they spent those days in amazement and thanksgiving that God had spared them from the punishment that had come upon all flesh.

SHALL WE NOT DO THE SAME? When we really consider that we deserved to perish in the flood together with the rest of humanity, that we should have hung on the cross instead of Jesus, then we will spend our days in wonder and praise that God has saved us. The day of judgment is past, the day of God’s grace and salvation is here. Rejoice! Praise God! And look forward to the day when God calls us to come out of the ark into the new and glorious life that He has prepared for us.



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

Our New Life in the Risen Christ

The year is 1753, in America. As long as you can remember, you have had to obey every whim of your master. He determines everything you do. He tells you when to get up and when to go to bed. He determines what you eat, how much you eat, and when you eat. He even picks your spouse for you and sells your children at the slave market. You have no rights and no hope of freedom. There is no underground railroad to freedom, no Abraham Lincoln defending your cause, and no hope of an Emancipation Proclamation.

You are a slave.

But then someone comes along, someone you've never met, someone you've never done anything for, and says he will help you. He will pay the ransom price to free you from this horrid, hellish slave owner. Having been freed, what then? Would you choose to go back to that slave owner and serve him again? Wouldn't you instead want to use your newly given freedom to live for the one who set you free?

You and I were born slaves to sin and enemies of God. Sin determined everything we did and every choice we made. We could not free ourselves from sin. It owned us. We were bound in those sins and making our slave march to the fires of hell.

But Jesus came to change all that.

He was willing to take our place. He was willing to give His life to purchase our freedom. And He did!

All through Jesus' life, He was the suffering Servant of the Lord. This culminated on the cross as He bore the sins of the world. But on Easter, everything changed. Listen to



Romans 6:9-10, "Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God." Jesus rose victoriously from the dead. All sin had been paid for. The work of bearing sin was out of the picture, done, taken away, crucified, dead, and buried on Good Friday—once for all. The risen Lord lives only to God, as His glorified Son.

In your baptism, God connected you to Christ. "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4) Jesus' death freed you from your sins. His resurrection to life gives you new life. By connecting us with Christ, God has worked new desires in us. No longer do we want to live to slavishly serve our flesh, but we want to live for Him who saved us. We are free to serve and worship our God every day and in every way. This is an accomplished fact in your risen Lord. This is the new life He has given you!

**We thank Thee, Christ; new life is ours,
New light, new hope, new strength, new powers:
May grace our every way attend
Until we reach our journey's end! Amen.**

(TLH 369:6)



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

WS 733, LSB 482

“This Joyful Eastertide”

Death seems final to us. Leaving the room where a loved one has just drawn that last breath, we don't expect to turn around and meet him for lunch the next day. Our general experience is that the dead stay dead.

Yet it has happened in history, more than once, that the dead have come back to life. Lazarus (John 11:43-44) and the multitudes who came forth from Jerusalem's tombs (Matthew 27:51-53) to name some. It is foolish to contend, as some have done and others still do, that there is no possibility of resurrection from the dead.

Our great God and Savior Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, was dead but now is living. It is His real, physical resurrection that we celebrate each spring in the processional hymn by George Woodward (1848-1934): **This joyful Eastertide Away with sin and sorrow! / My love, the Crucified, Has sprung to life this morrow.** So death's finality has been proved false yet again (Matthew 28:5-6).

Moreover, as the Apostle Paul explains (and as is echoed in the hymn's refrain), Jesus' return to life holds greater significance than any other resurrection: **Had Christ, who once was slain, Not burst His three-day prison, Our faith had been in vain.** That is to say that, if Jesus had remained in the grave, our faith in Him would be worthless. For how could we now pray to a dead Savior? How could we now expect a dead Savior to give us His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins, or wash us in the waters of baptismal grace? Above all, if Jesus were still a corpse, how could we ever expect Him to appear in glory to raise us from our own graves and meet Him in the air? If Christ is not raised, then death really would be final, our faith would be meaningless, and we would have no hope of heaven and eternal life.



G. R. Woodward playing the euphonium outside Walsingham Vicarage in the 1880s

But now is Christ arisen, arisen, arisen; But now is Christ arisen. As the anthem's melody steps ever higher and higher, our spirits rise on wings of Easter truth: Our Jesus lives, so all that depends on His resurrection must also be true forever!

In stanza two, the author uses the metaphor “crossing the river” to represent crossing over the river of death into life. **Death's flood has lost its chill Since Jesus crossed the river; / Lover of souls, from ill My passing soul deliver.** Jesus crossed over through death—and rose again. Therefore death holds no fear for us, no “chill.” We, too, will be delivered from its grasp.

Now **My flesh in hope shall rest And for a season slumber / Till trump from east to west Shall wake the dead in number.** Now there is but for us to wait, our bodies to “rest in peace,” until the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

George Woodward was an Anglican priest, but his special interest in music and hymns involved him in publishing or editing a number of carol and song books. He penned *This Joyful Eastertide* not long after his wife's death in 1893, and it first appeared in the volume *Carols for Easter and Ascension-tide* (1894). The tune *VRUECHTEN* is so perfect for this text and sounds so much like English cathedral music that it seems to have been written just for it. In reality, however, it is a Dutch folk tune that dates to the 17th century. You may well hear the hymn in your own church this Easter, perhaps even with trumpets! Let all the world hear that the dead do rise and Jesus lives!



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

The Man In the Fire

Any Sunday School student worth his salt knows of the three men in the fiery furnace. They might even remember their names — Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego—and that these three men had refused to worship a huge golden image set up by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Daniel 3). Reported by their jealous enemies, the three men were given two options: bow down and worship the golden idol, or be cast immediately into a burning fiery furnace. And then Nebuchadnezzar challenged: “*And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?*” (verse 15)

The three condemned men responded that “*our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.*” (verse 17) And even if it were not His will to so save them, no way would they “*serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.*” (verse 18) Bring on your fire! It can only kill our bodies, not our souls!

With the furnace stoked up to seven times its normal temperature, so hot that it killed the men who cast the three into the flames, the three faithful men of God found themselves walking freely in the blast furnace, with nary a hair singed or any smell of fire or smoke upon them. Their God had saved them according to His will and power!

But much more! Amazingly, He had joined them in the fire, which was plain to see. For the king exclaimed, “*I see four men loose . . . and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*” (verse 25) Not three men in the fiery furnace, but four! God not only saved His people, but also walked with them in their great danger.

But this is a promise He has oft repeated. Through Isaiah God assured His people, “*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned. . . . For I am the Lord your God.*” (43:2, 3) Jesus told



Bring on
your fire!
It can only
kill our bodies,
not our souls!

His disciples, who were rowing for their lives, “*It is I, do not be afraid.*” (Mark 6:50) Surely we are warned about smoldering temptations and searing cross-bearing. But the Man in the Fire has promised, “*Lo, I am with you always.*” (Matthew 28:20) What a comfort to know that after our predicted fiery trials, in which we partake of Christ’s sufferings, we will rejoice exceedingly when the glory of the Lord is revealed. (1 Peter 4:12, 13).

Not only is the Man in the Fire **with us**, He was also in the fire **for us**. It’s hard to fully comprehend the pain and suffering involved in being scourged, then nailed to a cross and lifted up to hang in the burning sun as one accursed of both men and God. Jesus was not the only man ever crucified. But He was the only One upon Whom “*the Lord laid the iniquity of us all.*” (Isaiah 53:6) That made His ordeal hellish! In Psalm 22 the Man in the Fire gave us a glimpse of what He endured for us: “*I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.*” (14-15) It might even be said that for three long hours the Father turned out the lights to hide the hellish agony of His suffering Servant. But through such suffering, our Savior “*made intercession for the transgressors,*” and “*by His stripes we are healed.*” (Isaiah 53:12,5)

So it is true that three men were cast into the fiery furnace, but a fourth Man joined them that day and delivered them.

On another day, years later, Jesus alone suffered the burning pain of hell, there to atone for all sin. How can we not remember? How can we not forever praise and thank this Man in the Fire, our Redeemer, our Immanuel?!



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

Christian Crosses are for Your Good

“But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.” (Hebrews 10:32-34)

Our lives are filled with memories. There are good memories and bad memories. Ordinarily it is the good memories we like recalling, because they are pleasant and delightful to dwell on, whereas the bad memories are preferably forgotten, because they can trouble us even to the point of causing nightmares.

In light of this, many would find it unusual to receive encouragement to remember unpleasant and difficult experiences of the past, with the promise that such memories will serve for an individual’s good. Yet this is exactly what we find in the section of Hebrews before us.

Hebrew Christian readers were in danger of forsaking their beliefs because of religious persecution, so the inspired writer advised them to look back to those early days when they first believed in Jesus as their Savior, and to keep on remembering what it was like. Those former times were also quite difficult, and for the same reasons, but back then they had been willing to endure persecution.

In those early days of their Christian faith-life, they had suffered the loss of association with family and friends who not only didn’t share their beliefs, but vehemently opposed them. Such painful ruptures in their relationships put them in a great spiritual struggle. Should they show a greater devotion to God or to those near and dear to them (see Matthew 10:37)? With the help of God, they stood their ground and remained in the faith.

The sufferings these new-born Christians endured involved being publicly scoffed at and ridiculed, along with other forms of persecution. Some of their fellow believers were even thrown into prison for Christ’s sake.

**Even though they suffered
the loss of all things, they
still possessed the priceless,
imperishable spiritual and
eternal treasures that Jesus had
purchased and won for them.**

It would have been easy for them to remain quiet about their faith and not be associated with other persecuted Christians. But they were not ashamed of being numbered among the Christ-believers, and out of compassion they visited and aided their incarcerated brethren (see Matthew 25:36).

This resulted in having their homes broken into and their possessions taken away. However, like the early Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, who rejoiced in being counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus (see Acts 5:41), they joyfully accepted this.

Why is it that such Christians should keep on remembering those troubled times? What good could come from this?

Looking back to those difficult experiences, they could call to mind the wonderful bond they shared with fellow believers; they would remember that the trials and tribulations they underwent caused them to be strengthened in their Christian

faith and resolve; and they would realize that even though they suffered the loss of all things, they still possessed the priceless, imperishable spiritual and eternal treasures that Jesus had purchased and won for them as their Savior.

Jesus told us that it will not be easy being Christians, but rather that there would be crosses to bear (Matthew 16:24). But in His great Sermon on the Mount, He gave us this promise: *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* (Matthew 5:10-12)



May God help us to keep the faith to the very end of our days in the face of all kinds of opposition!

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

In preparation for the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we are presenting a brief survey of the life of Martin Luther. The series will culminate in the October 2017 issue with an account of his posting of the Ninety-Five Theses.

From Recluse to Scholar: 1506-1507



he Apostle Paul commands us to “*comfort each other and edify one another,*”

(I Thessalonians 5:11) because one of the ways our gracious God makes His love and care known to us is through the counsel of other Christians. He came in just this way to Martin Luther during his darkest times.

Once Luther had joined the monastery, he devoted himself completely to the false religion of his day. The Roman church taught that you earned God’s merit by your works, especially through outward displays of repentance. Luther so believed and followed this lie that his fervor toward acts of penance distressed and alarmed his fellow monks.

He routinely starved himself and went long stretches of time without sleep. He exhausted his confessors by spending hours rattling off his sins to them only to come tearing back guilt-ridden over sins he had forgotten to tell them earlier. One wintry evening, he sprawled himself out naked in the snow, other monks having to drag him back inside. On one occasion, he whipped himself so profusely with a strap of barbed leather that he was found unconscious in his cell.

While these outlandish behaviors led most to distance themselves from him, there was one man, Johann von Staupitz, who identified with Luther’s anguish and sought to counsel him. Staupitz oversaw the spiritual life of novices in the Augustinian order and was blessed by God with a certain clarity when it came to the futility of outward works as a path to God’s grace.

Seeing that Luther’s burdened conscience came from the inherent impossibility of earning God’s favor by works of



the Law, he pointed the young monk to such scriptural truths as the forgiveness of sins found in the Apostles’ Creed, and Paul’s writings on justification by faith.

When Luther lamented that his life had no meaning under a God he believed to be an angry judge, Staupitz’s counsel was nearly prophetic: “You don’t realize, Martin, that these trials are useful, even necessary, for you. God is exercising you so that you should not speak so rashly but come to see that He will make use of you as a minister of great things.”

Staupitz steered Luther away from flagellation, fasting, and other self-torture and advised him to channel his fervor into the study of Holy Scripture. He encouraged him to prepare for the priesthood, earn the degree of Doctor of Divinity in Wittenberg, and preach from the pulpit as a way to clarify his thoughts.

Although Staupitz saw the futility of physical works, he still held that works of the heart (a renewed inner life) were needed to secure the forgiveness of sins. Unfortunately, Staupitz would later reject the Reformation. He saw separation from Rome and justification by faith alone as excesses and exaggerations, believing that Luther’s bold preaching led people to “abuse the Gospel for the freedom of the flesh.”

Our God is truly wise and can use all things to further His kingdom. Staupitz was God’s instrument to liberate Luther from wrestling with repentance and to thrust him instead into grappling with the Scriptures. The Word of God won

out in the end, with the return of the public proclamation of the pure Gospel. It is this same Gospel that we, by God’s grace, still have in our midst today.



Timothy Daub is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in Hecla, South Dakota.

Odisha State, India

Pastor Deepak Immanuel is one of the district chairmen in the Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church (BELC) in India. Pastor Deepak first went up to Odisha State to do exploratory work six years ago, in 2011. In 2015, four seminars were held in Odisha: at the city of Bhubaneswar, fifty-four pastors attended; at Baliguda, sixty-two; at M. Puram, sixty-five; and at Phulbani, seventy-six. Visitors are encouraged to attend and study with us. Many of the seminar attendees do not continue with us because they disagree with the teachings presented, but many more do continue.

We hope to begin work soon on a printed catechism in the Oriya language for the pastors to use in their congregations. Pastor Deepak visits up to four times a year. Between visits, three pastors in each district are appointed to carry on the work. These team leaders, or lieutenants, are seeking transportation solutions to help them get around and visit all the pastors who have enrolled. All told, Odisha State is an enormous mission field!

This work places additional pressure on Pastor Deepak, for the labor in Odisha takes a great deal of patience. It is necessary to become acquainted with the pastors, the culture, and so forth. People in Odisha are generally poorer than those further south in Andhra Pradesh or Tamil Nadu states. To make matters more difficult, Odisha State has an anti-conversion law.

In 2015 I visited an orphanage in Odisha that provides care for twenty-five boys, and I witnessed firsthand the deep poverty of this area. While eating one day, we were approached by a man who asked if we were Christians. He said that he was too. He invited us to go to his village, which was perhaps thirty kilometers away. He said that there were seventy families there, and asked if we could spend just one hour with them. Deepak said that we couldn't, because the town was in a restricted area where the Naxalites (murdering and kidnapping thieves) are known to operate. Everywhere in Odisha, except in the capital of Bhubaneswar, a foreigner

needs prior permission to travel and/or to speak. These are some of the restrictions that the devil puts in the way of our outreach, though of course our Lord has assured us of ultimate victory. Let us pray that the Word speeds on and triumphs (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

We do not generally think about dire persecution happening in India, but it has happened and still does happen, especially in Odisha State. In January of 1999, Australian Graham Staines and his two sons were burned to death by Hindu militants. Staines, a Christian missionary, was working among lepers in the Keonjhar area. The radicals set fire to the vehicle the three were sleeping in and held the doors shut with long poles until they died.

There were further severe persecutions of Christians in 2007-08. It was in 2008 that Pastor Deepak's father, also a pastor, was killed. There was also a strong push to reconvert Christians to Hinduism. Times have calmed somewhat since then, and it seems that some of the Christians who converted are being allowed to reconsider.

The Christians in Odisha have shown courage and dedication. They have come out of intense persecution, and so are not as flabby a church as others. And we have renewed our efforts to reach out with the Gospel in Odisha. Let us pray that the attitude of the apostles in Jerusalem may be the attitude of the Christians in Odisha: *"So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."* (Acts 5:41-42)



Pastors at a seminar in Odisha State.



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

MAN UP Retreat—August, 2016

The secular world has many meanings for the term “man up” (see sidebar). When viewed from a Christian perspective, the term takes on much greater meaning. God’s biblical advice and guidance within a God-pleasing framework of the term “man up” was the focal point for a three-day men’s retreat, held August 26-28, 2016 at Wyalusing State Park near Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin. Taking as their theme Ephesians 6:10, “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,” more than sixty CLC men gathered to be enlightened, encouraged, and strengthened.

This retreat came about after much discussion and planning by various pastors and laymen. Several of those involved in the early stages of the planning for MAN UP were not able to attend, but we are thankful for their input. Participants were organized into four teams: *Presentation, Activities, Cooking, and Cleaning*. Those men interested in attending were urged to sign up for one of the teams, and two leaders were assigned to each team to organize their teams and coordinate with other teams.



FRIDAY

The Hugh Harper Indoor Group Camp at Wyalusing has four separate buildings, each accommodating twenty-seven people (108 people total). There is also a main building with cooking facilities, dining room, and a large classroom. Additionally, a large amphitheater with fire pit is on the grounds. After arrival and settling in, attendees were served supper, which was followed by an evening devotion within the theme. The known and surmised histories of Boaz and Joseph served as examples of God-pleasing men. The evening’s relaxation activities included a bonfire, music, and lawn games.



MAN UP — Verb

man up: third-person singular. Simple present: *mans up*.
Present participle: *manning up*. Simple past and past participle: *manned up*

idiomatic: To “be a man about it” means to do the things a man is traditionally expected to do, such as taking responsibility for the consequences of one’s actions, displaying bravery or toughness in the face of adversity, providing for one’s family, etc. (Compare “brace oneself, steel oneself”)



The main focus was on building a strength budget, similar to a financial budget. Each participant identified personal strength sources and strength uses, and each developed a personal mission statement.



SATURDAY

For those who were up and were up to it, “strength training” consisting of hiking the trails, cave exploration, and rock climbing starting at 6:30 A.M. Breakfast was followed by a devotion, and then came the first MAN UP presentation, “Strength for Self.” Referring to Elijah’s strength (I Kings 19) and Paul’s lessons on weakness (2 Corinthians), the main focus was on building a strength budget, similar to a financial budget. Each participant identified personal strength *sources* and strength *uses*, and each developed a personal mission statement. Group discussion helped everyone work on his own budget.

Lunch was followed by the team-building activity of constructing a working catapult and participating in a contest.

MAN UP presentation number two was “Strength for Family.” The theme was broken down into several parts, including family in general, wives (why we have them), and husbands (how to be one). Illustrations from Genesis 19:23-26, 13:10, 19:8, Matthew 1:18-19, and 1 Corinthians 7:4 completed the lesson. The short exercise that followed encouraged each participant to think about his own family.

After supper came the third MAN UP topic, “Strength for Church.” This was the longest presentation of the day. It opened with a visual illustrating “what weakens us.” Participants were asked to complete the statement, “A pastor or layman is discouraged when . . .” Using supporting Bible lessons/passages, a four-part answer to each statement was discussed. The second lesson also opened with a visual illustrating “what strengthens us.”



The statements for participants this time were, a pastor is encouraged when . . . and A layman is encourage when . . . Again, the Lord in His Word provided completions for both statements. Small group discussion followed on the topics “biblical concepts for spending time,” “congregational organization,” “developing leaders,” and “leadership styles.” Full group discussion then reviewed the smaller group findings.

After the last presentation, team building activities included Biblical Trivial Pursuit, a bonfire, and music.

SUNDAY

Strength training in the form of hiking and rock climbing was again offered at 6:30 A.M. An 8:30 breakfast was followed at 9:30 with a divine worship service, with Pastor Paul Nolting serving as the preacher. After the service we discussed weekend takeaways and future planning. Then came lunch and facility clean up. The final activity was the catapult competition finals.

One of the takeaway observations was that fellowship like this weekend usually happens only at synod-wide pastoral conferences and CLC conventions. Having another opportunity for synod-wide fellowship is a blessing from the Lord.



Chuck Templeton is a member of Zion Lutheran Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He is a retired business owner.

The 2017 “MAN UP!” retreat will be held September 22–24 at beautiful Wyalusing State Park near Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.



The theme for the retreat is “*Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*” (Jude 3) Registration deadline is August 1, 2017. You can find out more information, and register for the retreat at www.manup.clclutheran.org. The cost is only \$75 for the weekend, and includes lodging, meals, and activities.

"What is a sacrament, and how many are there?"

You will not find the word *sacrament* in the Bible. If you were to do a quick search in a concordance, the closest match you would find is *sacrifice*. One can easily see that, as far as spelling is concerned, the two words are related—they both share the Latin root word *sacer*, which means "holy." That's where their similarities end, however. A sacrifice is a *holy action*; a sacrament is a *holy mystery*.

It is important to preserve the distinction between these two words because of how Scripture itself speaks about those things that it calls *sacrifices* and those sacred acts which we call *sacraments*. Sacrifices are actions that God lays upon man to do. Yet God never attaches forgiveness of sins or eternal salvation to anything we do. Sacraments do have God's promise of forgiveness and salvation attached to them, and that is because they come from God to man.

The customary explanation which we give to those we instruct in the basics of Christian truth is that a sacrament meets three qualifications:

- 1) it is something instituted by Christ,
- 2) it contains an earthly element connected to God's Word of promise,
- 3) it offers, gives, and conveys the forgiveness of sins. Since the forgiveness of sins is something that must come from God by grace, and can never be earned by anything we do, a sacrament must be something which God Himself is doing to bring to us the forgiveness of sins which Christ earned for us on the cross.

A thorough search of the Bible will reveal that there are but two such sacraments—Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Of Baptism we read that, on the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus*

Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." (Acts 2:38 ESV) Because forgiveness of sins comes to us through Baptism, he also later writes in his first epistle, "*Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*" (1 Peter 3:21 ESV)

We find similar things said concerning the Lord's Supper.

The forgiveness of sins is something that must come from God by grace, and can never be earned by anything we do.

In instituting this holy meal, Jesus said, "*Take; eat. This is My body which is given for you. . . . Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the new covenant shed for you for the remission of sins.*" (Luke 22:19-20) The Apostle Paul assures us, also, that "*as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*" (1 Corinthians 11:26 ESV) To proclaim the Lord's death is to proclaim the forgiveness of sins, which is the purpose of His death.

Since, as the Scripture says, we are saved by grace and not by works, it is clear that these two sacraments are pure grace—works of undeserved love performed by God for man, rather than works of obedience by man for God. What makes them "holy mysteries" is that we would never have known this unless God Himself revealed it to us in His Word. But what a gracious and merciful God we have, that He did not keep these blessed sacraments from us, but delivered them to us, thus bestowing upon us all of the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection.

There is certainly much more that can be said about the sacraments than what can be written in this small space. If you wish to study this matter further, speak with your pastor. God has made him a steward of these sacraments (see 1 Corinthians 4:1), and it would be his pleasure to explain them to you more completely.



Frank Gantt is pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS APRIL 2017

TLH = The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; WS = Worship Supplement 2000; LSB = Lutheran Service Book, 2006

| Date | Verse | Reading | Comments |
|--------|--------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Apr 1 | TLH 148:9-11 | John 17:24-26 | After all your sin and all your rebellion, Jesus still wants you to be with Him. That's amazing. That's divine grace. |
| Apr 3 | TLH 142:1-2 | Isaiah 53:1-5 | What did Jesus look like? He looked very ordinary, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. He was, after all, our Substitute. |
| Apr 4 | TLH 142:3-4 | Isaiah 53:6-9 | The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. |
| Apr 5 | TLH 142:5-6 | Isaiah 53:10-12 | You just can't bury the good news! Can you find the hints of Easter in these verses? |
| Apr 6 | TLH 162 | Matthew 21:1-17 | Jesus comes in the name of the Lord, the One chosen by heaven to bear our sins. |
| Apr 7 | WS 725 | Matthew 21:18-32 | Jesus calls on us to put our trust in Him, especially as He goes toward the cross. |
| Apr 8 | TLH 161 | Matthew 21:33-46 | Jesus was rejected by many, but He would not be defeated, and neither would His people. |
| Apr 10 | WS 723 | Matthew 26:1-30 | The Lord prepared the disciples for His burial by speaking of His crucifixion and giving them His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. |
| Apr 11 | TLH 365 | Matthew 26:31-56 | Running away from Jesus? Sometimes we do. For this we are truly sorry. Lord, have mercy on us. |
| Apr 12 | TLH 151 | Matthew 26:57-75 | It's difficult to stand up for Christ when the pressure is on. When we fail, may we weep tears of repentance like Peter did. |
| Apr 13 | TLH 164 | Matthew 27:1-26 | The sins of Judas, Pilate, and the crowd sent Him to the cross, as well as your sins and mine. |
| Apr 14 | TLH 172:8-10; LSB 430 | Matthew 27:27-56 | It seems like evil has won when the King is mocked and crucified, and His Father disowns Him too. But soon He shall reign forever and ever! |
| Apr 15 | TLH 173; LSB 454 | Matthew 27:57-66 | Holy Saturday, a day of rest, watching, and waiting. "My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning." (Psalm 130:6) |
| Apr 17 | TLH 187 | 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 | "Christ is arisen from the grave's dark prison. We now rejoice with gladness; Christ will end all sadness." |
| Apr 18 | TLH 190 | 1 Corinthians 15:12-34 | "All our hopes were ended had Jesus not ascended from the grave triumphantly. For this, Lord Christ, we worship Thee." |
| Apr 19 | TLH 195 | 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 | "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We now rejoice with gladness; Christ will end all sadness." |
| Apr 20 | WS 736 | Psalms 2:1-6 | Victory belongs to the Lord! When it comes to the wicked, God has the last laugh—although they won't think it's funny. |
| Apr 21 | WS 799 | Psalms 2:7-9 | Christ is risen and all authority in heaven and earth is given to Him. |
| Apr 22 | WS 729 | Psalms 2:10-12 | Jesus will bring judgment upon sin, but there is refuge and safety in the forgiveness He promises. |
| Apr 24 | TLH 196 | Job 19:1-12 | Job struggles with his friends and with God, wondering why such trouble has come upon him. It's a struggle we all face at times. |
| Apr 25 | TLH 197 | Job 19:13-22 | When everything is going against us we cry out, "Lord, have mercy!" |
| Apr 26 | TLH 200 | Job 19:23-29 | Suddenly, in the midst of his grief-stricken monologue, Job remembers his Redeemer. Yes, the same Living One Who is there for us in our grief. |
| Apr 27 | TLH 203; LSB 474 | John 11:1-16 | The death of Lazarus would ultimately serve to glorify Jesus (v. 4). Your own death will do the same. |
| Apr 28 | WS 733 | John 11:17-37 | Martha's confidence was in Christ and in the resurrection at the Last Day. Mary too believed Jesus had power over death (v. 32), and He does. |
| Apr 29 | TLH 206 | John 11:38-52 | This was the last straw for Jesus' enemies. They really couldn't argue with Someone Who could raise the dead, so they would seek His death. |



A New Building In Myanmar

The CLC is in fellowship with two church bodies in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). One is the National Lutheran Church of Myanmar (NLCM), centered in the city of Yangon in southern Myanmar; and the other is Zomi Lutheran Church of Myanmar (ZLC) which is headquartered in Kalaymyo, in the northwestern portion of the country. These two church bodies came into contact with us independently of one another, and are separated from each other by many miles in the country of Myanmar. Due to the distances which separate them, the pastors of these two church bodies are not able to get together with one another very often. But once a year they do attend the Joint Asia Pastoral Conference, along with pastors from India and Nepal, to study God's Word and to encourage one another in their service to the one and only Savior for sinners.

Delegates and attendees to the 2016 CLC Convention may be familiar with one of the leaders from Myanmar. Last summer Pastor Kham, secretary of the ZLC, addressed the CLC convention with greetings from our fellow believers in Myanmar.

With assistance from the CLC Mission Development Fund, the Zomi Lutheran Church of Myanmar was able to purchase property in 2011, with hopes of building a facility there. That hope is now becoming reality, as our fellow-believers in the ZLC near the completion of their facility in Kalaymyo, Myanmar. Two buildings are being constructed; between them they will serve as a worship facility, classrooms for pastoral

training, offices, residence for two pastors and their families, and an orphanage. This project is being funded in large part from offerings given to the CLC Mission Development Fund.

Since the construction began, the ZLC has faced several problems from the government, which is not favorable to Christianity. The government has increased red tape, slowing the building process. It has also added regulation fees and taxes which would not be required of others. Most recently, government agents required that a large construction tax be paid. Missionary Koenig writes, "The CLC has borne most of the costs of construction, while the members have contributed some and helped with labor costs. While our sister church numbers over five thousand souls, they are rather poor, with up to six congregations supporting one pastor as well as contributing to the headquarters expenses at Kalaymyo." Please pray for our brothers and sisters in the ZLC, that the Lord would give them strength and courage, and keep them faithful to Him as they serve their Savior in a country that is hostile to Him and His people.

Check out our Lutheran Missions Facebook page to see more pictures and updates on the construction progress on the building in Myanmar, as well as other updates from our fellow believers around the world. <https://www.facebook.com/lutheranmissions/>



Nathanael Mayhew is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, and a member of the Board of Missions of the CLC.

The M O N D A Y After

How is your mood on Monday? During the NFL season in the community I call home, the Monday mood of many hinges on what happened the previous Sunday afternoon. If our team won, there are plenty of smiles to go around, and total strangers are eager to talk about what a great game it was. On the other hand, with a Sunday loss still fresh in mind, Monday mornings can be brutal. Enthusiasm and goodwill can be hard to find.

So what about the Monday after Easter?

Having seen the risen Christ the night before, the disciples were justifiably overjoyed, but also still trying to process all that had happened. The following Sunday Jesus would again appear to them. Singling out Thomas, the Lord said, “Put your finger here; see my hands.” (John 20:27 NIV84) With multiple appearances over the next forty days, the Lord would continue to fortify His followers’ faith before His ascension to the Father’s right hand of glory.

Now what about us? What will our attitude and mood be the Monday after Easter and beyond?

Will we forget what the angel said at the tomb: “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!” (Luke 24:5-6 NIV84)? Will we be anxious about personal difficulties, despondent over challenges our congregation faces, and fearful for the future of our church body?

How can we despair on Monday when Jesus won the greatest victory of all time on Sunday? “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.” (Isaiah 53:4 NIV84) He suffered the most horrendous death of all time. He absorbed in His own body the punishment for all sin. And He won! He rose in glory, never to die again. All our faults and failures, our unfaithfulness toward God and lovelessness toward those around us—all our sin is gone, buried with Christ, and left behind in the tomb. “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the

dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Rom. 6:4 NIV84)

Because of Easter, Monday holds amazing promise and hope. Let’s live that way!

The world, because of its unbelief, will slip back into its hopeless trek toward death and eternal punishment. But because Jesus lives, we live too. We can greet Monday with confidence. No matter how many deadlines, problems, and uncertainties we face, we don’t have to worry. We have a living Savior who promises, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5 NIV84) Paul concludes, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32 NIV84)

As Jesus gathered His disciples and sent them out to preach the gospel, so He gathers us now, equips us with His Spirit, and sends us out to make disciples of all nations. Problems of tight congregational budgets, small numbers, and persecution from the world are not problems for the King of Kings. Even death itself cannot overcome us with Jesus.

Let’s look forward, not just to our Easter celebration, but also to the Monday after.

Let’s anticipate it as a glorious day to bask in the victory of Christ’s resurrection and to joyfully live for Him Who died and rose for us. Whether our service to Him is in the classroom, workplace, or home; whether it is showing Christ’s love with a smile and kind word to a stranger, working with fellow believers on a church outreach plan, or praying for and supporting the work of our larger fellowship in the CLC, may we live every day as a triumphant “Monday after”!



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

SEEN IN PASSING

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

French Television Bans Commercial Celebrating People With Downs.

More than seven million people worldwide have already viewed a Global Down Syndrome Foundation video entitled “Dear Future Mom.” The video was designed to assuage the anxieties of pregnant women who have learned that they are carrying a Down Syndrome baby. In the video, one such woman says, “I’m scared: what kind of life will my child have?” and in response, Down Syndrome children from many nations tell the woman that her child will hug, speak, go to school, tell you he loves you and “can be happy, just like I am — and you’ll be happy, too.” Late in 2016, however, a French court said that the commercial would be banned from French television. The reason? The video’s depiction of happy Down Syndrome children is “likely to disturb the conscience of women who had lawfully made different personal life choices”; i.e., those who had intentionally aborted a Down Syndrome child. Columnist George Will noted that although such children “are included in the category called ‘special needs’ people. . .



Scene from “Dear Future Mom” (image via YouTube)

what they most need is nothing special. It is for people to . . . quit killing them.” Currently, in approximately ninety percent of instances when prenatal genetic testing reveals Down syndrome, the baby is aborted. Will, George. “The video France doesn’t want you to see.” *Opinion*. NewYorkPost.com, 4 Dec. 2016. Web. 4 Jan. 2017.

Can I Be a Christian If I Don’t Believe In the Resurrection?

In a recent article in the New York Times, widely-followed columnist Nicholas Kristof asked that question of Christian pastor and author Timothy Keller. His answer might surprise you (as will the fact that it was actually printed in the *New York Times*): “Jesus’ teaching was not the main point of his mission. He came to save people through his death for sin and his resurrection. So his important ethical teaching only makes sense when you don’t separate it from these historic doctrines. . . . The Christian Church is pretty much inexplicable if we don’t believe in a physical resurrection.” Kristof goes on to ask whether billions of “good people” like Mahatma Ghandi are consigned to hell because they didn’t believe in Jesus. Keller replies, “The Bible makes categorical statements that you can’t be saved except through faith in Jesus (John 14:6; Acts 4:11-12). . . . You imply that really good people (e.g., Gandhi) should also be saved, not just Christians. The problem is that Christians do not believe *anyone* can be saved by being good. If you don’t come to God through faith in what Christ has done, you would be approaching on the basis of your own goodness.” Kristof, Nicholas. “Pastor, Am I a Christian?” *The New York Times* 25 Dec. 2016, p. SR19. Print.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In accord with our usage and order, **Luke Bernthal**, who was called by St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Mountain View, California, and St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Hayward, California, to be their pastor, was installed on January 29, 2017, in a joint service at the Mountain View church. Pastor Steven Karp officiated and preached.
—Pastor Steven Karp

Christianity: the Most Persecuted Religion Worldwide.

We tend to think of “martyrdom” in terms of ancient Rome and the early church. But people are giving their lives for the Christian faith as much in modern as in ancient times. In fact, according to a recent study by renowned author and sociologist Massimo Introvigne, Christianity is by far the most persecuted religion in the world. On average, one Christian is killed every six minutes in our world today. Last year, over *ninety thousand* Christians were killed for their faith. Of those, seventy percent were in African tribal conflicts, and thirty percent in government persecutions, attacks on Christian villages, or terror attacks worldwide. Cipollone, Elisa. “Christians: The Most Persecuted in the World.” *Faithzette*. Lifezette.com, 4 Jan. 2017. Web. 4 Jan. 2017.