

August 2018 VOL 61 NO. 2

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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





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On the cover: the steeple of Ascension Lutheran Church, CLC, Batavia, Illinois.

Worship the LORD

Can we really give the glory that is due His name in a one-hour-a-week service?

We truly owe God our worship, for He is our Creator and has given us everything we need for our body and life. More than that, He has given His Son to redeem us and has chosen us in Christ to be His children, as Paul says, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.” (Ephesians 1:4)

Yes, we ought to “Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name” in worship. But what is true worship? You may think of worship in terms of gathering in church to sing hymns, listen to a sermon, and offer prayers to God. Those are acts of worship, but can we really give the glory that is due His name in a one-hour-a-week service?

In Romans 12:1, the Apostle Paul urges us to do much more: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (ESV) Paul speaks of our worship in terms of sacrifice.

OLD TESTAMENT WORSHIP REVOLVED AROUND SACRIFICES.

There were many different sacrifices in the Old Testament, but they basically fell into two categories: sacrifices to atone for sin and sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise. When you think about it, our worship really revolves around those same two types of sacrifices.

God is not asking us to offer ourselves as a sacrifice to atone for sin. Like the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament, our bodies would never be worthy enough to atone for even one sin. The writer to the Hebrews says, “Every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.” (10:11) All those sacrifices pointed to Jesus, Who alone could truly atone for our sins.

As the passage in Hebrews 10 continues, “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” (10:14)

OUR WORSHIP SERVICES REVOLVE AROUND JESUS’ PERFECT SACRIFICE.

We begin by confessing our sins, and Jesus gives us the fruit of His sacrifice in the absolution: your sins are forgiven. Then Jesus, Who is the Word, comes to us in His Word to fill us with everything that His sacrifice has accomplished for us:

God’s presence and blessings, His grace and truth. When we receive the Lord’s Supper, again Jesus comes to us, giving us all the benefits of His sacrifice on the cross.

So our worship services are really about God serving us with the sacrifice Jesus made for us. He fills us with His love, grace, and forgiveness; and strengthens us in our faith.

“Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.”

(Psalm 29:2)

Now, filled up with mercy gained by His sacrifice, we respond with the other type of sacrifice, the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. That begins with our songs of praise, our prayers and our offerings in church, but it is so much more. As Paul says, Christians are to “present your bodies a living sacrifice.” We are to use every part of our body to serve God 24/7. Everything we do and everything we say is to be a part of our worship of God. That, Paul says, is your “spiritual worship,” or “reasonable service,” which is another way to translate it.

So don’t think of your worship as only a Sunday morning event. Rather, consider your Sunday morning worship your opportunity to be refreshed and refuelled by God to go out into the world and truly worship Him in daily living, so that all “may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)



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

THE GOSPEL

God's Grace Comes to Us

Ah, summer vacation! Time to get away from the city and enjoy nature around us. There are national and state parks to visit, tents to be pitched, campfires to sit around, and lakes to “get away” to. This time of year it’s not unusual to hear the comment, “I feel closer to God in nature than I do in church.” This doesn’t surprise us too much; after all, nature is God’s handiwork. He is the builder of everything we see around us. It all bears His divine “thumb-print,” if you will. His power is seen in the mighty redwoods of California, the majestic peaks of the Rocky Mountains, and the crashing waves of the Atlantic Ocean. On a cloudless night, hints of God’s divine nature can be seen in the belt of the Milky Way and all the starry host. While nature’s grandeur may tell us of the Creator’s great power, wisdom, and eternal nature, it does not bring us His grace or announce His forgiveness. Hiking through the woods will not comfort the troubled conscience with the assurance of sins forgiven. Summiting a mountain will not tell you how to reach that even higher peak, heaven.

No, nature is not the means by which God’s undeserved love, His grace, comes to us. Quoting from Isaiah, the Apostle Paul writes, “*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*” (1 Corinthians 2:9)

That doesn’t mean God has hidden these things from us.

Rather, His grace comes to us in much simpler ways. The only means by which His grace comes to us is through the divine Word of the Gospel. In the Gospel, God the Holy Spirit brings everything Jesus Christ has done, right to us. Through

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the message of the Gospel, God announces to us the forgiveness of sins, as “*the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*” (1 John 1:7) Through Baptism, God washes away sin (Acts 22:16) and we are clothed in Christ’s holiness (Galatians 3:27). In Holy Communion, our crucified and risen Lord personally comes to us in the bread and wine, giving us His body and His blood and declaring His forgiveness (Matthew 26:28).

As amazing as God’s creation is, who has ever found such amazing gifts at the top of a mountain, in the Big Dipper, or at the end of a fishing pole? Yet in the still, small voice of the Gospel, the God of all creation comes and whispers His forgiveness and undeserved love to you in Christ. The Gospel declares that on the wooden tree of the cross, Christ became a curse for us to free us from the eternal curse of our sin (Galatians 3:13). In the glorious Son-rise of Easter, God tells us that we are declared to be right with God because of Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross.

“*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” (Romans 10:17) The Gospel in Word and sacrament is the only tool the Holy Spirit uses to bring us to faith in Jesus for forgiveness and eternal salvation. Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit keeps us “hiking” in faith on the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake—all the way to heaven.

Enjoy what’s left of your summer vacation, giving thanks to God. Enjoy His creation with your family and friends. But may we never, ever, take a vacation from the means of grace—

the tools God uses to bring the blessings of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection to us. Praise be to the Holy Spirit for His means of grace!



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

TLH 6, LSB 924

“Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above”

On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus passed through a village where He was met by a group of ten men who were afflicted with leprosy. Not daring to approach too closely—for lepers were forbidden close contact with the general population—they called out to Him from a distance, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” (Luke 17:13) On another occasion two blind men followed Jesus and cried out to Him, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” (Matthew 9:27)

Their cries for mercy were not in vain. Jesus healed the ten lepers and opened the eyes of the two blind men.

Jesus must surely have heard cries for mercy constantly as He traveled about Galilee and Judea, teaching and healing. People with afflictions of various kinds appealed to Him to relieve their misery from disability, disease, and demon possession. They appealed to Him because they had heard or seen how Jesus had freed others from all sorts of ailments and troubles. Because of these answered appeals for mercy that we read about in the Gospels, the cry for mercy has long been a regular part of Christian worship. In our Sunday services we sing, “Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us.”

This part of the liturgy follows the confession of sins and the absolution in which we are assured that we are forgiven for the sake of Jesus Christ. In response to that precious assurance, we sing a hymn of praise to the Holy Trinity. Then comes the threefold cry for mercy, for though we are forgiven and at peace with God, we must remain for a while in this sin-corrupted world in which we have to endure many trials.

The hymn “Kyrie, God Father in Heaven Above” expands on this portion of the liturgy. It reminds us why our appeals to God for help with the troubles of this world are not in vain. In it we address God as *Kyrie*, the Greek word meaning “Lord”. We come to Him as He has made Himself known to us in the Scriptures: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is God the Father, not only our “Maker and Preserver” but also the one who is great in “grace and love.”

He is “Christ, our King” Who brought salvation for sinners. He is the Lord Jesus, God’s own Son, Who rose from the dead after offering Himself as the sacrifice to free us from our sins and reconcile us to God. Now He sits on His heavenly throne where He serves as Mediator between us and God. He is able to “hear our cry and grant our supplication.”

He is God the Holy Ghost, Who through the Word and sacrament has given us faith in Jesus Christ. It is truly “the gift we need the most,” for by faith we possess the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. We ask the Spirit to guard that precious gift all our life and to bless our last hour so that we are able to “leave this sinful world with gladness.”

An unusual feature of this hymn is its use of Greek words. *Kyrie* is the title by which the disciples addressed Jesus when they were caught in a storm on the Sea of Galilee and cried out, “Lord, save us!” (Matthew 8:25) It is how the woman of Canaan addressed Jesus when she pleaded with Him to free her daughter from the torment

of demon possession (Matthew 15:25). *Eleison*, “have mercy,” is the word used in the Gospels to record the cries for mercy of the ten lepers, the two blind men, the woman of Canaan, and others. It is a good thing for us to know these words from the original Greek text of the New Testament. Not that they have any more power than their equivalents in English or any other spoken language. But they teach us that when we sing, “Lord, have mercy upon us,” we are joining with a multitude of believers who have called on the name of the Lord, going all the way back to those we meet in the four Gospels.

Like theirs, our cries for mercy will never be in vain. “As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.” (Psalm 103:13) He will hear us and answer us according to His perfect wisdom.

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



Because of these answered appeals for mercy that we read about in the Gospels, the cry for mercy has long been a regular part of Christian worship.

“Mandrakes, Please”

The Bible mentions more than one hundred plants, herbs, and trees; everything from acacia and aloe to wheat and wormwood. Knowing the appearance and properties of these plants can help us better understand their use in Scripture.

For example, consider the mandrake plants referenced in Genesis 30:14-16. “Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, ‘Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.’ But she said to her, ‘Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?’ And Rachel said, ‘Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.’ When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, ‘You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son’s mandrakes.’ And he lay with her that night.”

“Mandrakes, please,” asked Rachel. A seemingly innocent request. Yet, Leah responded angrily, saying, “Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?” Clearly, more was involved here than mandrake plants discovered in a wheat field. For Leah, the mandrakes were almost incidental. They merely represented one more item that Rachel was taking away—the most important of which was Jacob’s affection.

Though sisters, Rachel and Leah were both married to Jacob. However, Jacob had not chosen to wed Leah, but was tricked into the marriage by his unscrupulous father-in-law, Laban. Jacob’s first choice and first love always remained Rachel; as explained in Genesis 29:30, Jacob “loved Rachel more than Leah.” Feeling unwanted and unloved, Leah resented Rachel.

But Rachel also resented Leah—not because Rachel felt unloved or unwanted, but because she felt maternally unfulfilled. By this time, Leah had borne Jacob four sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Rachel, however, had not



conceived and was desperate to have children. “Give me children, or else I die!” she scolded Jacob in Genesis 30:1.

Rachel’s desperate desire to have children may explain why she desperately wanted the mandrake plants—desperation enough to offer Leah one night with Jacob in exchange for the mandrakes. “Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.” But why the interest in mandrakes?

For millennia, the Mediterranean Mandrake or *Mandragora Officinalis* was used in traditional healing, magic, and even witchcraft—especially because of its narcotic properties and human-shaped roots. Over time, legends about the mandrake grew more prolifically than the plant itself; how it shrieked when pulled from the soil; how it radiated light after nightfall; how it brought fame, fortune, and

power. Curiously, even the Jewish historian Josephus wrote of the mandrake’s strange ability to shrink away from harvesting hands.

Legends aside, since antiquity the mandrake has been prized for its healing qualities, especially as an aphrodisiac and remedy for infertility. For this reason, the mandrake was sometimes called the “Love Apple” and even “Satan’s Apple.” In fact, the ancients were so convinced of the mandrake’s pregnancy-power, they often wore it as amulets or slept with it under their beds.

Though the mandrake is highly toxic and potentially deadly if wrongly prepared and dosed, it is still used as a treatment for such conditions as ulcers, fevers, cancers, anxiety, arthritis, Alzheimer’s, jaundice, liver diseases, digestive issues, and yes, INFERTILITY.

And so, you see, Rachel asked for some of Reuben’s mandrakes—“Mandrakes, please”—because she hoped the mandrakes would help her finally conceive a child.



Mark Weis is pastor of St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Lemmon, South Dakota.

Faith Therapy

“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.”

(Hebrews 12:11-13)

During times of God’s chastening, or discipline, we all feel the weakness of our sinful flesh and have our moments of doubt and discouragement. In the verses before us, the writer to the Hebrews gives a vivid picture of what spiritual encouragement looks like under those circumstances. It’s like strengthening weak hands and feeble knees, “so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.” One could say it’s a lot like physical therapy.

When physical therapy is required, a person is in need of strengthening muscles that have become damaged, whether by physical overexertion, injury, or surgery. The therapy is necessary so that the damaged muscles do not lose their ability to function properly. Physical therapy works those muscles, testing them to perform better and better, so that they can become stronger. And yet the process of physical therapy itself can be horribly painful. Despite the pain, most would still appreciate the growth experienced each week—a greater range of motion, increased stamina, ability to lift more weight. In order for such growth to happen, though, the person has to endure the pain and struggle of the exercises. And without the aid of a physical therapist guiding and coaching the person on, most people would likely skip out on those important exercises altogether, leading to disastrous results.

When God disciplines His children, He is providing “faith therapy.” God knows that because of our sinful flesh, we are often lazy—especially when it comes to matters of our faith life. Just as muscles need to be exerted and exercised in order to grow and gain strength, so too does one’s faith. We also

need someone to guide and push us in the growth of our faith, otherwise we will lazily try to just drift by. When the pain of God’s loving discipline comes along in the form of disaster or loss, hardship or heartache, then the Christian wants to go back to God’s Word for comfort in those distresses. In other words, God disciplines you with tests and trials, so that you will rely more heavily on the healing of His holy Word.

Just as muscles need to be exerted and exercised in order to grow and gain strength, so too does one’s faith.

It is here where our analogy with the physical therapist falls apart. A good physical therapist does not want you to become more dependent on him, but less. He wants you to gain full use of your muscles so that you can take care of yourself. His job is complete when you go home self-sufficient. In contrast, the tests and trials God sends your way are not

intended to make you more self-sufficient, but less so. Life’s trials humble us and prove just how weak we really are, but there in that weakness the almighty God comes to us in His Word with His power to strengthen our faith, to increase our reliance on Him.

Are you feeling the pain and weight of God’s discipline in your life? Are you needing the weak hands and feeble knees of your faith strengthened? Remember what God’s Word says. God gave His Son to die for you. God loves you and wants you to spend eternity with Him. His discipline is your faith therapy. “My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word.” (Psalm 119:28)



Chad Seybt is pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

“Christians can worship together as long as they agree on the fundamentals.”

There’s a reason why no one talks about the Ecumenical Movement anymore. It’s the same reason why no one was pleading for God’s deliverance in the days of Samson. For forty years the Philistines had oppressed the people of Israel. Yet there was no apparent outcry. Why not? Because the people adapted and intermarried. (Judges 14)

The Ecumenical Movement promised to unite a diversity of theological positions under one common roof. It has. Denominational lines have become blurry and nobody seems to care. As long as there is agreement in the basics, the “fundamental” doctrines of Scripture, why not pool resources and embrace what is held in common?

The idea has a certain appeal, especially for those removed from the immediate circle of fellow believers. College students who are surrounded by godless professors and unbelieving classmates often feel marginalized because of their faith. Finding someone, anyone, who believes in Jesus as his Savior and accepts the main teachings of Scripture, provides a common, natural bond. “As long as we agree on the core issues, why not worship together?”

It is true that some doctrines are more “fundamental” than others because some are directly related to saving faith. Rejecting the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, or His resurrection from the dead will have a more immediate (and serious) consequence than denying the doctrine of church fellowship. But to say that some doctrines of Scripture deserve our full attention while others are optional is like playing Jenga with your faith. Remove enough “non-fundamental” doctrines and the structure falls.

People often suggest that our differences merely stem from the denomination in which we were raised. “Everyone comes to God in his own way, through his own traditions.” But there are no denominational doctrines in Scripture. There was not one faith delivered to the Baptist church and another

to the Lutheran church. The Bible speaks of “our common salvation” and urges us to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3) There was one faith delivered to the church. The fact that the church has splintered into many denominations is not God’s idea. It is caused by sinful mankind.

For church fellowship to be established, God expects full agreement in all of the doctrines of Scripture, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:20)

Notice the level of agreement expected: “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Anything less than doctrinal unity sets the church on a course of confusion and potential disaster. That’s what happened to Air New Zealand Flight 901 in 1979. A minor miscalculation in the flight coordinates led to the deaths of all 257 people onboard. The pilot thought he was going the right way, but flew directly into a mountainside. Likewise, a “minor” doctrinal error today can do permanent, irreversible damage tomorrow.

Thankfully, there is a bond that links all Christians together. Every Sunday we confess our belief in the oneness of the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. This Church crosses denominational lines and includes every soul that trusts in Jesus for salvation. For now, this Church is known to God and not to us. He can see faith; we can’t. Church fellowship is to be based on what we *can* see: a professed, complete agreement in doctrine and practice.

James Albrecht is pastor of St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Okabena, Minnesota.



For church fellowship to be established, God expects full agreement in all of the doctrines of Scripture.

THE ROAD TO REFORMATION

In observation of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we are presenting a brief survey of the life of Martin Luther. The series continues with major events in the life of the Reformer that took place after 1517.

—1530—

Luther and the Augsburg Confession



he birthday of the Lutheran Church is often placed on June 25, 1530, the date the Augsburg Confession was read before the emperor at the Diet of Augsburg.

By this time Luther was no longer a lone voice crying out to be given a fair hearing, as he had been nine years earlier in Worms. There he had been condemned, and he and anyone supporting him were declared by the emperor to be outlaws. This ban was never enforced because the emperor was distracted by wars with France and even with the pope, as well as by uprisings within Germany by both the knights and the peasants. The Turks also were a severe threat from the east. Plainly, the support of all the Germans, and especially of Luther's prince, the Elector of Saxony, was desperately needed. Thus, the Lutheran movement, under the protecting hand of Providence, grew largely undisturbed by government interference.

But in 1530, the emperor was ready to address the religious divisions in his realm directly, and he summoned theologians to a "diet," or meeting, that summer in Augsburg. A Lutheran delegation, headed by Philip Melanchthon, proceeded to Augsburg. There Melanchthon busied himself with writing a document expressing the faith of the Lutherans to present to the emperor. That document, the Augsburg Confession, did several things. It showed that the Lutheran churches continued to teach what the church had always taught. It condemned false teachings being taught by other dissenting groups of that time. It showed where the Roman Catholic Church had wandered into error. It did all this with clear and gentle language. And it was backed by Scripture. It clearly showed what was Lutheran and what was not. It remains the fundamental confession of Lutheranism to this day.

It did not, however, succeed in its immediate purpose. The



in 1530, the emperor was ready to address the religious divisions in his realm directly, and he summoned theologians to a "diet," or meeting, that summer in Augsburg.

emperor gave them until April 15 to fall in line with Rome.

Luther, however, was not at Augsburg. He was still under the ban and could not safely leave Saxony. An attempt was made to have him stay in the free city of Nuremberg, but the city officials there did not wish to anger the emperor and so refused to invite him. He was forced to remain at Coburg Castle, 150 miles from the diet.

What did Luther do while sidelined away from the main action? In a letter to Melanchthon, he explained, "We shall make a Zion out of this Sinai and construct here three huts: one for the Psalter, one for the Prophets, and one for Aesop," and that is what he did. He dictated a commentary on the first twenty-five Psalms; he continued his work of translating the Old Testament, finishing all but Ezekiel; and he translated thirteen of Aesop's fables, adapting them for children.

He also wrote a famous letter to his four-year-old son, Hans, to encourage him in his studies. In it he describes a wonderful garden with fruit trees, and ponies, and playing children. When asked, the owner of the garden said that these were children who "like to pray, study, and be good." And as for Hans? "If he likes to pray, study, and be good, he too may enter the garden" and ride the pretty ponies.

While at Coburg Castle, Luther deeply grieved the loss of his father, though rejoicing that he had "lived until now so that he could see the light of truth."



But always his attention was directed toward the great work at Augsburg. Through a constant stream of letters of encouragement and advice, he helped to make this a confession that will last for the ages.

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

Ascension Lutheran Church Batavia, Illinois

A hymn of glory let us sing;
New songs thro'out the world shall ring: Alleluia!

Christ, by a road before untrod,
Ascendeth to the throne of God. Alleluia!

(TLH 212:1)

As the words of the hymn, so also our name, Ascension Lutheran Church, directs our focus to our living and ruling Savior, Jesus Christ.

Ascension Lutheran Church in Batavia, Illinois, is located on five acres with many beautiful trees, about forty-five miles west of Chicago. We are close enough to visit the big city, and far enough away to be free from the big-city traffic, noise, and crowds. We have deer and other wildlife on our property, and farms and open countryside nearby. We are blessed to have a pretty church in a pretty setting. But our true beauty is found in our Savior and His gracious presence among us in His Word and Sacraments.

Our congregation was formed in the early 1960's by two separate groups of Christians yearning for the truth of the Gospel. The one group was initially served by Pastor Paul G. Koch of La Crosse, Indiana. The other group was originally

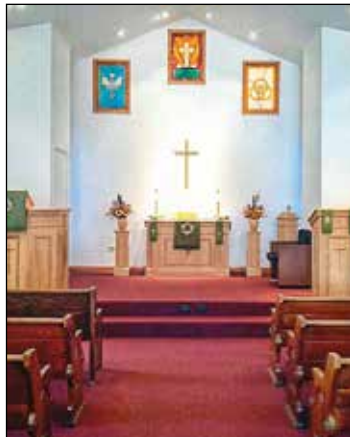


led by two laymen, Emil Ruch and Maurice Tretbar. After Pastor John Lau left the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and moved with his family to Chicago for secular employment, he served Pastor Koch's group first and then later served the other group also. When he accepted the call to Immanuel Lutheran College, the two groups merged into one and chose the name *Immanuel Lutheran Church*. They were served by CLC pastors from the Milwaukee area until the arrival in 1968 of our first full-time pastor: seminary graduate David Schierenbeck.

Immanuel applied for and was accepted into membership in the Church of the Lutheran Confession in 1968. By 1970 the congregation became an official mission of the CLC. An A-frame house with an attached garage was purchased in Addison, Illinois. The garage was remodeled into a chapel.



By 2002 the Lord led us to our current location, which at the time was just a bare parcel of land. God moves hearts and strengthens hands. With members of our congregation and many members of other CLC congregations doing much of the work, by the spring of 2005 our church and parsonage were built. We held the first service in our new church on Easter Sunday.



Because there already was an Immanuel Lutheran Church in Batavia, we needed to change our name. We chose the name *Ascension Lutheran Church* because it was on the very day that we celebrated our Lord's ascension that we decided to purchase this property.

In 2010 our congregation became self-supporting.

Most of our members live at a distance from our church, some quite a distance, but the road to God's house is never long. Our total membership is forty-seven, with an average Sunday attendance of nineteen. We are not a big congregation, but our God is almighty. His Gospel that we are privileged to proclaim is the power of God for salvation. In addition to our regular worship services, Sunday school, and Bible studies, we have monthly Bible studies in a member's home in Chicago.

Our congregation has expanded its outreach in the Batavia community, serving two adult care centers with weekly Bible studies and semi-monthly worship services. Attendance there is routinely high. It is a joy to share God's Word with these dear people who are so hungry for it!

Ascension is uniquely blessed to be the gathering place each summer for the Mission Helper groups departing from and returning to Chicago's O'Hare Airport. Many of the mission helpers leave their cars in our parking lot, and we transport them to and from O'Hare. It is exciting to meet the mission helpers, and to play even this tiny role in helping them to spread the Gospel in foreign fields.

If you visit our Chicagoland area, we would be blessed to have you come and worship and fellowship with us.

O risen Christ, ascended Lord,
 All praise to Thee let earth accord, –
 Alleluia!
 Who art, while endless ages run,
 With Father and with Spirit One. –
 Alleluia!



Terrel Kesterson is pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Batavia, Illinois.

Church of the Lutheran Confession in Tanzania (CLC-TZ)



The pastors and leaders of the CLC Tanzania have found a very good reason to make their way into the Valley of Elephants. The reason they do is quite simple—there are blood-bought souls of Christ waiting to hear the Good News.



During a recent visit to our sister church body in Tanzania, I was able to assist in the training of men to be faithful preachers and teachers of God’s saving Word. It is always encouraging to gather with faithful pastors and church leaders around God’s Word as the one source of truth. I had the opportunity to meet with several pastors in four different districts for one or two days of seminars. While the priority of my visits is to work with the pastors and leaders, it is always a privilege to get out into the communities and the Maasai bomas (village enclosures) to meet our brothers and sisters in Christ and bring the Good News of our Savior Jesus.

Many of the congregations I visited were very typical for East Africa. The church buildings are made of mud wattle construction. This type of construction involves digging a ditch for the outside walls of the structure. Long sticks are then placed into this ditch, so they are standing erect. Larger posts are placed at the four corners and on each side of where the door will be located. Mud is then packed into the ditch at the base of the sticks to hold them upright and in place. The next step involves weaving smaller and more tender sticks through the long sticks that have been placed into the ditch. Once all the walls have been woven together, mud is then packed in layers onto and into the sticks on each side of the walls. After the mud has dried, the walls will sometimes be smoothed over and then painted.

One such congregation of the CLC-TZ is in a rather desolate area of the Moshi/Kilimanjaro district. This area is called *Msito wa Tembo*. This is a Swahili phrase for “Valley of Elephants” because for many years this area of Tanzania was a major migration route for the wild elephants that used to dominate much of this part of East Africa. Elephants have

not been seen in this area for quite some time. You don’t see many humans, either. Several devastating droughts have left this region almost uninhabitable. Yet the resourceful people of the Maasai tribe manage to live here. The Maasai are cattle herders who roam for miles and miles to graze their cows, goats, and sheep. For the most part, they do not eat fruit or vegetables, so the lack of fertile ground for farming isn’t an issue for them.

While most people in Tanzania would find very little reason to travel to *Msito wa Tembo*, the pastors and leaders of the CLC Tanzania have found a very good reason to make their way into the Valley of Elephants. The reason they do is quite simple—there are blood-bought souls of Christ waiting to hear the Good News that their sins have been paid for and they are forgiven! And pastors and evangelists go, with Bibles in hand, to proclaim the truth of God’s saving Word.

Among the Maasai, respect is not readily given; it must be earned. However, once an individual has proven himself to be honest and trustworthy, then the Maasai will protect that individual with their own lives and freely share anything they have with him. This became quite obvious when I saw how warmly the CLC-TZ pastors and I were welcomed into their bomas. Some of the more distant congregations were very quiet and leery, as they had not been visited by a light-skinned foreigner before. But by the end of our time together, they had warmed up considerably.



What a gift we have been given by our Lord to share the Gospel with the people of the Maasai tribes of East Africa!

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

Left: Valley of the Elephants Lutheran Church. Above: Pastor Jeremiah, Missionary Ohlmann and Christians of the Maasai people.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS AUGUST 2018

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

Date	Verse	Reading	Comments
Aug 1	TLH 24	Psalm 92	The Lord is victorious over His (and our) enemies.
Aug 2	TLH 47	Proverbs 15:1-9	Wise people guard their tongues, speaking gently for the benefit of others.
Aug 3	TLH 136	Ezekiel 43:1-10	Ezekiel's vision of the perfect temple reminded the people that God would come among them. This took place when Immanuel ("God with us") came.
Aug 4	TLH 80	John 1:1-14	Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, came to dwell with us.
Aug 6	TLH 56; LSB 697	1 Thessalonians 5:12-24	As you wait for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, be joyful and live in love!
Aug 7	TLH 28	Psalm 93	The world the Lord has created will remain by His mighty power until He chooses to end it.
Aug 8	TLH 1	Psalm 95	Do not harden your hearts, but come joyfully before the Lord Who cares for you.
Aug 9	TLH 418	Proverbs 16:17-25	Our plans, ways, and ideas should always be submitted to the Lord's
Aug 10	TLH 420	Daniel 4:28-37	Nebuchadnezzar's pride and confidence in himself led God to take steps to humble him. We all need humbling from time to time, don't we?
Aug 11	WS 763	John 4:7-26	Jesus reveals that He is the Messiah and invites the Samaritan woman to drink of the "living water" (the forgiveness of sins).
Aug 13	WS 751; LSB 598	Numbers 3:40-51	The Lord taught the Israelites the concept of redemption by claiming the Levites and the firstborn of Israel as His own.
Aug 14	WS 740	Psalm 96	What is the "new song"? It is the song that tells how God saves His people.
Aug 15	TLH 87; LSB 792	Psalm 98	The "new song" is the Gospel, the good news of God's love and faithfulness to us in Christ Jesus who redeemed us.
Aug 16	TLH 412; LSB 695	Proverbs 18:15-19	Here we find some divine advice for dealing with disagreements.
Aug 17	WS 762	Daniel 9:25-27	Daniel prophesies three distinct eras until the final destruction of Jerusalem. Note the references to Jesus' birth and death.
Aug 18	TLH 519	John 6:16-24	When Jesus is with us, there is no need to be afraid.
Aug 20	TLH 50; LSB 795	Numbers 6:22-27	The triune God blesses you: The Father with His preservation, the Son with His grace, the Spirit with His peace.
Aug 21	TLH 59	1 Chronicles 11:1-9	David is made king just as the Lord had said. He would be the kingly forerunner of the greatest King, Jesus Christ.
Aug 22	TLH 532	Psalm 101	A Christian does well to surround himself with friends who trust and follow the righteous ways of the Lord.
Aug 23	TLH 517	Proverbs 19:18-23	Discipline (godly training) is an important part of our growing in Christian maturity.
Aug 24	TLH 276	Hosea 6:1-6	The Lord laid bare Israel's sins, but also urged them to turn to Him and be restored.
Aug 25	TLH 132	John 8:12-18	Jesus' testimony about Himself was backed up by the Heavenly Father, Who also testified on His behalf.
Aug 27	TLH 283	1 Timothy 4:6-16	Not just public ministers, but all of us can devote ourselves to the Scriptures and strive to put our hope in the God of our salvation.
Aug 28	TLH 518	Numbers 9:15-23	The Lord Himself leads His people day by day.
Aug 29	TLH 31	Psalm 103	We praise the Lord for His great mercy and compassion on both our bodies and our souls!
Aug 30	TLH 402	Proverbs 20:17-24	Many are the temptations around us. We ask the Lord to direct our steps.
Aug 31	WS 760	Hosea 11:1-11	God's love for Israel was most clearly shown in His sending of the Christ to save them from their sins (Matthew 2:13-15).

Third Foreign Missionary Authorized

“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

(Luke 10:2).

During every Board of Missions meeting I have been a part of, at some point, someone brings up the fact that with all of the opportunities we have overseas, it would be really beneficial if we had a third full-time foreign missionary. That desire is now, perhaps, closer to being met as a result of the action taken by our church body in our recent convention.

As early as 2008, the CLC in convention recognized the need for a third full-time foreign missionary. However, since there were insufficient funds, the convention resolved, “We eagerly anticipate the calling of another full-time foreign missionary when financially feasible.” In 2010, convention concurred with the Board of Missions “that the need and urgency to call a third missionary continues to grow, but we understand that there are insufficient funds at present to fully support a third foreign missionary.” Therefore, the Board of Missions was encouraged to pursue alternative ways of providing a presence throughout our foreign mission fields.

In response, the Board of Missions has issued a number of part-time missionary calls over the past eight years. Missionary Todd Ohlmann, Pastor Nathanael Mayhew, and retired Missionary David Koenig have served as part-time missionaries in the past. Currently, Pastors Michael Gurath and John Hein serve as part-time missionaries. In 2016, as a means of further providing a presence in more areas, the Mission Board decided to restructure one of the full-time foreign missionary positions. Missionary Ohlmann currently serves as our traveling/visiting missionary. In this role, Missionary Ohlmann resides in the U.S. but spends approximately six months a year traveling overseas as he conducts a regular schedule of visitations to our many sister church bodies.

However, the need for another full-time missionary has continued to grow. Therefore, since the Lord has financially

blessed the CLC in recent years, the 2018 convention authorized the Board of Missions to call a third full-time missionary. To fund this new position, convention resolved to have 50% of this funding come by way of an increase in the Board of Missions general budget (from the CLC General Fund) and 50% to come from the Mission Development Fund (MDF) for the first year. Over the next three years, the CLC Coordinating Council, in consultation with the Board of Missions, would implement a plan to move these costs into the regular Missions general budget.

It is certainly exciting to see the initial steps being taken to provide for a need we have recognized for at least a decade.

However, there are still challenges. Calling a third foreign missionary would cost approximately \$70,000. We rejoice that the Lord has blessed our church body such that half of this cost can come by way of an increase to the general budget. However, an increase of \$35,000 to the MDF budget may prove difficult. Offerings to the MDF are unpredictable, and without an increase in those offerings, the funding of a third full-time foreign missionary would come at the expense of other programs currently being funded from the MDF. And, of course, we would wait on the Lord to lead the right man to accept the call. A foreign missionary call presents unique challenges that are not suited to everyone.

In our fall meetings, and leading up to them, the Board of Missions will, no doubt, spend considerable time discussing this opportunity. Please pray that the Lord would continue to provide for us so that we may issue this call, and pray that the Lord would lead the right man to accept such a call into our foreign mission fields which are so ripe for harvest.

Robert Sauers is pastor of Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Morris, Minnesota, and a member of the CLC Board of Missions



It is certainly exciting to see the initial steps being taken to provide for a need we have recognized for at least a decade. However, there are still challenges.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Nice Knowing You, Charles Darwin.

A just-released scientific study appears to flatly refute the Darwinist view of evolution. Professors Mark Stoeckle from Rockefeller University in New York and David Thaler at the University of Basel in Switzerland compared millions of DNA "barcodes" across a hundred thousand animal species, to explore genetic diversity and look for evidence of evolution. They published their findings in May. Among those findings was evidence that 90% of all species on earth today (including man) didn't evolve at all, but came into being suddenly, all at the same time. Moreover, this startling appearance happened in relatively recent time. Their guess is 100,000 years ago. In evolutionary terms this represents a shockingly recent date, almost like yesterday compared to the millions of years that has been considered "settled science" for generations. Also amazing was their finding that species are very, very distinct, with almost no evidence for intermediate forms between the established species. "If individuals are stars, then species are galaxies," said Thaler. "They are compact clusters in the vastness of empty sequence space." Until now, Darwinistic evolution has taught that species developed gradually from earlier species over vast eons of time. Hood, Marlowe. "Sweeping gene survey reveals new facets of evolution." *Evolution*. Phys.org, 28 May 2018. Web. 10 Jun. 2018.

Big Win for Freedom of Religion.

In a 7-2 decision, the Supreme Court in June ruled in favor of Colorado baker Jack Phillips, who exercised his religious convictions by refusing to create a wedding cake for a homosexual couple. Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel Kristen Waggoner, who represented Phillips, praised the ruling. "Jack serves all customers; he simply declines to express messages or celebrate events that violate his deeply held beliefs," Waggoner said in a statement. "Creative professionals who serve all people should be free to create art consistent with their convictions without the threat of government punishment." De Vogue, Ariane. "Supreme Court rules for Colorado baker in same-sex wedding cake case." *Politics*. CNN.com, 4 Jun. 2018. Web. 10 Jun. 2018.

Missouri Synod Finds Unexpected Factors in Retention of Young People.

In January, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod published results of an extensive demographic survey about declining church membership, and how to address it. Such losses, they found, are largely due to declining birthrates and are actually less severe among confessional Lutherans than other denominations. One disturbing issue continues to be the trend of "millennials" (young people 18-34 years old) leaving the

church. The goal, of course, is to retain more of these young people, but some of the factors in effective retention may surprise you. To quote the survey's findings:

- "The largest group of those who have left the LCMS are, in fact, now 'de-churched,' that is, not attending any church.
- "Worship practice is not a dominant factor in why millennials have left the church.
- "Statistically, Lutheran schools are a significant blessing in the retention of young people.
- "Longer pastorates tend to enhance retention. The age of the pastor is irrelevant.
- "Relationships are significant to millennials. Healthy and positive relationships with parents aid in retention.
- "Young people who feel that their congregation cares about them and is open to their struggles tend to stay in the church."

Harrison, Matthew. "Message to the Church about demographic challenges we face." *Reporter*. Blogs.LCMS.org, 6 Jun. 2018. Web. 10 Jun. 2018.