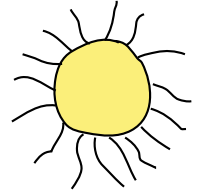


LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



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



OBEY YOUR LORD AND LET HIS TRUTH • BE TAUGHT YOUR CHILDREN IN THEIR YOUTH
THAT THEY IN CHURCH AND SCHOOL MAY DWELL • AND LEARN THEIR SAVIOR'S PRAISE TO TELL.

TLH 630:2

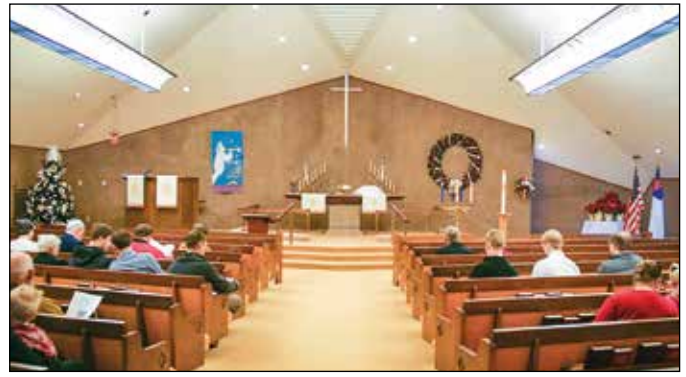




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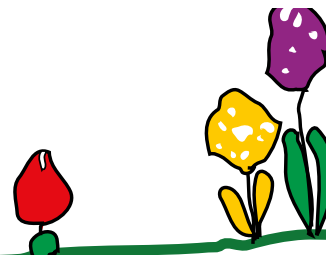
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“BACK TO SCHOOL”



It's just a loaded, emotive phrase, isn't it? “Back to school.” Individual reactions vary wildly, depending on your station in life and how you are wired. Kids who love school get excited, those that don't, not so much. Some parents tend to hear the phrase with relief, others with a sense of regret, even guilt—“Where did the summer go? We should have carved out more family time.” Teachers get that old familiar knot in their stomachs and, like pretty much every other occasion in life, retailers hear cash registers.

“BACK TO SCHOOL” ALSO MEANS SOMETHING ELSE.

To go “back” means that you first had to step away. Have you ever wondered how or why our current custom of summer vacation started? The standard answer is that it was agrarian-based; school went into recess for three months in the summer because children were needed on the farm. Anyone with any association to farming knows that obviously wasn't the reason. The busiest times on the farm are planting and harvest (spring and fall) when kids are back in school.

The answer is actually much more complicated than that. School buildings were built to heat, not cool, and both students and teachers found it difficult to function during the heat of the summer months. Educators also believed for a time that the brain functioned like a muscle which, like any other muscle, needed rest. There was also concern, as expressed in an article in the *Pennsylvania School Journal*, that children “were growing up puny, lank, pallid, emaciated, round-shouldered, thin-breasted all because they were kept at study too long.”

The real reason for the current Memorial Day to Labor Day vacation is probably a combination of factors, but educators are almost universally agreed that students lose ground during the long summer vacation.

Which brings us to *Christian* education. Nowhere in the Bible does God advocate a prolonged break from Christian education. Where a slide in secular education is a problem, spiritual slides are simply unacceptable. Nor does our God advocate “farming out” the Christian education of children

to others. Others can assist, but the ultimate responsibility is on parents: primarily fathers. “*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*” (Ephesians 6:4 ESV) “*Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children.*” (Deuteronomy 4:9 ESV)

In the last hundred years or so our society has undergone a dramatic shift from self-sufficiency and “do-it-yourself” to dependency and hired help. Like so many other things, as a society we have come to regard education as “someone else's job.” Even *Christian* education is now seen as the

responsibility of those we hire or call to do it: pastors, Christian day school teachers, VBS and Sunday school instructors, and so forth. All of these serve as tremendous blessings from our God, but the primary responsibility still resides, by God's decree, with parents. All parents need to acknowledge and accept this responsibility, but especially those parents who,

responsibility of those we hire or call to do it: pastors, Christian day school teachers, VBS and Sunday school instructors, and so forth. All of these serve as tremendous blessings from our God, but the primary responsibility still resides, by God's decree, with parents. All parents need to acknowledge and accept this responsibility, but especially those parents who,

for whatever reason, choose to send their children to public schools. Education that is not Christ-centered routinely exposes our children to influences (both subtle and overt) that must be addressed and countered. While homeschooling and Christian day schools do not relieve parents of their God-given parental responsibilities, they are designed to work with, rather than against, Christian parents.

If you are a parent with school-aged children and no CLC Christian day school is available to you, consider homeschooling. Help is available if you ask and look. You will never regret the decision, and your children are worth any sacrifice it might require.

Michael Roehl is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bismarck, North Dakota.



Time to get Back to the Book

(of Holy Scripture)

“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.”

(2 Timothy 3:14)



“Back to school” often means back to a more disciplined routine. “Back to school” means getting back to careful study. For many parents, it means reminding children repeatedly that homework needs to be done before opening the social or game apps on their phones. Sometimes “back to school” means that parents or grandparents need to scrub some of the rust and cobwebs out of their own brains so that they can give assistance to their children or grandchildren. These are all important parts of the process of preparing for and then living a successful life.

Paul’s point to a young pastor named Timothy was exactly that. The things Timothy had learned early in life were still true, and as important as ever for his life as an adult and as a pastor. Of course, Paul was exhorting Timothy concerning the religious instruction of Timothy’s childhood. The verses following the verse above reminded Timothy of how in his childhood he had “known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (3:15-16) We are quick to understand Paul’s point that the study of the Scriptures to attain that wisdom is of ultimate importance. However, the level of attention and encouragement given other lessons and activities can easily surpass those related to faith. Perhaps it would serve us well to look back a few verses to understand Paul’s concern for a now-grown Timothy, even a Pastor Timothy, and why it was important for Timothy (and so for us all) to get back to the Book and review the lessons learned earlier in life.

Paul warns of “perilous times” (3:1) that will come in the last days—the times in which we live. He warns that false teachers who are headstrong and haughty and lovers of pleasure will actually come into our homes. When one thinks about how much we are all influenced by TV, movies, and social media in these last days, we must realize that the Apostle’s words

apply more now than ever before. Paul culminates his warnings by saying that “evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” (3:13) We do need to get back to the Book, remembering our lessons that we learned when we were young, lessons that we need to teach to our young children.

When one thinks about how much we are all influenced by TV, movies, and social media in these last days, we must realize that the Apostle’s words apply more now than ever before.

Paul encouraged Timothy to continue in the things he had learned, “knowing from whom you have learned them.” (3:14) Timothy learned from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois the precious truths of Holy Scripture. Timothy was to remember who taught him these things, for these were God’s agents for Timothy’s good and blessing. This encouragement would have also included the Apostle Paul, who gave Timothy his advanced training in the Scriptures. We would do well to heed

these words and understand that Christian parents and grandparents serve as a special blessing with a spiritual relationship and responsibility.

However, we ought to take Paul’s lesson one step further. We, like Timothy, were brought to the knowledge of the truth by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit through the inspired Scriptures. The Spirit brought us the knowledge of forgiveness and peace and everlasting life that is ours in Christ Jesus. The Spirit has also strengthened us in the face of the trials and tribulations and persecutions of this life. With the Spirit’s blessing, we will remain assured of that salvation which is ours in Christ Jesus, our crucified and yet living Lord. It is time to get back to the Book, with the Spirit blessing our study!



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

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION—HYMN 630

“Ye Parents, Hear What Jesus Taught”



Contrary to the oft-repeated cant¹ of collectivists, it does not “take a village” to raise a child; it takes *parents*. God entrusts *parents*—not society in general, not educational or governmental institutions, and not villages—with the responsibility of the proper upbringing of children. This responsibility is frequently enjoined upon parents throughout both Old and New Testaments. For example, “*You shall teach them [God’s Words] to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.*” (Deuteronomy 11:19) and “*And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*” (Ephesians 6:4)

Do these Bible passages sound like “helpful hints” or “friendly suggestions?” Are they something that Christian parents can safely ignore? Clearly, they are forceful expressions of God’s will that parents take responsibility for the education of their own children. Hymn #630 in The Lutheran Hymnal echoes this parental duty: **“Ye parents, hear what Jesus taught/ When little ones to Him were brought:/ Forbid them not, but heed My plea/ And suffer [allow] them to come to Me.”** (Verse 1)

Obedience to this explicit injunction from God requires not only teaching our children about Jesus at home, but also seeing to it that they learn of Him in both church and, if possible, at school as well. **“Obey your Lord and let His truth/ Be taught your children in their youth/ That they in church and school may dwell/ And learn their Savior’s praise to tell.”** (Verse 2)

It is at this point that we encounter a major difficulty, don’t we? Obviously, children will not learn about Jesus

(or about Biblical morality, or the role of God in the history of man, or man’s sinful nature, or God’s Law and Gospel) in the public schools. This creates a challenge for Christian parents, and the more they know about the nature of public education in America today, the more they will realize the magnitude of that challenge. Of course, there may be cases where public school is the only available option—a single parent, for example, or a family that has no Christian day school available and is unable to homeschool. Many Christian parents, past and present, have succeeded in raising Godly children despite the influence of public schools. However, for believers, public school should not simply be the default choice.

A Christ-dismissing, humanistic, “secularized” education tends, at best, to instill an incomplete and distorted understanding of reality. At worst, and in the absence of supplementary spiritual education, it can lead children to depart from the one saving faith. The public schools’ inclusion of an error such as evolution may seem relatively easy for parents to correct, but compensating for the omission of all critical, spiritual truths presents a much greater challenge. The fact that some parents, with the help of Godly pastors and Sunday school teachers, have succeeded in overcoming that challenge does not make it any less acute.

Christian education, whether at your church’s Christian day school or by means of homeschooling, involves significant sacrifice for most parents. However, the “payoff,” in the long run, is of infinite importance and eternal consequence. **“For if you love them as you ought,/ To Christ your children will be brought./ If thus you place them in His care,/ You and your household well shall fare.”** (verse 3)



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

Professor Paul Naumann contributed to this article.

¹ Cant: “tedious or hackneyed language, especially when used sanctimoniously” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*)

Ye Parents, Hear What Jesus Taught

<http://lutherantacoma.com/hymns/630.mp3>

Translator: William M. Czmanske (1939) Author: Ludwig Helmbold (1596, cento) Publication Date: 1941 Scripture: Mark 10:14

Topic: The Christian Home: Christian Education

The Gibeonite Deception

“Then the men of Israel took some of their [the Gibeonites’] provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD.”
(Joshua 9:14)

After forty years of wilderness wanderings, the Israelites finally entered the Promised Land to conquer and possess it. Cities fell, kings fled, nations trembled—not because of Israel’s power or military prowess, but because of Israel’s God. As Joshua explained, *“The Lord your God is He who has fought for you.”* (Joshua 23:3)

Yet, amid the swell of victories, a single event occurred which impacted the Israelites for the next four centuries. This event was the so-called Gibeonite Deception.

Gibeon was a prominent city located six miles northwest of Jerusalem. Of Amorite and Hivite descent, the Gibeonites fell under the condemnation of Deuteronomy 7: *“When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, and when the Lord your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.”* (verses 1-2)

Yet, the Israelites did make a covenant with the Gibeonites; not knowingly, but carelessly. Posing as ambassadors from a distant land, the Gibeonites sought a peace treaty with Israel. To lend credibility to their ploy, the Gibeonites wore tattered clothes and old sandals, and carried patched wineskins and moldy bread—evidence, they claimed, of a long journey. And while the Israelites were at first wary, they were fooled by the story and agreed to a peace treaty.

Three days later, when the Israelites discovered the Gibeonite Deception, nothing could be done to right this wrong. The Israelites had made a covenant in the name of the Lord their God, and therefore could not annul the covenant without dishonoring God.

As a result of this covenant, the Israelites were forced to protect the Gibeonites from five Amorite armies (Joshua 10);

and centuries later, under King David, to kill seven sons of King Saul as retribution for Saul’s bloody persecution of the Gibeonites (2 Samuel 21).

Sadly, the Israelites could have avoided these tragic consequences had they only sought God’s counsel. Yet we read in Joshua 9:14, *“Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions [to seal the peace treaty]; but they did not ask counsel of the Lord.”*

Why did Joshua and the Israelite leaders fail to seek God’s counsel in this matter? Did they forget? Did they think the matter too trivial? Whatever the reasons—good intentions or bad choices—the outcome was the same: troublesome, unforeseen consequences.

Have there not been times when we, too, have experienced troublesome, unforeseen consequences because we failed to ask God for His counsel?

Have there not been times when we, too, have experienced troublesome, unforeseen consequences because we failed to ask God for His counsel? “God, is this the right lifestyle, friendship, relationship, investment, career? God, is this the right church to join; the right basis for fellowship; the right time and place to launch a ministry?” On our own, we cannot always see through deception.

In fact, because of our sinful nature, we have an enormous capacity to deceive ourselves.

How do we seek God’s advice? Through prayer, of course; but also by turning to the clear instruction of the Bible. For good reason Paul told the Ephesians to find *“out what is acceptable to the Lord.”* (Ephesians 5:10).

When making decisions or undertaking endeavors, may we heed the words of the hymnist:

“With the Lord begin thy task.

Jesus will direct it.

For His aid and counsel ask.

Jesus will perfect it.” (LH 540:1)



Mark Weis is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Cape Coral, Florida.

Faith's Journey Ends in Our Homeland

“These 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 the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”

(Hebrews 11:13-16)

We often hear life spoken of as a journey. It's easy to understand why. In the course of life we are always on the move. We pass through the stages of life from childhood to adulthood, from middle age to old age. We move through years of education, then on to the world of work where we may proceed from one job or career to another, and finally to retirement. Life often takes us from place to place: from our childhood home to a place of our own, from a small house to a larger one, from one city to another.

Life can be called a journey also in the sense that it has a destination. And though individual life journeys vary greatly and in many ways, their destination is always the same. It is the grave.

Our passage from Hebrews tells us that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob thought of life as a journey. They referred to themselves as *“strangers and pilgrims,”* travelers passing through a foreign land. And they were travelers who were not afraid to reach the destination of their earthly pilgrimage. They did not fear death. Rather, they *“died in faith”*; they ended their journey in the world believing that death was not the final destination for them. They believed that the end of life in this world meant the beginning of life in their true homeland, the heavenly country that God had provided for them.

Why would they believe such a thing when all they saw with their eyes is what we see, namely death and burial at the end of earthly life? It was because they had God's promises and believed them. They believed in the Savior Who was to come from their descendants, the one in Whom all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). In the

promised Christ, they had the hope of deliverance from sin and death. They looked for the resurrection and eternal life with God, where all the sorrows and troubles of this world would be things of the past.

As believers in Christ, we can view our lives in the same way that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob viewed theirs. Our life is not a journey in the way that the unbelieving think of it. It is the journey of a foreigner in a strange land. We do not intend to stay for long; only as long as God wants us to stay. We regard our time here as important, for we know that God has put us here in this dark

world to serve as lights shining with the Gospel of Christ. But we do not dread the end of our travels here, for we, like the Old Testament patriarchs, have from God the promise of our true homeland, the heavenly country that He has prepared for us. We have from Jesus the promise that He has gone to prepare a place for us and that He will come again to take us there.

Our passage closes with another word of comfort. The writer tells us that God was not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He called Himself their God long after they had died, a fact that Jesus said proved that they were still living (Matthew 22:31-32). They had gone to that heavenly country, that homeland that they had hoped for based on God's promises. We may be certain that God is not ashamed to be called the God and Father of those who believe in His Son Jesus Christ, for Jesus assures us that we have a place in the Father's house (John 14:1-6).

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



Our life is the journey of a foreigner in a strange land. We do not intend to stay for long.

"What is the proper way to apply water in Baptism?"

This question arises frequently, especially since there are certain denominations who teach that the only valid form of Baptism is by *immersion*—that is, by dunking a person all the way under the water

When considering the proper way to apply water in Baptism, the first question is, "Does God give a specific command in this regard?" The answer is, "No." There is no Scripture in which God gives such a command.

The next question is "Is a particular method of water application indicated by the Bible word *baptize*?" Again, the answer is, "No." The Greek word *baptizo* means, literally, "to wash." There are two passages in the New Testament in which the word is not even used for the sacrament of Baptism, but simply to wash (Mark 7:4 and Luke 11:38). The kind of washing that is described in these two passages could vary from the immersion of hands or small utensils, to a non-immersion application of water on much larger items.

One final place we can search for direction is in the scriptural accounts of Baptisms. Some of these accounts could allow for a Baptism via immersion. For example, the Ethiopian eunuch and Philip "*came up out of the water.*" (Acts 8:39) However, such an example does not expressly indicate immersion. While this Baptism, and others recorded in Scripture that took place in a river or body of water, could allow for immersion, the early morning Baptisms in the Philippian jailer's house would not (Acts 16:33).

Where does this leave us? It leaves us wonderfully and beautifully in the realm of Christian freedom.

Baptism, by God's design, is not complicated. The simplicity of Baptism's external components highlights the depth of its spiritual blessings—plain, ordinary water, applied in any manner, combined with God's Word, brings the blessings of Christ's cleansing work to a sin-stained soul.

Remembering the "washing" of Baptism assists our minds and hearts to appreciate God's Baptism blessings. Consider

our natural state: "*But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.*" (Isaiah 64:6) When something gets physically dirty, we wash it. Sin is spiritual dirt, and Jesus has given us the spiritual means to be washed clean: ". . . *baptizing [washing] them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*" (Matthew 28:19)

In some passages, God uses multiple "washing" words to emphasize the full spiritual cleansing that is ours through Christ Jesus. "*Arise and be baptized [washed], and wash away [completely, thoroughly, so they are gone] your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*" (Acts 22:16)

To forbid or insist upon a specific method of water application goes beyond what God says and curtails Christian freedom. Immersion could provide a dramatic visual aid of what Martin Luther wrote in his Small Catechism: "What is the meaning of

this Baptism with water? It means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance and die with all sins and evil desires." While immersion could aid visually in this way, it is no more or less effective than a drop of water on a premature baby's head. After all, the power of Baptism is not in the water or how it is applied, but in the Word of God.

The simplicity of water and the Word in Baptism allows us to marvel at the greatness of our Lord and revel in the freedom of the Gospel.

If you, like the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:31), would like guidance as you open God's gifts of grace—including Baptism—your pastor stands ready to serve you.



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

THE ROAD TO REFORMATION

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 next month's issue with an account of his posting of the Ninety-Five Theses.

Luther and Erasmus — 1516



The European Renaissance (“rebirth”) was, in part, good for those who wanted to be faithful to God’s Word. During this period scholars, called humanists, studied the original Greek text of the New Testament rather than relying on Jerome’s Latin Vulgate, which had been produced during the late 4th century. Among these scholars was Desiderius Erasmus (portrait, page 2 top). A contemporary of Luther, Erasmus’s efforts led to a new edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516. This edition included text which at times contradicted the Vulgate, upsetting many theologians in the Catholic Church. Luther would later use Erasmus’s Greek edition of the New Testament in writing his own German translation of the Bible. Key to the spread of Reformation ideas in Germany was having a Bible translation in the vernacular—the language of the people.

Although Luther agreed with Erasmus on most of his translation work, the two later had a falling out over the relationship between salvation and good works. Luther contended that it was only through God’s grace that salvation came to the sinner. Erasmus argued that good deeds were necessary for salvation as well. When asked to speak on Luther’s behalf after the Diet of Worms, Erasmus neither said nor did anything.

Indulgences

The idea of indulgences was nothing new in the Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation. Since 1190 A.D., in connection with the Crusades, the church had used the idea of purchasing the right to not have to perform penance for certain sins. It was taught and believed that Jesus and “saints” had performed surplus good deeds (that is, more than those necessary for their own salvation), whose merit could be doled out by the pope. By purchasing indulgences, people were assured of having to spend less time in purgatory, and

might even be prevented from going to hell. In 1515, Pope Leo X issued a papal edict expanding the list of sins covered by purchasing indulgences, including the ability to transfer credit to loved ones already deceased. The profits from the sales of indulgences were used in part to fund church building projects, including St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Luther was surely not the only critic of this church practice, but he would become the most vocal and well known.



Electoral Frederick and Relics

Known as “Frederick the Wise,” Frederick III of Saxony founded the University of Wittenberg in 1502. Luther spent much of his professional life as a preacher and teacher there. Although Luther and Frederick may have never met in person, Frederick supported Luther’s work and often provided him safe haven during the Reformation’s infancy.

Frederick did, however, amass a large collection of relics. According to his 1518 inventory, the Castle Church in Wittenberg housed 17,443 items, including St. Anne’s thumb, milk from the Virgin Mary, hay from Jesus’ manger, and a twig from Moses’ burning bush. Frederick relied on pilgrims visiting these relics to support Saxony and the university. It was claimed that the viewing of relics, like the purchase of indulgences, would provide spiritual benefits. In fact, by visiting these relics on All Saints’ Day and leaving a gift at the church, people could supposedly remove nearly two million years from their stay in purgatory.

It was by God’s grace that Luther had the conviction and courage to speak out against the use of indulgences and the veneration of relics as a means to obtain God’s favor. Speaking out was fraught with danger, as we will see, but Luther was rightly more concerned about the salvation of souls than

he was about the ire of his secular ruler. It wasn’t until 1522 that Frederick would cease displaying his relics.

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



Graduation in Togo

Three-and-a-half hours of pure and unbridled joy and thankfulness as only our brothers and sisters in Africa can express it. That is what I witnessed and was privileged to be a part of at the Mission Evangelique Lutherienne de Confession du Togo (MELC) Bible Institute graduation on March 5th, 2017. An outdoor meeting place was rented for the event because the MELC church building on the outskirts of Lome, Togo, would not hold the 250-300 attendees they were expecting. I was told that this facility had typically been used for weddings, but because it was in such disrepair, it wasn't rented out much anymore. There was a tattered tarp-covered stage on one side with tree-shaded areas for the guests to sit on the other three sides. The middle area was an open space. I've observed that this open space is common in the churches of West Africa as it provides a place for the "conga line" dancing that takes place in every service.

After a thirty-minute taxi ride through the crowded streets of Lome, I arrived about fifteen minutes before the service was scheduled to begin. There was music playing and the seating areas were packed. Well over three hundred church members, family, and friends were in attendance. Many of the church members traveled three or four hours to celebrate the graduation of their pastor. There was definitely a buzz of excitement in the air as everyone waited. I was given a seat on the stage with Pastor Kossi sitting next to me along with several elders from the congregations. There was also one government dignitary on the stage. I sat and watched the people visit and interact as I tried to take it all in. Then suddenly, the music stopped and the chatter died down as the music for "Stand Up, Stand Up, For Jesus" began to play. Then everyone seemed to turn their heads around all at once as they began to look to a corner far in the back where the



Missionary Ohlmann (left) and Pastor Kossi (right) with the 2017 graduates.

graduates were emerging as they began marching through the crowd, literally marching, to the beat of the hymn. Everyone erupted in cheers and the ladies filled the halls with their shrill African yells of joy. I'm sure the folks out on the street could hear the noise from blocks away. The graduates were all dressed in black pants, white shirts, and red ties. They held their Bibles closely to their chest with their right hand and swung their left arm like soldiers to the beat of the music as they marched in lock-step to the stage. Once on the stage they continued to march in place as they turned to face the crowd of friends and relatives.

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When the hymn was finished they took their seats, and Pastor Kossi went to the lectern to begin the service in the



Above: Pastor Kossi with one of the graduates.



name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He then asked for the Lord's blessings on the service and on those who had gathered. This was followed by a sermon based on Luke 7:24-30. Pastor Kossi encouraged the graduates by reminding them of the words of Jesus describing John the Baptist, and telling them that it is now their privilege to take up the work of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Following the sermon, several guests were welcomed, including a representative from the office of the President of Togo. Pastor Kossi specifically mentioned Missionary David Koenig and Missionary Matthew Ude as honorary guests who could not be in attendance. Then there was more singing and, as is their tradition, conga lines. First the women formed a conga line and danced and sang for several minutes. They were followed by the Sunday school teacher leading the children in the next conga line, and then the men followed with their own. Again, I just don't have adequate words to describe the joy that overflows as they dance and sing to the Lord!

After the final conga line, I was introduced and was asked to preach the graduation sermon. I preached on Joshua 1:1-9, my favorite Scripture for a graduation sermon. I reminded and encouraged the graduates and all those in attendance that we can go forward in life, serving God with boldness, courage, strength, and confidence; knowing that we serve a God who has proven Himself to be faithful in every promise He has ever made. The cross of Jesus Christ and His empty tomb are the ultimate proof of His faithfulness, and this truth gives us all the strength and courage we need!

"Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

When I was finished, the graduates were told to stand, and the crowd erupted into joy once again as an impromptu conga line began and lasted for several minutes. One could tell that

Pastor Kossi was not expecting this, but he just looked over at me and smiled and shrugged his shoulders. He leaned over and said with a big smile, "The people are very happy this day."

Once things settled down, Pastor Kossi had each graduate come forward to receive his certificate of completion. The certificate reads as follows:

This certifies that _____ has successfully completed a course of instruction in the Word of God and the Doctrines of the Church of the Lutheran Confession and has given public testimony of his agreement with these doctrines and is thus officially certified to serve as a Pastor and Evangelist.

Deborah, a woman from the local congregation, also faithfully attended classes for the past several years. She received a certificate that was similar, but that states that she will now serve the Lord in women's and children's ministry.

After they received their certificates, several honored guests came by to shake their hands. Then the music started again and each graduate slowly danced his way through the crowds to the area where his family, guests, and congregation members were sitting. There was much hugging, handshaking, appreciation, and just overall joy as the crowd sang and danced in typical Africa style for the next thirty minutes or so.

What a day! What a privilege!

Thanks be to our faithful God for providing more faithful preachers and teachers of His saving Word!



Todd Ohlmann is a full-time visiting missionary for the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay—Hayward, California

St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay is a small collection of friendly and faithful members whose residences are scattered across North-Central California—from the East Bay (Oakland area), to Stockton in the Central Valley, all the way up to the Sacramento area. Despite the distances that separate members, St. Stephen is a very close-knit group of believers who deeply appreciate their shared faith in Christ and faithfully drive the many miles necessary for them to gather for worship and fellowship together.

The beginnings and sustained existence of the congregation are, most importantly, a testament to God's faithfulness and grace. In the fall of 1968, Don Luebke, from Castro Valley, California, heard one of Pastor Rollin Reim's weekly radio broadcasts. He was led by God the Holy Spirit to contact Pastor Reim, then serving St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the San Francisco Peninsula in Mountain View, California. He suggested the exploration of a permanent church outreach in southern Alameda County in the East Bay.

Without hesitation, Pastor Reim offered to assist in the endeavor. After several months of dialogue, plans were made to hold exploratory Lenten services on each Sunday

afternoon of the 1969 Lenten season in a rented hall in nearby San Lorenzo. The response to this outreach was far beyond expectations, and a Good Friday evening service was held in a vacated church in Castro Valley, which would eventually become the congregation's first church home.

In early 1970, a much more suitable, recently-vacated church was found several blocks away. This proved to be an effective move in God's plan to increase the congregation's membership with confessionally-minded Lutherans, many of whom were acutely aware of the compromise and lack of orthodox practices in some Lutheran churches.

In the fall of 1970, a move in church location was needed because of the sale of the Castro Valley property. A suitable worship site was found in adjacent Hayward in a historic church building called the Pioneer Chapel.

Pastor Reim continued serving St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay (official name) until 1972. A new ILC graduate, Paul Schaller, became the first resident pastor.

After meeting in the homes of members in June 1991, Roy Cameron negotiated a rental agreement for a room at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, and services began in the Central Valley. In July 2004, after Pastor Emeritus Norbert





Above and right: some members of St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay.

Reim and his wife Celeste moved from Phoenix to the Bethel Retirement Community in Modesto, services were moved from Stockton to Modesto. In 2012, Central Valley services were moved from Modesto to a retirement home (Atria Senior Living) in Stockton. Lay-led worship services are still held at Atria on the first and third Sundays of each month, and a pastor-led worship and Bible Study is held on the last Tuesday of each month on a rotational basis between member homes in Rio Vista and Stockton, and at Atria Senior Living.

In 2010, due to sharply rising rental costs, the congregation moved from the Pioneer Chapel to renting the sanctuary of Grace Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Hayward, where the congregation holds worship services currently.

In 2014 the congregation sold the parsonage in Hayward to Pastor Steven Karp. In late 2016, with the vacancy at St. Stephen Lutheran Church (West Bay) in Mountain View and the pending retirement of Pastor Karp in the East Bay, it was agreed that it was in the best interest of both congregations to enter into a dual parish arrangement. Each congregation issued a divine call to Pastor Luke Bernthal, who accepted those calls and began his service in January 2017. Members of both congregations gather at the church in Mountain View for occasional special services, such as Pastor Bernthal's installation, Easter Sunday, and the church picnic in July.

Through all these changes, the congregation remains steadfast in the Lord and His Word, and grateful for His grace and faithfulness for nearly fifty years. Pastors who have served St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay and Central Valley include Rollin Reim, April 1969-June 1972; Paul Schaller, June 1972-May 1980; Greg Kesterson, May 1980-March 1981; Mark Weis, March 1981-July 1987; Jerome Barthels, July 1987-October 1995; Michael Sprengeler, November 1995-August 2000; Rollin Reim, August 2000-January 2001 (interim); Nathan Pfeiffer, June



2002-July 2005; Steven Karp, May 2006-January 2017; and Luke Bernthal, January 2017-present.

Currently, Pastor Bernthal conducts services weekly in Hayward at 1:00 P.M. each Sunday with Bible Class at 2:00 P.M., and monthly services in the Central Valley, usually on the last Tuesday of each month at 2:00 P.M.

In addition to worship services and Bible studies, the congregation has enjoyed getting together for various activities over the years, including the annual church picnic, various Sunday brunches, and a boat tour of San Francisco Bay aboard the USS Potomac, which was the personal yacht belonging to President Franklin Roosevelt.

If your travel plans take you to the many sites and attractions of the beautiful Bay Area, we invite you to stop by to worship with us on Sunday afternoons in Hayward!



Luke Bernthal is the pastor of St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay in Hayward, California, and St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the San Francisco Peninsula in Mountain View, California.

[Acknowledgments: A majority of the information in this article was taken from a history of the congregation written by the late Don Luebke, with additional information provided by Jean Niblett and Timothy Blank.]

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS AUGUST 2017

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

Date	Verse	Reading	Comments
Sept 1	TLH 483; LSB 749	Jeremiah 23:33-40	If prophets or preachers speak words that contradict what the Lord has already said, you know them to be false.
Sept 2	WS 758	Ezekiel 34:1-10	The shepherds of Israel failed to take care of the flock, but the Lord would not abandon His people. He would step in Himself to rescue His flock.
Sept 4	TLH 648; LSB 558	Ezekiel 34:11-16	The Lord Himself shepherds His people. He calls them, gathers them, tends them, and brings back the lost. What a Shepherd you have in Jesus!
Sept 5	TLH 485	Ezekiel 34:17-24	God’s people were being “trampled” by the strong, but they find peace and hope in David’s greater Son, Jesus Christ, Who shepherds them to life eternal!
Sept 6	TLH 627	Ezekiel 34:25-31	God calls us His own sheep, the people of His pasture! For as often as we displease Him with our sins, these are blessed words indeed!
Sept 7	WS 732	Luke 24:1-12	Christ prophesied that He would rise from the dead, and His Word did not fail. He is risen—still today!
Sept 8	WS 759; LSB 466	Luke 24:13-35	The risen Christ lived again to comfort the Emmaus disciples through the Word. He still lives to bring us comfort through the Word.
Sept 9	WS 765	Luke 24:36-49	Jesus gently invites us not to doubt the truth of His resurrection. Everything said about Him was fulfilled, and now the good news about it goes into all the world.
Sept 11	TLH 216	Luke 24:50-53	Because Jesus was received back into heaven, we can be sure that His atoning death for our sins was accepted once and for all. Why not praise God continually!
Sept 12	TLH 32	Revelation 2:1-7	These seven letters also speak to us in our own churches. In Ephesus, their loveless behavior needed correction, yet they had persevered for the name of Christ.
Sept 13	TLH 97; LSB 806	Revelation 2:8-11	We may not all be wealthy by the world’s standards, but we are all immensely rich because we are heirs of everlasting life in heaven.
Sept 14	TLH 427	Revelation 2:12-17	Pergamum (in modern day Turkey) was the center of emperor worship, and Antipas was the first martyr in Asia. May we remain faithful even if persecuted.
Sept 15	TLH 329	Revelation 2:18-29	The Christians were being seduced by sexual immorality, so Jesus urged them to repent, to continue in love and faith, and to remember their triumph at the end.
Sept 16	TLH 60	Revelation 3:1-6	The Lord will return, so we need to “stay awake” spiritually and watch for Him. In Him we are justified and given life (v. 5).
Sept 18	TLH 447; LSB 654	Revelation 3:7-13	Jesus reassures us that He is coming soon and He will help us endure to the end.
Sept 19	TLH 324	Revelation 3:14-22	In all these letters, Jesus never preaches the Law without the Gospel. Here, even the luke-warm are spurred on by the Good News of v. 21.
Sept 20	WS 749	1 Samuel 17:1-11	By this time Saul had lost His faith in the God of Israel. If the Spirit were not in our hearts, fear and despair would quickly overwhelm us, too. God, preserve our faith.
Sept 21	TLH 658	1 Samuel 17:12-32	What started out as a mission to deliver food became a mission to stand up for the name of the Lord, although David’s brother doubted his intentions.
Sept 22	TLH 499	1 Samuel 17:33-40	David witnesses to Saul that salvation comes from the Lord (v. 37). That is the heart of our witness too.
Sept 23	TLH 193	1 Samuel 17:41-58	It is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves—or even by doctors, medicines, technology, and so forth. Finally, it is by the cross and empty tomb of Jesus Christ.
Sept 25	TLH 532	2 Samuel 7:1-17	We make our plans, but there are times when God changes them—for the better. Just as He did here.
Sept 26	TLH 59	2 Samuel 7:18-29	Better than having the opportunity to build an earthly temple, David thanked God that his kingdom would have no end (a promise fulfilled in Christ Who rules forever.)
Sept 27	TLH 230	Psalms 119:73-80	God, Who created our bodies, also gives us spiritual understanding through His Word.
Sept 28	WS 738	Psalms 119:81-88	We see Christians persecuted, we face trouble ourselves, and yet the Lord’s trustworthy words will continue to give us hope.
Sept 29	TLH 639	Psalms 119:89-96	The Word of the Lord endures forever. It will always be there for us. It will never change. It will be our guide and comfort to the end.
Sept 30	TLH 294	Psalms 119:97-104	Oh, how we treasure God’s sweet Word because through it we gain understanding and learn of our Savior’s love for us!

Every other month we get an update on what's been happening at our Immanuel Lutheran High School, College and Seminary in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



Youth Camp at ILC

Back to the Future is more than the name of a 1980's movie trilogy. This past June over one hundred CLC young people entering grades 6-9 gathered on the picturesque campus of Immanuel Lutheran College for the summer camp that is held there biennially. This camp is well described as a week in the Word of God, fellowship time with one another, and team-building exercises to bond with fellow Christian friends, combined with entertaining activities and a few surprises.

In their first year as the new directors, cousins Joci Gamble and Jonathan Gamble kept the great elements of camp alive while adding a new style of leadership and direction. They were assisted by their peers, who gave their time and energy to volunteer as counselors, along with others serving as helpers in the kitchen and in other areas.

The camp theme, "Back to the Future," had in mind the Reformation that took place five hundred years ago this year. As part of the daily camp lessons, the children looked to the Word of God to consider some essential truths that the Lord unshackled during the Reformation. The central teaching that we are "justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ" stood dominant, and on that basis *Sola Fide*, *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Gratia* were given three days of lesson attention. The final two days of camp focused on the amazing blessings of the priesthood of all believers and on the biblical fact that "God is love." The camp's Bible instruction also went "back" to see that these teachings of Scripture stretch back more than five hundred years; they have been taught throughout the Bible's history from the beginning, and the Lord continues to preserve these teachings into the future.

The camp theme, "Back to the Future," had in mind the Reformation that took place five hundred years ago this year.

A typical day at camp moved along to a familiar, enjoyable rhythm. After early morning calisthenics and breakfast, the campers began with a devotion in the gym, after which they broke into smaller classes for the hour-long Bible studies mentioned above. The late morning hours were spent in a variety of activities, like whiffle ball, baking bread, intensive

1980's workout, sidewalk art, kite flying, and others. After lunch it was Ultimate Team Competition time, with the campers divided into teams lead by a counselor and engaged in events that even included catapult launching and water war flag capturing. Afternoon activities also involved, if weather permitted, swimming at the local Fairfax swimming pool. Activities after supper included music and a featured nightly activity. These ranged from Bunco or Camp Jeopardy to a fan favorite "Huge Ball," which is an amusing type of dodge ball. Thursday evening had the highlight of an evening worship service in the ILC gym.

All who participated, adults and children alike, can look back on that week with thankfulness to the Lord for the opportunity to gather together and grow in His grace and blessing. We can all look back and rejoice that the same Lord, Who unleashed the Gospel over five hundred years ago, continues to preserve it for us now and into the future.

Matthew Hanel is pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Dallas, Texas, and a member of the CLC Board of Missions.





ANNOUNCEMENTS

Fall 2017 Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference

St. John's Lutheran Church, Clarkston, Washington
October 3-5, 2017

Agenda:

- Review and Analysis of “Repetition in the Bible”
—Pastor Michael Gurath
 - A Study of Luther and/or Reformation History
—Pastor Luke Bernthal
 - Review of the new WELS Catechism—Pastor David Naumann
 - Social Media And The Church—Opportunities And Pitfalls
—Pastor Mark Tiefel
 - Definition and History of the Church Growth Movement
—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt
 - OTX (exegete's choice)—Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer
 - NTX (Revelation 2:18ff)—Pastor Benjamin Libby
 - Chaplain—Pastor Mark Tiefel
 - Communion speaker—Pastor David Reim
- Submitted by Pastor Mark Tiefel, Secretary

In accord with our usage and order, **Stefan Sonnenfeld**, who was called by Faith Lutheran Church, West St. Louis County, Missouri, to be its pastor, was ordained and installed on Sunday, July 2, 2017. Preaching for the service was Pastor Bruce Naumann.
—Missionary Todd Ohlmann.

On Sunday, September 17, **Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mankato, Minnesota**, is celebrating the 150th anniversary of the signing of our church constitution. Son of the congregation Pastor Matthew Hanel will be preaching on this joyous occasion. The service begins at 9:30, with a program to follow. Please come and join your voices to ours in thankful adoration of our great God! —Pastor Thomas Naumann

In accord with our usage and order, **Thomas Joel Naumann**, a 2017 Seminary graduate of Immanuel Lutheran College who was called by Mt. Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Detroit, MI, to be its pastor, was installed and ordained on Sunday, July 9, 2017. See Photo below.

In accord with our usage and order, **Claire Abbas**, who was called by Gethsemane Lutheran School, Spokane Valley, Washington, to be a teacher, was installed on Sunday, August 6, 2017.
—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt.



Ordination and installation of Pastor Thomas Naumann, left to right: Missionary Todd Ohlmann, Pastor David Schaller, Pastor Emeritus Walter Schaller, member Matthew Fobar, Pasto Thomas Naumann, Pastor Michael Wilke, Pastor David Naumann, member Randy Wittorp, Pastor Joseph Naumann, Board of Missions member Steven Leinberger.