

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



**And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.**

Joel 2:28





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Editor: Paul Naumann, 3732 Claymore Lane, Eau Claire, WI, 54701, E-mail to paul.naumann@ilc.edu; Assistant Editor: Craig Owings; Art Director, Graphic Designer, Print Production: Matthew Schaser; Proofreaders: David Lau and Paula Naumann; Staff: James Albrecht, Theodore Barthels, David Bernthal, Timothy Daub, Wayne Eichstadt, David Fuerstenau, Frank Gantt, Norman Greve, Mark Gullerud, John Klatt, Ross Kok, Joseph Lau, Delwyn Maas, Bruce Naumann, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, John Reim, Michael Roehl, Thomas Schuetze, Chad Seybt, Steven Sippert, Mark Weis.

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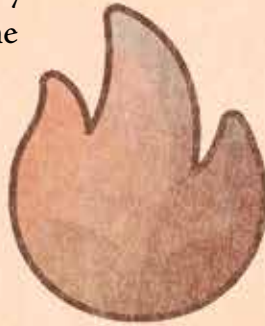
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True Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism has gained popularity in recent years. While it uses the name of one of the church festivals, Pentecostalism is not biblical. It is an idea that searches for proof of God's power outside the means of grace. Adherents pray for gifts of speaking in tongues or divine healing based on the strength of their faith in God. While true Lutheranism is focused on the principle of Scripture alone, Pentecostalism looks for God outside of the Bible. It's a completely misguided idea that appeals perfectly to our selfish sinful nature.



heaven." (Acts 2:5) This crowd was not immediately friendly; some accused the apostles of being drunk at 9:00 A.M. Peter spoke of the miraculous signs that day, but miracles were not the focus of his sermon. Instead, the Spirit-breathed words spoken by Peter were a wonderful presentation of Law and Gospel based on the Old Testament Scriptures. The Law convicted those gathered of their sins: "*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*" (Acts 2:36) As soon as those gathered revealed their sorrow for their sins, Peter moved on to the Gospel: "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" (Acts 2:38)

The results are staggering. About three thousand were added to the church in one day. These people were not converted with signs and miracles, but with the preaching of the Law and Gospel.

Let us instead consider Pentecost as it is revealed in Acts 2.

Many people had gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:15-22). The twelve apostles (Matthias had replaced Judas Iscariot) were gathered together as they heard the sound of a rushing wind. They had tongues of fire rest upon them and were "*filled with the Holy Spirit,*" (Acts 2:4) Who enabled them to speak in foreign languages. Clearly the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles and other early New Testament Christians in a special way as they spoke in tongues, healed others (Acts 3), and even raised the dead (Acts 20:8-10).

The Spirit equipped them for the task at hand. Gathered at Pentecost were the same apostles who had deserted the Son of God as He was led to the cross. Yet now, less than two months later, they boldly proclaimed the name of Jesus, no longer afraid to speak on their Savior's behalf. These men, some of them former fishermen, found their sea legs in their new role as fishers of men. The Holy Spirit filled them with much-needed courage.

Then Peter, who had denied even knowing Jesus, preached in front of the people gathered "*from every nation under*

Often we, like Pentecostals, long for visible evidence that our work as fishers of men pays off.

We thirst for special blessings from God to affirm our faith and we crave gratitude from those with whom we share the Word. In times when God's Word is met with indifference or animosity, it is especially important for us to remember the role of the Holy Spirit, Who was poured on us in Baptism. Just as He worked through the words of those early Christians, so also He works through the words of Christians today.

May each of us be filled with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, and practice the true Pentecostalism that was recorded for us in Scripture: the fearless preaching of the Law and Gospel and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to convert sinners.



Ross Kok is a teacher at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran School in Okabena, Minnesota.

Gifts Galore

Did you know that there are over 30,000 different species of fish in our world? Scientists, and others who keep track of these things, tell us there are about 300,000 different species of plants for our enjoyment. But the granddaddy of diversity goes to the insect kingdom with a whopping 950,000 different kinds of insects and more being described or discovered nearly daily! No doubt about it, our God is a God of variety and diversity. The diversity of plant and animal life that God has given us is astounding! However, the riotous variety of colors, sounds, tastes and abilities of nature that God has provided pales in comparison to the variety of abilities He has provided the crown of His creation, mankind.

Throughout history we see many examples of the relentless curiosity of man expanding or expounding on our knowledge of God's creation. Although man's inquisitiveness may at times get him into trouble, we often have the opportunity to praise God because of the creative abilities of others.

In the Scriptures, we have many examples of people using, and abusing, their gifts from God.

We can use these examples, good and bad, to help us take inventory of our own God-given talents and look for more ways of implementing them in the Lord's service.

David was a mighty warrior for the Lord. He and his mighty men performed many a daring and death-defying deed to show the surrounding nations that Yahweh was indeed the only true God. Yet the Lord was also generous to David in other respects. David had a talent for putting the Word of God to music. This warrior poet sought ways throughout his life to use his talents for the praise of his God and the edification of his fellow men.

The Lord has distributed many other gifts to His people besides those of music and poetry. In the book of Exodus we read of the man Bezalel, who was talented indeed. The

Lord leaves no doubt as to the source of these talents: *"I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship."* (Exodus 31:3-5)

Sometimes people may think they don't have a talent or gift worthy enough to share because it may not be as flashy or noticeable as someone else's gift.

Sometimes people may think they don't have a talent or gift worthy enough to share because it may not be as flashy or noticeable as someone else's gift. When Tabitha/Dorcas passed away, the women of Joppa were quick to point out to the apostle Peter the work she had accomplished with her hands. The many coats and pieces of clothing which had blessed so many individuals were truly blessings from God through the talents of this Christian woman. (See Acts 9:36-43)

We can assume that the apostle Matthew may have had a talent with numbers which led him to his choice of being a tax collector. Judas may have also had this talent, but perhaps should have recused himself from the job of treasurer for the disciples due to his greed. As we mentioned earlier, our many talents can be twisted by our sinful flesh to serve ourselves rather than God and our fellow servants. This is part of being a good steward with our God-given talents—to seek a God-pleasing use for them.

Have you taken inventory of your talents lately?

Do you have a head for numbers, or is working with your hands your forte? Try speaking to your pastor, a council member, elder, or someone in the women's group—ask if there is something you might do for your Lord. God has created us with a variety of talents, all for the purpose of serving Him and our fellow man. See where you fit in, find your niche. I'm sure you'll see the blessings that come to His Church as our various talents work toward this common goal.



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

HYMN 226

“Come, Oh Come, Thou Quickening Spirit”

Think a moment about your daily prayers. To whom do you pray?

The obvious answer would be, “I pray to God, of course.” But press the question a bit further, and you might respond, “I pray to the one true God; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Don’t stop there. Keep riding that train of thought.

In my own case, I often pause before I start praying, and meditate a moment on the astonishing thing that is about to happen: I, a sinful speck of flesh and blood, am about to actually speak to the creator of the universe; the eternal, almighty, holy God; the “I Am” of the Old Testament—and He will be attentive to what I say. Amazing truth! This “meditative pause before prayer” puts me in a right frame of mind. It reminds me of the solemnity of prayer and of the astounding privilege which we—solely for Jesus’ sake—have in being able to directly address God.

Usually, at least in my prayers, my “default” perceptual framework is that I am speaking to God the Father. Somewhat less often, I consciously address my prayers to God the Son—Jesus Christ. Seldom, however, do I address my prayers specifically to God the Holy Spirit. Ironic, isn’t it? It is, after all, God the Holy Spirit Who created saving faith in me in the first place. It is God the Holy Spirit Who day by day sustains that faith, also through the Means of Grace. It is the Holy Spirit Who empowers me to use my gifts in a God-pleasing manner. It is even the Holy Spirit Who helps me to pray. Of the three Persons of the Triune God, it is the Holy Spirit Whom the Bible most directly connects with my day-to-day life as a Christian; and ironically, it is the Holy Spirit about Whom I think least often when my thoughts are upon God.

Hymn 226 in *The Lutheran Hymnal* is a Pentecost hymn of invocation to the Holy Spirit. It reminds us of the work of the

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Romans 8:16

Holy Spirit in our lives, and directs our prayers to the Holy Spirit, petitioning His blessings and guidance. This hymn lists too many blessings of the Holy Spirit for us to enumerate in a one-page article, but consider just the following:

The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit guides us in our daily walk as Christians (Galatians 5:25). **“Grant our hearts in fullest measure/ Wisdom, counsel, purity,/ That they ever may be seeking/ Only that which pleaseth Thee.”** (Verse 2)

The Bible tells us that God’s Word is the “sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17), and that it was this sword that the Spirit used on the first Pentecost to work repentance in many who heard Peter speak (Acts 2:37). **“Show us, Lord, the path of blessing;/ When we trespass on our way,/ Cast, O Lord, our sins behind Thee/ And be with us day by day./ Should we stray, O Lord, recall; [call us back]/ Work repentance when we fall.”** (Verse 3)

The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit assures us that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). **“With our spirit bear Thou witness/ That we are the sons of God”** (verse 4) and **“And when life’s frail thread is breaking,/ Then assure us more and more,/ As the heirs of life unending,/ Of the glory there in store,/ Glory never yet expressed,/ Glory of the saints at rest”** (verse 9).

The Bible tells us that it is the Holy Spirit Who keeps us in the faith to the end (Philippians 1:6). **“Guard, O God, our faith forever;/ Let not Satan, death, or shame/ Ever part us from our Savior.”** (Verse 8)

Daily guidance, true repentance when we sin, assurance that we are heirs of salvation, and continuance in the saving faith to the end—may these blessings of the Holy Spirit be ours at Pentecost and always.



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

Listen to hymn at: <http://lutherantacoma.com/hymns/226.mp3>
Pentecost: Hymn #226 *The Lutheran Hymnal* Text: Rom. 8:15
Author: Heinrich Held, c. 1664
Translated by: Charles W. Schaeffer, 1866, alt.
Titled: “Komm, o komm, du Geist des Lebens”
Composer: J. Christoph Bach, 1680 Tune: “Komm, o komm, du Geist”

God Often Blesses Us in Unexpected Ways

(For context, please read 1 Kings 17:1-16)

Scripture says that Ahab was more evil than the kings before him and that he thought it was a trivial thing to walk in those sins. He overtly promoted the worship of Baal. Ahab's apostasy signaled dark times ahead for the people.

Elijah let Ahab know that the Lord God had taken notice, and for the next three years there would be neither dew nor rain—a direct slap in the face to Baal, who supposedly ruled the sky and brought rain. God determined to save the life of Elijah from the vengeance of the king and from drought-caused famine, and He did so in some unexpected ways.

First, God sent Elijah to hide in the Cherith Ravine, where a brook flowed into the Jordan. The Lord sent ravens to keep him well fed, and there was the refreshing brook for his thirst. When the brook dried up, the Lord sent Elijah to a city in Sidon where a widow would provide for him.

Now, hold on! This is, in many ways, more unexpected than being fed by ravens.

Wasn't there anyone he could stay with in Israel? Why Sidon? Jezebel was from Sidon. The religion there was rank idolatry, and the people were Gentiles. The prophet of the Lord God was going to be taken care of by a Gentile?

And not just a Gentile, a Gentile *woman*! In that society men were the caretakers upon whom the women depended. The prophet of the Lord was going to be taken care of by a woman?

Yes, God chose to save Elijah by sending him to a *pagan* land to be cared for by a *Gentile woman*. Oh, and she was also *poor*. One might have expected Elijah to be sent to some nice, God-fearing family of means somewhere in Israel. That would have been more comfortable and familiar in every way; but that is not what God did. Why?

Let's go to Luke 4:16-30, where we read that Jesus entered the synagogue in Nazareth on a Sabbath Day. After reading a portion of Isaiah 61, He began to preach to the people. It began well enough, as the people all "*marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.*" (v. 22) Then Jesus referenced how God had sent Elijah to Sidon to be cared for

by a widow who was a Gentile; and then the episode where Naaman, also a Gentile, was healed from leprosy as directed by Elisha.

Jesus pointed out how there were many widows in Israel during the time of Elijah and many lepers during the time



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of Elisha. Both the widow of Zarephath and Naaman of Syria were blessed tremendously by their experiences with prophets of the Lord God. They came to know the God of Israel as the one true God. The citizens of Nazareth, however, were outraged that Jesus would reference two occasions in which the Lord God blessed Gentiles in ways that He had not blessed those in Israel. They were offended at the idea that the Lord God would love and bless outsiders—people who were not descendants of Abraham. They became so upset with Jesus that they tried to kill the rabbi Who had called Nazareth His home town.

It is no small thing that God would seek out and bless individuals with backgrounds far different from those who grew up knowing Scripture from their youth. "*The Lord knows those who are His.*" (2 Timothy 2:19) God was committed to keeping Elijah safe and sound to preach another day, and He was committed to giving the widow an opportunity to hear God's Word and come to know that the "*Word of the Lord...is the truth.*" (1 Kings 17:24)



We rejoice that the Lord is so often blessing us in ways that exceed our expectations!

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

A Window to the Unseen World

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”
(Hebrews 11:1-3)

Have you ever traveled by plane on a rainy day when a low ceiling of dark clouds made your flight a forbidding prospect? Yet once on your way, after a brief climb through the clouds, you emerged into a world of dazzling sunlight and clear blue skies.

Having that experience for the first time is a revelation; from the ground it is hard to imagine the different world that exists not far away, above those dark clouds!

Still harder for the human mind to imagine is the unseen world that exists above the one in which we live. Here below we see a world filled with conflict, violence, and misery; one characterized by uncertainty, danger, and fear. But the Scriptures reveal another world where all is peace, with God reigning and with His holy angels carrying out His Word. It is a world that offers peace and freedom from the uncertainty and fear of this world, for there dwells God Who has reconciled our fallen world to Himself by the sacrifice of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

But to us the world above remains invisible, not accessible to us by means of our physical senses.

And for this reason the people of this world keep telling us that God and heaven do not exist and that we are fools for thinking otherwise. Either that or they give a distorted view of God and heaven. How are we to know the true God and receive the blessings that He offers?

Our text tells us that faith is the window by which we see clearly into the unseen world above. By faith we know that there really is a God Who loves us and looks upon us as His own children for the sake of His Son. He really does hear our prayers when we cry to Him for relief from the suffering that we experience in this fallen world.

By faith we have confidence about the things that we hope for from the unseen God. We hope for Jesus to come again as He has promised. We hope to see this evil world brought to an end and in its place the *“new heavens and new earth in*

which righteousness dwells.” (2 Peter 3:13) We hope to enter that new world and live with our Savior and all our fellow believers in perfect joy and peace forever.

Our text strengthens in us that faith by reminding us to avoid the mis-reading of the faith as being “faith in us.” They had faith, and by it they had *“a good testimony.”* That is, they had God’s approval. Abraham believed God, and His faith was

Faith is the
window by
which we **see clearly**
into the unseen
world above.

accounted to him as righteousness (Romans 4:3). As men and women of faith they lived with the confidence that when they died and left this world they were headed for eternal life. They *“all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth.”* (Hebrews 11:13)

By faith we know the true and living God Who created the universe in six days by the power of His Word. We know that by the power of that same Word we have been remade into a new creation. *“For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 4:6)

By faith we now know the things hoped for and the things not seen. And we look forward to the day when Jesus comes again. Then there will no longer be a need for faith and hope; then we will experience what we now hope for and we will behold with our eyes what we now know by faith.

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



"How do confessional Lutherans differ from others regarding Baptism?"

Some of the differences in the ways that Christian churches conduct Baptisms are merely matters of custom and logistics. Other differences surrounding Baptism are significant matters of "what does the Lord say?" and are, therefore, stones in the foundation of sound biblical teaching.

Any conversation about Baptism will benefit from starting with one central question: "Is Baptism an act of a believer directed heavenward, or is it an act of God with blessings flowing to the sinner?" The scriptural answer is the latter, but let's consider the question more closely.

If Baptism is something that a believer does to declare his conviction of faith, then it is an expression of blessings already received and not a means whereby one receives blessings. If this is the understanding of Baptism, then it is logical that someone would not be baptized until he is old enough to understand Scripture and to personally declare his faith. Almost all non-Lutheran Protestants view Baptism in this way—as an act on the part of the believer declaring his faith and commitment.

If, on the other hand, Baptism is something that God does, if its purpose is something God effects, and it is a heaven-to-earth action instead of earth-to-heaven, then its use will be something quite different. Then Baptism and its blessings aren't curtailed by the recipient's ability to declare his faith. Then it's not a rite of passage or a mere human custom, but rather has the full power of God and His blessing and His command.

Jesus commanded His disciples to "make disciples of all the nations." (Matthew 28:19a) Next, Jesus explained how to accomplish this mission: "baptizing . . . teaching." (Matthew 28:19b-20) Baptism has the power to "make disciples"—to bring someone to faith. That is a heaven-sent blessing, not an earthbound ritual or tradition.



On Pentecost, after the Law in Peter's sermon had convicted the hearts of those listening, they asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." (Acts 2:37-38) "Be baptized . . . for the remission of sins." Again, this can be no earthly confession or declaration of man. Even Jesus' enemies pointed out that only God can forgive sins (Mark 2:7).

Peter draws a correlation between the waters of the Flood and the waters of Baptism when he writes, "There is also an antitype which now saves us—Baptism." (1 Peter 3:21). Peter's words could not be more clear: Baptism saves!

Sinful man cannot save himself, so if Baptism saves, God must be at work through it.

In these passages and others like them, God clearly declares that Baptism forgives sins—all sins!—and therefore gives and seals salvation to those "who believe and are baptized." (Mark 16:16)

When we consider the blessings that God says come through Baptism, there is no doubt or uncertainty that Baptism is a heaven-sent blessing. God is the One Who is at work as He showers the gifts of His grace upon the one who is baptized.

With the foundational question answered, many of the other questions surrounding Baptism are framed with a scriptural understanding and can be answered and addressed.

If you have more questions about Baptism, or if you'd like guidance in becoming more fully equipped to speak to others about a scriptural understanding of Baptism, talk to your pastor. He will count it a blessing to study God's Word with you.



Wayne Eichstadt is pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Spokane Valley, Washington.

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.

Road Trip: 1510-1511

I love road trips. I think it is the opportunity to experience new things and meet new people that appeals to me. I cannot say that I have been on a pilgrimage, though. A pilgrimage is a road trip specifically for religious reasons.

In November of 1510, Martin Luther embarked on the longest road trip of his life. His was a pilgrimage from Wittenberg to Rome, the “Holy City,” a journey of 850 miles. He and a fellow monk traveled by foot over several months, staying in monasteries along the way.

For Luther the journey had a twofold purpose.

The official reason was to obtain an audience with Roman church leaders to settle a dispute within the Augustinian Order over a new set of rules by which monks were to live. In this regard the trip proved a failure. Shortly after his return, this episode in church politics resulted in Luther’s being sent permanently from Erfurt to Wittenberg, where he would carry out much of his life’s work.

The other purpose of this pilgrimage was more personal for Luther. At this time in his life he was still trying to appease what he perceived as an angry God through pious living. Praying to saints (up to three different ones each day), self-injury, fasting, isolation, and sleep deprivation were all things Luther did to try to atone for his sins. To go to Rome was the opportunity of a lifetime. Apart from the Holy Land itself, Rome contained more relics and holy places than anywhere else in the world. In January of 1511, upon seeing Rome in the

distance, Luther fell to the ground and cried, “Greetings to you, Holy Rome!”

Luther was not particularly interested in seeing the ruins of a once-great city, whose population had by that time dwindled to about forty thousand. Instead, he craved seeing those churches and relics that he thought would help him spiritually. He believed, as did many, that visiting certain places in Rome would reduce time spent in purgatory for himself and his relatives. Devout visitation to these sites was said to bring forgiveness of sins.

For this reason Luther spent most of his time in Rome visiting such sites. He even commented once that he almost regretted that his parents were still living because he would have been able to free them from purgatory through his efforts. In order to shorten his grandfather’s stay in purgatory, Luther climbed the stairs of Pilate’s palace on his knees. He visited the remains of countless martyrs and over forty popes.

Luther was disillusioned, however, by what he saw and heard in Rome. He was shocked that the Italian priests were poorly educated and did not take their church duties seriously, often rattling through the mass, showing no respect for the sacrament. He saw the lavish wealth of the church hierarchy and heard of the pervasive immorality of the clergy.

On the long journey home, Luther no doubt had time to contemplate all that he had experienced. Did the visits to the relics give him the peace of mind that he sought? Did newfound doubts about the Catholic church begin to creep in? God used this road trip to Rome to prepare His servant for the road ahead.

Joe Lau is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



Thinking Outside the Box

M*ann denkt, aber Gott lenkt*, loosely translated from the German, means that we think and plan, but God carries out. On this subject Scripture holds both a warning and an encouragement. “Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.” (Proverbs 19:21 RSV) “A man’s mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9 RSV) This may serve us as an admonition to take God more into the equation, and an encouragement to remember that He is in charge.

At times we find that our own thinking and planning is not in accord with God’s plan, whether that be His immediate or His ultimate plan. This just shows how fallible we are. Early in my missionary career I had a plan—to have someone come to Nigeria and work there first and then go farther afield. I thought it was a good idea. God thought otherwise. While I waited to have God carry out my plan, time passed. Finally, I saw that my “ideal” plan was not to be carried out. I then accepted the CLC Board of Missions’ call to move to India. Likewise, in our domestic mission efforts here in the U.S., we have at times gone the route (no matter how carefully considered) that may not have been the route God would have had us go. So we have to think outside our “box”—that constructed thought pattern to which we may have devoted a lot of time and effort. That’s why it’s so important, along with our intensive planning, to pray to God for direction and redirection.



There is also the hindrance (though we do not recognize it for that) of our “comfort zone.” It is warm and cozy within the zone, but cold and numbing without. It is safe and secure inside the zonal boundary, but outside it is hazardous and even downright dangerous—for body and mind, but not for spirit. The harvest in India is great, white, and ripe; that is why our missionaries, mission helpers and Board of Missions members are going there. Opportunities overflow among Hindus, Muslims, detached Christians and new workers/pastors.

The differences in culture, and the difficulties of living in the foreign field, may also push us to stay “within.” These also necessitate versatility in approach and methodology in facing them. Necessity is the mother of invention.

We are inherently centripetal in our “church” approach; for after all it is *we* whom we are talking about, *our* own church, all that is familiar to *us*. This does seem to differ from the thrust of the church at its inception and through the centuries.

The church is to be centrifugal, swirling out of the box and out of that delightful zone that is so well known.

Society is eager to tell us what our ambitions should be. In sharp contrast, Jesus states in unmistakable terms what the Christian’s ambition should be, and to the ears of the worldling this statement sounds like the scratching of fingernails upon a blackboard. Which of the two





has our ear? Paul says, “Thus making it my ambition to preach the Gospel, not where Christ has already been named” (Romans 15:20 RSV), and “. . . but our hope is that as your faith increases, our field among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may preach the Gospel in lands beyond you.” (2 Corinthians 10:15-16 RSV) So off he went, and off goes the church— centrifugally.

- **In East Africa above all we aim for the Masai (a tribe only 10% evangelized) and the Muslim.**
- **In West Africa we aim for the Muslim and the animist.**
- **In Central Africa we basically follow our brothers and who they are reaching out to. We are not always in charge.**
- **In Nepal we aim for the Hindus.**
- **In Myanmar we aim for the Buddhists.**
- **In India we aim for the Hindu and the Muslim and adherents of those other false religions.**

There is plenty to aim at.

Even in Chennai, which has a ten percent Christian population, it is not hard to see who we are after. Meticulous Luke records, in our Lord’s sending out of the twelve, “And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere.” (Luke 9:6 RSV) In Luke’s inspired proof passage for the universal priesthood, the sending out of the seventy, he quotes our Lord, “The harvest is plentiful, but

the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Luke 10:2 RSV)

The extent of the overseas mission opportunities given us by the Lord has increased greatly since 2006, as statistics show. Then there were 19,787 brothers and sisters in the faith served by 329 pastors with whom we were working. Now, ten years later, we can say that (conservatively speaking) we work with over 900 pastors and over 60,000 souls. This does not even count assistants, like evangelists and students who are studying to be pastors. Well, after all, He did say the fields were white for harvest! The harvest is not gathered in the village, but in the fields, which means we have to get *out* there!

An analogy for us is the early settlers of our eastern seaboard. As the farmlands played out, there was a continual move to the West. Over the Alleghenies, beyond the Cumberland, out to the prairies—always in search of that virgin soil that would produce the bountiful harvest. Repeatedly, they found it. There were hazards galore, blistering heat, drought and blizzard. Graves marked the route, and yet they went, far outside their comfort zone, with dreams beyond the box. We thank the Lord that His finger is not writing on the wall that we have been weighed in the balance and been found wanting. Instead His finger is pointing, pointing the direction to us clearly. Let us take courage, and keep up the good work of *sending out*.



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.

Above left and right: pastoral trainees at Martin Luther Bible School in India; below left: Missionary Peter Evensen with an MLBS graduate.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Ponsford, Minnesota

Out in the northwest lake country of Minnesota, a summer tourist might well be charmed by the sight of a white frame church set in a park-like grove. It is like so many that were built in early times for rural Christians, those without fast cars to take them to consolidated town churches. But this one at Ponsford was built for reasons of confession rather than convenience.

In his early anniversary history, congregation chairman Lloyd Tretbar tells of the beginnings of St. Paul church. "Prior to 1950, the congregation of St. Paul's Lutheran was a part of the congregation of Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, Ponsford, Minnesota. At that time Mt. Calvary was affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In the early 1950's considerable study was devoted to the doctrinal errors increasingly pervading the LC-MS, in particular its departure from the Scriptural basis for church fellowship and its adoption of the Common Confession in 1950. Our pastor at the time was Francis Schupmann. After a thorough study . . . the congregation voted to sever its fellowship with the LC-MS and to join the Orthodox Lutheran Conference. After a court struggle in 1953-1954, the Minnesota State Supreme Court awarded the church property to the Missouri Synod."

One blow followed another, as test followed test. After discovering that the courts would not uphold the right of a congregation to determine its affairs according to its convictions, the congregation also lost its pastor. Pastor Francis Schupmann was taken from their midst by accidental drowning in 1954, while he was picnicking with the Sunday School.



Ponsford is an unincorporated community in Becker County, Minnesota, United States. Population (2016) is 801.



After more court battles, the congregation, then served by Pastor Arthur Schupmann, left its property at Ponsford and began holding services at the Lloyd Tretbar farm. The formal organization of St. Paul's Lutheran Church took place early in 1955. A church building was to be constructed on a site offered by Mr. Norman Zauche. For almost a year, members cut lumber to help pay for the building materials. On June 23, 1957, the building was dedicated to the glory of God.

In 1957 St. Paul's congregation joined the Orthodox Lutheran Conference, an association of congregations which had withdrawn from the LC-MS for doctrinal reasons. This



affiliation continued for four years. When Pastor Arthur Schupmann was released to accept another call in 1961, the church joined Mt. Olive congregation in nearby Detroit Lakes in calling Pastor Gerhart Becker of Joice, Iowa. He was installed as pastor on September 17, 1961. He served until 1972, when he asked to be released from his call to enter secular employment as Ponsford Postmaster.

By then an independent congregation, the Ponsford group—along with the Detroit Lakes sister church—extended calls without success for almost a year. Then Pastor Clarence Hanson came from Millston, Wisconsin, to assume the pastorate. In 1975 the parish took formal membership in the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

When Pastor Hanson retired from the public ministry, God filled his place with a graduate from Immanuel Lutheran Seminary. Pastor Mark Weis served the congregation from 1978-1980. God continued to bless St. Paul's with faithful pastors. Pastor Glenn Oster served the congregation from 1981-1984. St. Paul's was Pastor Vernon Greve's last parish before retirement; He served from 1984-1988.

"Genuine care and concern for the other person's interest." That is the definition of the Greek word *love*, the same love which God showed us by giving "*His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" (John 3:16) In the fall of 1991, to the glory of God, the members of St. Paul's and Mt. Olive Lutheran Churches in Ponsford and Detroit Lakes reflected that same "genuine care and concern for the other person's best interest" by providing a new parsonage for their called servant of the Word.

Years earlier a one-acre wooded property had been purchased, and a well drilled for Pastor Hanson's mobile home. Later a spacious garage was added. Following that was the addition of half a basement under the mobile home, which provided the pastor's office and storage space as well as a safe

area for a wood-burning stove. But the things of this world don't last, and the mobile home was no exception. A joint meeting of St. Paul's (Ponsford) and Mt. Olive (Detroit Lakes) congregations was held in June of 1991. At that meeting it was decided to replace the mobile home with a one-piece pre-built home from a local lumber yard. Hearts motivated by the Gospel were set in motion to come up with the funds for this need. What wasn't given outright was provided by low-interest loans from members to meet the final costs. And on September 11th a house mover delivered the pre-built house to the property. The arrival of that blessed gift from our God was videotaped by Pastor David Naumann, who served the congregation from 1988 until 1993.

The congregation continued to devote itself to the preaching of the Word of God. In 1993, after Pastor Naumann accepted a call to another parish, a call was issued by St. Paul's and Mt. Olive to Pastor Theodore Barthels. He served the congregation until 2003. God then called Pastor Barthels to Austin, Minnesota, and Pastor John M. Johannes, who was serving Prince of Peace Lutheran of Hecla, South Dakota, accepted the call to St. Paul's. He is the current pastor.

Located on the prairie of northwestern Minnesota, St. Paul's remains founded on the solid rock of God's Word and the preaching of it in spirit and truth. While the founding members are dwindling and passing into the eternal joy of heaven, the next generation continues on with a confident hope that is built on the blood and righteousness of Christ. Numbers have gone down over the years, but the zeal for God's Word remains strong. We thank the Lord for the many

years of His guidance and blessings, and pray for His continued providence.

John Johannes is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Ponsford, Minnesota, and Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.



Graduation at the Martin Luther Bible School in India

On Wednesday, March 29th, 2017, twenty-one students graduated from the Martin Luther Bible School (MLBS) in Andhra Pradesh State, India. The Bible School is run by our brethren in the Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church (BELC) in India and supported through offerings to the CLC general budget. These new pastors will now serve as overseers of congregations in the BELC. Thank the Lord that He has sent out more laborers into His harvest (Luke 10:2).



CLC resident missionary Peter Evenson joins leaders of the BELC in the ordination of a new pastor.

Missionary Peter Evensen attended the graduation and addressed the students. He wrote, "The MLBS graduation program consisted of a welcome address by Rajamani, pastoral counseling address by Moses, Sampath, and Bhaskar. I gave the convocation address based on Paul's words to the Ephesian elders and pastors in Acts 20:28-32. I reminded them that their study of God's Word was just beginning and that they need to 'pay attention to themselves' by studying God's Word first for themselves to be built up so that they can encourage and preach to others. The warning Paul gives of false teachers and teaching also applies to us. This is another reason to study God's Word: so that we know the truth and can recognize error. I encouraged them with the fact that it is the Holy Spirit who made them overseers and will give them the gifts they need to carry out His work. D. Paul then read a number of encouraging Bible passages and led each graduate in his pledge and ordination, as the chairmen and I laid hands on each new pastor."

The MLBS offers a two year program with courses that are similar to those taught at our own Immanuel Lutheran Seminary in Eau Claire.

Regarding the courses studied, Missionary Evensen writes: "They go through an introduction to the Bible, study the Gospels, Acts and Paul's missionary journeys, as well as church history, an overview of the Old Testament, Homiletics, distinguishing between Law and Gospel, Christian Doctrine, Lutheran Confessions, an overview of the Epistles of Paul, the General Epistles and Revelation, the Church Year

and Liturgical Service, Luther's Small Catechism, church administration, conduct and character of pastors, and the doctrinal position of the BELC."

Classes are held four days a week, Monday through Thursday, and on Saturday the students go with a BELC pastor to make a home visit on a member in one of the BELC congregations. Pastor D. Paul is the main instructor at the Bible School, but several other pastors assist in this work. Pastors Ashirvadham, Bhasker, Rajamani and Sampath each teach several days a month.

On April 1st a new batch of twenty-four students began the two-year program at MLBS in preparation to become pastors with the BELC. Missionary Evensen concludes, "Pray that God will be with these incoming students and help them diligently hear and study His Word."

Note: Missionary Evensen recently had surgery on his knee to repair the meniscus, which was completely torn. He has been slowly recovering for the past few weeks, but has several more weeks or months before he is fully rehabilitated. He is resuming his regular schedule of traveling and teaching among our fellow

believers in the BELC, but appreciates our prayers.

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



“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JUNE 2017

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

Date	Verse	Reading	Comments
Jun 1	TLH 225	John 6:60-71	The Spirit gives life through the Word of Christ.
Jun 2	WS 739	Acts 2:1-21	The Spirit moves His people to prophesy—to tell the world of salvation through Jesus.
Jun 3	TLH 210	Acts 2:22-36	Jesus is truly the Son of God, the appointed Savior for all people.
Jun 5	WS 752; LSB 603	Acts 2:37-47	Baptism is for all because the promise is for all, adults and children of all ages alike.
Jun 6	TLH 234	Acts 9:1-9	Jesus rescues one of His enemies. What love and grace!
Jun 7	TLH 231	Acts 9:10-22	The Holy Spirit turned Saul’s heart so quickly that it baffled the Jews, but we rejoice at the power of God and each soul won for Christ.
Jun 8	WS 740	Acts 9:23-31	Saul suffered for the name of Jesus, but so great is Jesus’ name that even though attempts on Saul’s life were made, the church was encouraged.
Jun 9	WS 741	Acts 9:32-43	People saw the miracles that Peter did, but they turned to the Lord, not Peter. (vv. 35, 42).
Jun 10	TLH 236	Genesis 1:1-2	In the beginning—God.
Jun 12	TLH 657	Genesis 1:3-19	God prepared the land, sea, and sky for life, creating everything in its proper order.
Jun 13	TLH 246	Genesis 1:20-31	Human beings are the crown of God’s creation and distinctly unique, not just “highly developed animals.”
Jun 14	WS 743	Genesis 2:1-7	God took special care creating Adam from the dust of the ground.
Jun 15	TLH 426	Genesis 2:8-18	God lovingly created a special place for His special creatures to live, a garden perfectly suited to them.
Jun 16	TLH 622	Genesis 2:19-25	And then He created the perfect companion for Adam. Yes, surely, it was all very good!
Jun 17	TLH 413:1-3	Genesis 3:1-7	Satan came to ruin the people of God, attacking them with temptations not unlike those he still uses today.
Jun 19	TLH 413:4-6	Genesis 3:8-15	But God promised to destroy Satan and his work.
Jun 20	TLH 456	Luke 18:1-8	We are reassured that God does hear the prayers of His believing children and will do what is right for them.
Jun 21	TLH 321	Luke 18:9-14	What is the believing heart’s attitude toward sin? It is sorry and counts on God for mercy (which He gives through Christ Jesus).
Jun 22	WS 753	Luke 18:15-30	Jesus gladly received the children, but the rich ruler went away empty. They had their hearts set on different kingdoms.
Jun 23	TLH 350	Luke 18:31-43	The disciples did not understand yet about Jesus’ death, but they and others saw that He was from God, and they trusted Him.
Jun 24	TLH 373	Ephesians 2:1-10	We do not make ourselves spiritually alive, but God alone gives us faith and raises us up with Christ to the highest places.
Jun 26	TLH 129	Ephesians 2:11-18	Both Jews and Gentiles are made alive, both reconciled to God through the cross, both given access to the Father in heaven.
Jun 27	WS 767	Ephesians 2:19-22	All Christians, young and old, rich and poor, of every nation, are therefore members of God’s household.
Jun 28	TLH 416	Ephesians 5:1-7	Live a life of love, just as Jesus loved you, and put away things that are not fitting for those who appreciate Christ’s cross.
Jun 29	TLH 401; LSB 690	Ephesians 5:8-21	Live as children of the light—because that is who you are!
Jun 30	WS 791; LSB 860	Ephesians 5:22-33	June is the most popular month for weddings, so review what the Apostle says about marriage and how Christ is part of yours.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Considering Leaving Church? Bad Idea.

Religion columnist Karl Vaters advises, “If you’re planning to leave your current church to stop attending church altogether, please reconsider this very dangerous step. Very few decisions are more likely to cause long-term spiritual damage than leaving the church. Even for a little while. Because a little while almost always becomes a very long time. Even deciding to ‘see what’s out there’ in other churches can be a dangerous practice. Church-shopping can become church-hopping, which easily leads to church-stopping. Christianity was never meant to be lived in isolation. We need you. You need us. We need each other.” Vaters, Karl. “7 Bad Reasons to Leave Your Church.” *Pivot*. ChristianityToday.com, 27 Dec. 2016. Web. 16 Mar. 2017.

Hottest New Idea in Church Growth: Conservative Theology?

A recent study of Christian churches in Canada revealed, to the surprise of many, that “theological conservatism in both attendees and clergy is an important predictor of church growth.” Of the churches surveyed, those reaching out to their communities with a doctrinally conservative, Bible-based theology were the churches more likely to thrive and grow. The study was published in the December 2016 issue of the prestigious peer-reviewed journal, *Review of Religious Research*. Commenting on the study, author Owen Strachan said, “For years we had been told that liberal doctrine was needed to draw people, but the data show the reverse is true. It turns out people actually want to be called to believe in something, belong to somewhere, commit to Someone. Not everyone is drawn to conservative biblical doctrine, of course. But many are. What an encouragement this is to Bible-loving, gospel-preaching pastors and churches!” Strachan, Owen. “The Hot ‘New’ Church Growth Method.” *Ministry*. TheGospelCoalition.org, 12 Jan. 2017. Web. 11 Apr. 2017.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Summer **Traveling Vacation Bible School (TVBS)** is in need of volunteers for the summer Kingdom Work. Trips are planned to Washington, California, Illinois, Minnesota, and North Dakota. If you are interested in helping by taking an expense-paid vacation with your family this summer, please go to www.clctvbs.org for more information, or to register.

— Teacher Ross Roehl

Anniversary.

Immanuel Ev. Lutheran Church of Mankato will celebrate the 150th Anniversary of its Christian day school on Sunday, August 13, 2017. Pastor Timothy Wheaton of Blue Springs, Missouri—an alumnus of the school—will serve as the guest speaker for the occasion. A church picnic will follow the morning service. All alumni of the school and other interested parties are invited to join us upon this day celebrating the Lord’s many blessings.

— Pastor Paul Nolting

In accord with our usage and order, **Frank Gantt**, who was called by Zion Lutheran Church, Lawrenceville, Georgia, to be its pastor, was installed on Palm Sunday, April 9, 2017. Assisting at the service were Pastors Douglas Priestap, David Pfeiffer and David Koenig. — Pastor V. Fossum

CLC General Pastoral Conference

June 13-15, 2017 — Agenda:

- Old Testament Exegesis: Amos 1:1ff. —Pastor John Hein
 - New Testament Exegesis: 2 Thessalonians 1:1ff.—Pastor David Naumann
 - Eschatology and the Olivet Discourse, a Study of Matthew 24-25—Pastor Frank Gantt
 - Imitating the Reformed: How Do Their Practices Influence Us? —Pastor Terrel Kesterson
 - Exercising Christian Wisdom and Liberty in Matters of Adiaphora and Offense —Pastor David Reim
 - Respecting the Calls of Brother Pastors —Pastor Michael Roehl
 - The 95 Theses: Why They Mattered in 1517 and Why They Matter Today —Pastor Thomas Schuetze
 - Overview of Confessional Lutheran Fellowship Through the Centuries —Pastor Chad Seybt
 - Joint Statement Discussion —Pastor Wayne Eichstadt
 - Music Coordinator—Pastor David Schaller
 - Chaplain—Pastor Mark Weis
 - Communion Service Liturgist —Pastor Dennis Rieken
 - Communion Service Speaker —Pastor Timothy Daub.
- Submitted by Pastor Michael Eichstadt, President



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