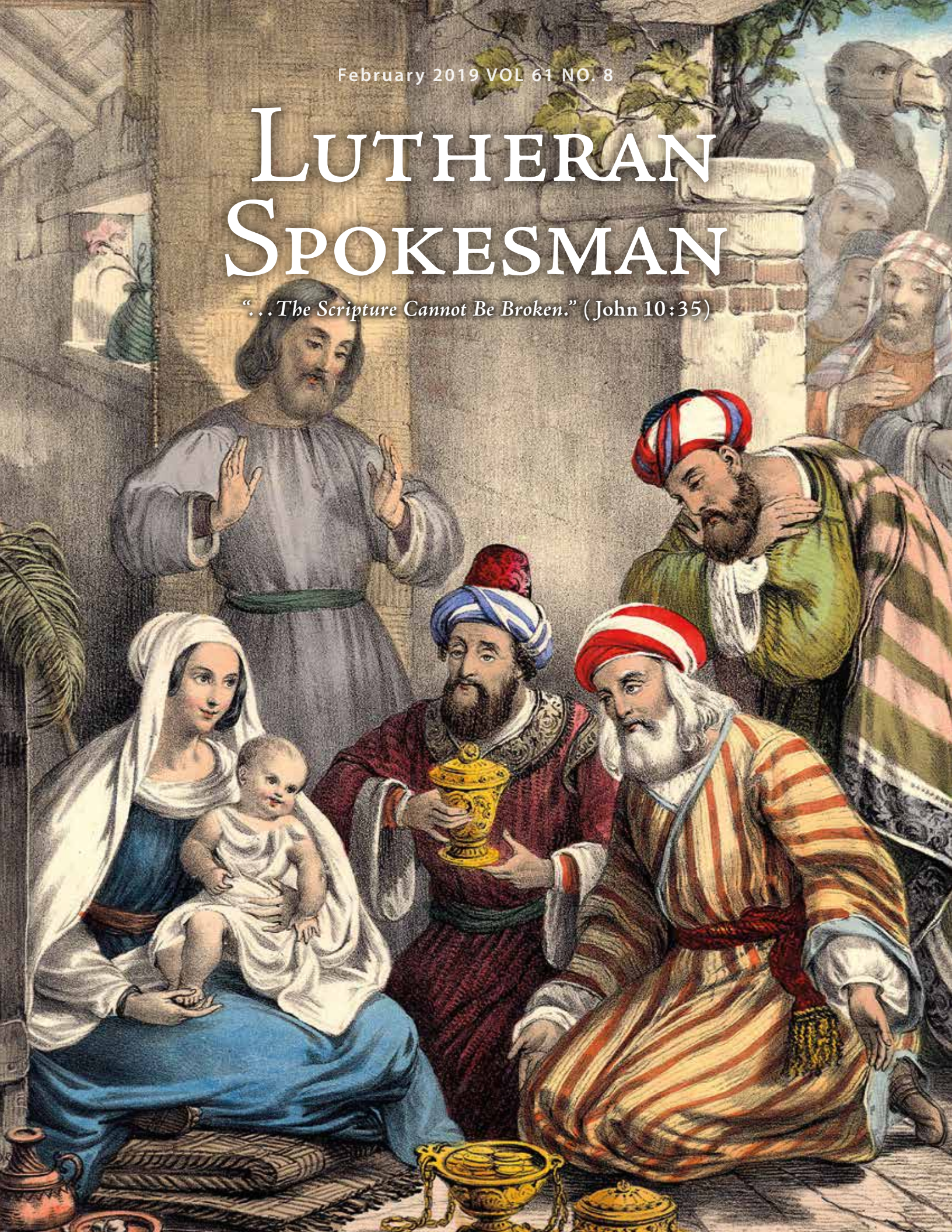


February 2019 VOL 61 NO. 8

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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





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Welcome to the Family

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

(Matthew 2:10-11)

The wise men, the three kings, the magi . . . tradition has made these visitors of Jesus to be seen in different ways. We Christians may scoff at wise men in Nativity sets: “The wise men don’t belong in the manger scene! They didn’t get there for two years! They weren’t kings! We don’t know how many there were!” They have become, in many of our minds, the *others*; strange rich men who came from far away to see the newborn King. They are mysterious; their names aren’t given, and their place of origin is simply referred to as the East. They are outsiders to our usual Biblical narrative that largely follows the Jews up to that point.

The wise men are included in the Gospel of Matthew not because they are a novelty, but because their inclusion was one of the first indications of the new normal for the early New Testament church. They were outsiders, but they were welcomed to worship the newborn King of the Jews as their own King. Matthew himself was also seen by the Jews as an outsider. Working as a tax collector for the Romans, he was seen as a thief and a traitor. The Pharisees disapproved of Jesus’ meal with Matthew and other sinners (Matthew 9:9-13).

Near the end of Matthew’s Gospel, the future of the New Testament church comes into greater focus as Jesus laments His rejection by the Jews: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37) Jesus’ sincere sadness over the lost souls shows the necessity of being part of God’s family.



We are outsiders, too. We sinners are not born into God’s family; we are adopted as sons and daughters of the King through Christ’s vicarious atonement and the work of the Holy Spirit. “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:4-6) “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” (Ephesians 2:19) Seeing the wise men as strange foreigners from mysterious lands misses the point of God’s plan of salvation. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost.

The wise men assure us that we, too, are included in Christ’s saving work.

They were not Jews who had found assurance in the promise of the coming Savior since youth. They were educated men, following a miraculous star. Through the Holy Spirit, they recognized the miraculous and strange nature of this newborn King.

May the truth of our own welcome into God’s family fill us with joy, and hope for the blessings to come in our heavenly home. And may our hearts be moved to share this good news with the others in our lives.



Ross Kok is a teacher at Holy Cross Lutheran School in Phoenix, Arizona.

Called to *Action*

Read John 1:29-51

Examples—good, bad, or indifferent—are all around us. Even though we know the Bible’s primary purpose is to show us the path to heaven through the grace of our Lord Jesus, the Scriptures are also full of examples. Paul tells us, “*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition.*” (1 Corinthians 10:11) Though Jesus’ disciples were often poor examples of Christ followers (just as we can be), in the account of Jesus calling the first of His followers we find examples we would do well to emulate.

John and Andrew

The first two disciples Jesus called to follow Him started out as disciples of John the Baptizer, namely John and Andrew. When John the Baptizer singled out Jesus and testified that He was indeed the “*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,*” (John 1:29) it was enough for these two. Although John the Baptizer did retain some disciples for a time, Andrew and John knew it was time to stop following the preacher and follow the One preached. We would do well to remember that. As attached as we may become to our pastors, it is the One Whom they preach that we follow. We dare not let brotherly love or loyalty cloud our vision of Christ.

Peter

The next we hear of Andrew, he is telling his brother, Simon (Peter), about the Christ. Andrew wasn’t content with just the telling however, he *brought* his brother to see Jesus. Are we often content with the telling, and forget to follow through with the bringing? We may tell others about our church or our religion, but when we are done speaking, have they been brought to Jesus? We would do well to leave those to whom we witness with these truths: I

believe Jesus is the Christ, true Son of God; His life, death, and resurrection were the perfect payment for all sin; He is my Savior because He paid for my sin; He is their Savior as well.

Philip and Nathanael

When Jesus called Philip, we are simply told that he followed Him. Philip then found a friend to share the Good News with. Nathanael scoffed at the idea that the Messiah could come from Nazareth, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” (John 1:46) Whether the poor reputation of Nazareth was deserved or not, Philip didn’t take the bait. He was not going to debate his friend, but rather simply invited him to come and see for himself. We know the old saw, “Never discuss religion or politics.” However, our sharing of Christ and His

Word is to be our daily occupation. When we discuss biblical matters with others, it may be difficult to keep a firm hand on our emotions, to not become argumentative. This is especially true if someone is purposely baiting us into an argument. Take a page from Philip’s book: “Let’s look into God’s Word together and see!”

Nathanael heard Jesus state, “*Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.*” (John 1:48) This tiny glimpse of Jesus’ omniscience was enough to have Nathanael confess, “*You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!*” (John 1:49) Jesus revealed to Nathanael that as he accompanied Him, he would see far greater things than this. We have seen far greater things. Whether in the full revelation of God’s Word or in our own life experiences, we have seen prayers answered and promises fulfilled. Let us follow in the footsteps of the followers of Christ, and joyfully share the Good News with all!



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

WS 717

“Bright and Glorious Is the Sky”

The creation account gives surprisingly little attention to the stars. It tells us that on the fourth day God made lights and placed them in the sky, but it calls our attention mostly to the sun and the moon. The stars almost seem to be just mentioned: “He made the stars also.” Yet the stars, too, are called God’s lights “set in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth.” (Genesis 1:16-17)

The stars in God’s creation have a prominent place in this Epiphany hymn by Nicolai F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1875). The stars in the night sky make it “**bright and glorious.**” They make the high heavens “**radiant.**” When God set them in the heavens, He made them so that their rays of light incline to the earth and “**beckon us to heaven above.**” They lift our thoughts from earthly things to God the Maker of all things.

The “**sages from the east afar**” who came to visit the child Jesus were undoubtedly careful observers of the stars, for they took note of the star that signaled His birth when it rose in the East. But it was not just the appearance of a new star that led them to undertake the journey to Bethlehem; stars by themselves tell us only of the power and wisdom of God.

The wise men identified the new star as a “**wondrous star**” and “**went to find the King of nations and to offer their oblations unto Him as Lord and King.**” For this they needed more than the knowledge of astronomy, more than the knowledge of God’s eternal power and deity. To identify the star as they did, the wise men needed the knowledge of God that is revealed only in the Bible. This knowledge they surely had, for how else could they have known the significance of the star? The wise men evidently knew of the prophecy of Christ that says, “A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel.” (Numbers

24:17) It must have been this knowledge that moved them to set out on a journey from their homeland to Bethlehem. This is why the wise men are thought to have been from Babylon, where the Jews took the knowledge of the true God when they were exiled there.

The wise men had the faith that comes by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word, for when they found the child Jesus, it was in lowly circumstances. “**Him they found in Bethlehem, yet He wore no diadem; they but saw a maiden lowly with an Infant pure and holy resting in her loving arms.**” Still, they worshiped Him as the promised Christ, their Lord and Savior.

The beauty of this hymn is especially its praise of God’s Word as the true star that guided the wise men. “**Guided by the star they found Him whose praise the ages sound.**” The Word is the star that has also guided us to the child Jesus and pointed Him out to us as the promised Savior. You and I did not get to see the

star that the wise men saw. But we have the same Word that they had. We have more than they had, for we have the record of Christ’s life, atoning death, and resurrection.

We hear no more of the Bethlehem star after it led the wise men to the child Jesus. But God’s Word is still here for us and will be for the rest of our lives. By it the Holy Spirit strengthens and keeps us in the true faith unto everlasting life.

As a star, God’s holy Word ✪ Leads us to our King and Lord; ✪ Brightly from its sacred pages ✪ Shall this light throughout the ages ✪ Shine upon our path of life.



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



Frankincense

“And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Matthew 2:11

As a boy, I often puzzled over the gifts of the Magi. Gold was certainly a treasure. But what was myrrh, and who was Frank? Eventually, I realized that “Frank” was not a person but a nation; that *Frank*-incense was named for the Frankish crusaders who introduced this incense to Europe. But millennia before the crusaders, frankincense was already a prized commodity of the ancients.

The Babylonians and Assyrians used frankincense in religious ceremonies. Egyptians used it for incense, insect repellent, perfume, salve, embalming, and for making the black kohl eyeliner worn by Egyptian women.

Early on, frankincense was recognized for its healing properties. The ancients used it to treat a variety of health issues, including wounds, skin conditions, dental and gum disease, digestive issues, and respiratory problems. The Roman emperor Nero used frankincense-ointment to hide the “bags” beneath his eyes after a night of reveling.

And that which the ancients knew, modern science is rediscovering. Research has shown frankincense to be immune-enhancing, antibiotic, antifungal, antiviral, antiseptic, and anti-inflammatory, with potential use for treating some forms of cancer, colitis, Crohn’s disease, anxiety, asthma, arthritis, and more.

Frankincense comes from the *Boswellia* tree. There are several species of *Boswellia*: some scraggly, others stately, but all confined to the dry, sun-scorched deserts of the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa. The Greek historian Herodotus reported that *Boswellia* trees were guarded by flying serpents; though, in all likelihood, this legend was created by *Boswellia* owners to frighten away *Boswellia* poachers.

Harvesting frankincense was very time-consuming. Cuts were made in the bark of the *Boswellia* tree, from which

seeped a milky white resin or sap. After drying for three months, the sap was scraped from the tree, sold, then either chewed as gum, steamed for essential oils, or burned as incense—a pleasing citrusy aroma.

Given the inhospitable climate of the *Boswellia* tree, the difficulties of harvesting and transporting it, and the growing demand for it, frankincense became extremely expensive. By the time Jesus was born, frankincense was worth its weight in gold. So great was its mystique, value, and healing qualities that many ancients viewed frankincense as a gift fitting for the “gods,” and *Boswellia* trees as the property of kings. Records show that King Seleucus II Pogon of Syria offered gold and frankincense to Apollo at the temple of Miletus in 243 B.C.

Frankincense is mentioned seventeen times in the Bible: fifteen times in the Old Testament and twice in the New¹. The biblical words for frankincense—*LEVONAH* in Hebrew and *LIBANOS* in Greek—both mean “white”; a reference to the white sap of the *Boswellia* tree. It’s not surprising that frankincense is mentioned more times in the Old Testament than the New, especially in the Book of Leviticus. Its primary use in the Old Testament was as incense, whether sprinkled on burnt offerings, added to baked offerings, or included in a special incense mixture so sacred that to replicate the mixture for personal use was punishable by death. As stated in Exodus 30:38, “*Whoever makes any like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people.*”

But for all the Old Testament mentions of frankincense, that New Testament reference in Matthew 2:11 remains the most familiar to us. Knowing the healing properties and extreme value of frankincense, we can better understand why the Magi and the ancient world viewed it as treasure;

and why frankincense was an appropriate gift for the infant King of Kings.

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



¹ Exodus 30:34; Leviticus 2:1, 2, 15, 16; 5:11; 6:15; 24:7; Numbers 5:5; 1 Chronicles 9:29; Nehemiah 13:5, 9; Song of Solomon 3:6; 4:6, 14; Matthew 2:11; and Revelation 18:13.

Marriage: More Than Just a Piece of Paper

*“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled;
but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”*

(Hebrews 13:4)

*“What’s the point in marriage?
It’s just a piece of paper, and a piece
of paper doesn’t define our love.”*

That statement sums up how many people view marriage today. But would such people hold the same attitude toward the green paper they carry around in their wallets? Or the paper they received while walking across the graduation stage? How many would run the deed to their house or the title for their car through a shredder? After all, it’s just paper, right? These examples expose the line “marriage is just a piece of paper” for what it really is, a pitiful excuse.

The problem sinners have with marriage isn’t the piece of paper at all; rather it’s the lifelong commitment that the marriage license represents. The marriage promise is a promise to give of oneself willingly and entirely to another person “for richer or poorer, in sickness or in health, as long as we both shall live.” By avoiding marriage, a person leaves himself with an ever-present and convenient “out” of the relationship.

In the marriage promise, husband and wife proclaim that their bodies are no longer their own, that their whole body is now also for the service and use of their spouse, and *only* their spouse (1 Corinthians 7:4). Another problem many have with marriage is that it is a lifelong commitment to the *same* individual, which necessarily implies limits and boundaries for sexual activity. Of course, God has every right to instruct us how we ought to use the bodies He has created and redeemed by the blood of His Son, and also to set the limits for His gift of sexual pleasure as well (1 Corinthians 6:18-19). It is not surprising that such boundaries are derided and despised by many; they prefer to think of sexual intercourse as a recreational activity to be used whenever, however, and with whomever they

please. But even as marriage is more than just a piece of paper, so too the sexual relationship is more than just a physical activity.

This special intimacy is God’s gift to the married couple. It is part of “becoming one flesh” with one’s spouse. It is used by God to strengthen the marriage bond between husband and wife: physically, mentally, and emotionally. It is God’s way of providing the blessing of children to parents and the blessing of father and mother to children. God’s Word is clear that to indulge in sexual relationships outside the confines of marriage is contrary to His will.

**Contrary to man’s low view of marriage,
God tells us that marriage is honorable.**

It is of God’s design and comes with God’s blessing. Marriage was God’s solution for the only thing that was “*not good*” in a perfect creation (Genesis 2:18). God protects marriage with the Sixth Commandment. Our Savior Jesus honored marriage by His presence and first miracle (John 2:1-11). And God uses marriage in Scripture to picture the relationship between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

The marriage commitment is a precious and honorable thing as it reflects Christ’s commitment to His bride, the Church, even to the point that “*Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.*” (Ephesians 5:25) May the Holy Spirit enable us to hold with honor God’s blessed gift of marriage.



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

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTS — JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

In this twelve-part series we are taking a brief look at some of the major cults, past and present, that have found adherents in the United States. Your pastor can help you if you'd like a more in-depth study of a particular group.

Christian Science

Some lies are so obvious they can't be disguised. So, cults rely on a trick the Navy once used when trying to hide ships on the open seas. Vessels were painted in bright, bold colors, and covered with complex geometric patterns. The idea was not concealment but confusion.

Confusion is a key factor in Christian Science. The name itself is a bold and blatant lie. It is neither Christian nor scientific.

Christian Science is the brainchild of Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910).

Born in New Hampshire, she was raised in a strict Congregationalist home. According to her, she was sickly as a child—suffering near invalidism and remaining unconscious for hours at a time. In 1862, she came into contact with a doctor who proposed that she could heal her body through the power of her mind. This, he claimed, was in direct harmony with the way Jesus healed people in the Bible. It seemed like a good marriage between medical science and Christianity.

When Eddy suffered a fall a few years later, she claimed that doctors did not expect her to live. But then, she read the words of Matthew 9:2: *"Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.'"* Eddy then claimed to have been miraculously healed "Three days after her 'near death experience.'" God then led her, she said, on a three-year journey where she learned the principles of Christian Science. She later wrote, "True healings are the result of true belief." In fact, "Matter, sin, and sickness are not real, but only illusions."

In 1875 she published *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. Eddy believed that she herself was the key to the Scriptures, as predicted in Revelation 3. She further identified herself as the woman in Revelation 12. She, alone, could rightly interpret God's Word. Only she could correct the errors that the Bible allegedly contained.



Christian Science doctrine is both brash and deadly. It denies the existence of Satan, sin, good, and evil. The "God" of Christian Science is not the triune God taught in the Bible, but rather the "Father—Mother." According to Christian Science, Jesus was neither God, nor the Messiah. He did not really die, nor was His sacrifice in any way effective. These doctrines could hardly be more anti-biblical and anti-Christian had they been drafted by Satan himself.

Eddy's teachings are not just harmful spiritually, they endanger physical lives as well. Practitioners are taught that, while doctors may be used for broken bones and vaccinations (where mandated by law), Christian Science prayer is most effective when used apart from medical care. This fact brings negative attention to the group, especially when untreated children are permitted to die.

Why would anyone want to join this group? Because there are many people who wonder why God hasn't healed them and are ready to try anything that might work. When they hear stories of miraculous healings, or hear that someone has uncovered a secret cure that comes from God, the temptation is real. Desperation makes them vulnerable. Confusion leads them astray.

If someone you know is a Christian Science adherent, remember that the most basic teachings of Scripture have been totally upended in their mind. Though they speak of the Bible, it's a false front for some of Satan's most brazen lies. But remember also that these are precious souls for whom Jesus died. To reach them requires kindness, patience, and careful instruction in Scripture. Help them to see that sin, sickness, and death are very real—as is God's Solution to sin through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son.



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

“THIS WE BELIEVE”

In ongoing observation of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we are presenting a brief overview of the Book of Concord. The series will survey the three ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran confessions.

The Nicene Creed

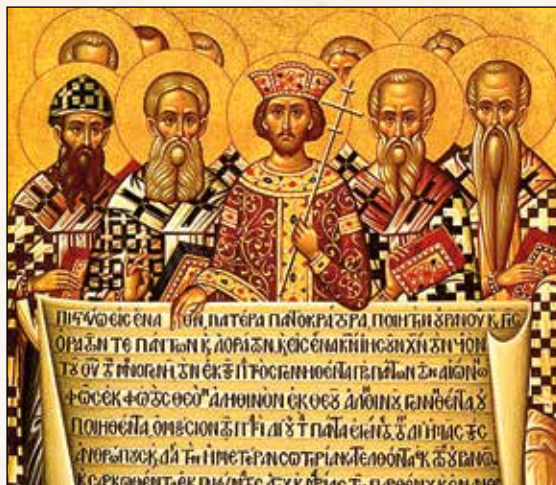
They think they have identified it, submerged in the clear, shallow waters near the shores of Iznik Golu in modern Turkey. This ancient church was destroyed centuries ago by an earthquake that also caused the ground to sink into the lake. The ancient name of Iznik was Nicea. In this church the Council of Nicea was held in A.D. 325, and here the Nicene Creed was adopted.

We commonly recite this creed during our communion services.

The first thing we notice is how similar it is to the Apostles' Creed. The same material is presented in the same Trinitarian order, but in a somewhat fuller manner. For example, the Father is Creator also “of all things visible and invisible.” The work of the Son is again presented by listing the chief events in His life: He was incarnate, was crucified, suffered, died and was buried, rose from the dead, ascended, sits at God’s right hand, and will return for judgment. All this is quite similar to the Apostles’ Creed.

But the added part is very different, both in language and content. “Begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made.” Here the tone is different; it’s more formal, technical, theological. To understand why this is, we need some background.

Because of the influence of a heretic named Arius, the church was engaged in a titanic debate over how to answer the question Jesus has put to each of us, “*But who do you say that I am?*” (Matthew 16:15) Arius and his followers—and they were many—were answering very much as the Jehovah’s Witnesses of our day answer. They said that Jesus is a created being, greater even than angels and archangels. He was, they said, created before the heavens and the earth. He was the creature nearest in nature to God, sharing a



similar nature. But He was not true God, nor was He due the same glory and honor.

In response, the church rose up and declared that Jesus was begotten in eternity by the Father and thus shared His eternal nature and divine being. He was God from God. An analogy was given. They were inseparable, as light is from light. He was begotten, not made, not created, did not come into being, not even before time. The vital, clinching phrase was,

“Being of one substance with the Father.” This the Arians could not accept or get around. They fought to substitute “a similar substance.”

Why is this so important? The Creed stresses Christ’s work for our salvation. “Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.” He was “crucified also for us.” The confessors were convinced that only a truly divine Savior is able to save. And they confessed that this is what Jesus is.

We wish we could say that this settled the matter, but it didn’t. Over the next few centuries, Arianism very nearly prevailed. It was overcome in the Roman Empire, but before this happened, the barbarian tribes had been converted to Arian Christianity. When they invaded the Roman Empire, they reintroduced this error. Finally, however, it was defeated. The church where the confessors met may have been ruined by an earthquake, but the truth proclaimed there has survived the shock waves of false teaching and prevailed.

The third article was very brief, simply: “And I believe in the Holy Ghost.” The rest was added by another council in A.D. 381 when it became necessary to state clearly that the Holy Spirit is also truly God.



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

A SLICE OF LIFE IN THE CLC

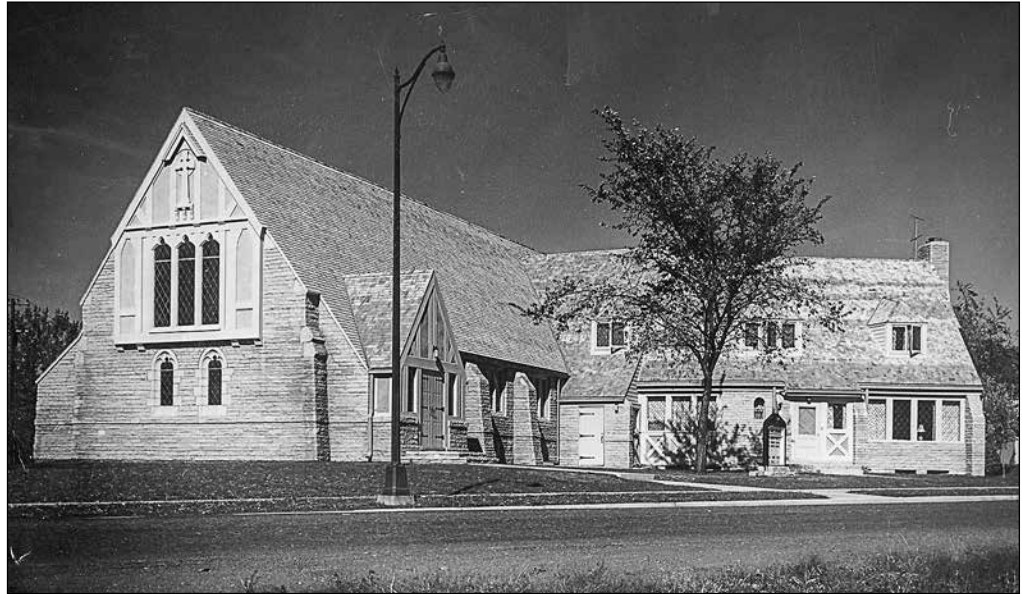
Snapshots of congregations from around the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church Austin, Minnesota

Seventy-eight years ago, in the early summer of 1941, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church had its first worship service, conducted by Pastor Reinhardt Schierenbeck of Sanborn, Minnesota. On June 27 of 1941, St. Paul's was incorporated and its constitution adopted. At the time of organization, St. Paul's membership consisted of fourteen charter members with their families; a total of forty communicant members. At that organizational meeting it was proposed that a young seminary graduate by the name of Lester Schierenbeck take charge of the work in Austin while he awaited a call and the congregation called its first pastor. Pastor William Blauert was installed on October 5, 1941. St. Paul's also purchased property for their church structure along the banks of the small Cedar River, on the corner of what was then called River Drive and St. Paul Street. That small river would become a big challenge for the congregation in years to come.

Due to the war restrictions on new construction, St. Paul's was able to finish only a basement sanctuary for worship until years later. Less than three years after the installation of their first resident pastor, Pastor Blauert was called home to the Lord after a sudden illness. Pastor Lester Schierenbeck was called to serve the young congregation and served as pastor of St. Paul's for the next twenty-five years.

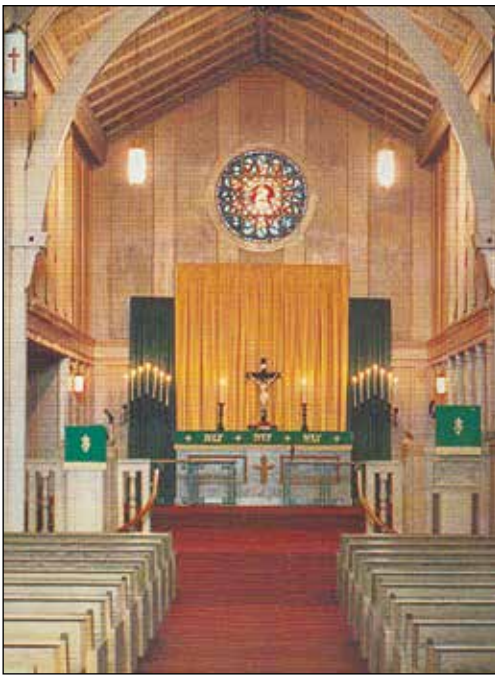
In 1953 the iconic stone church and parsonage, built in the gothic tradition, was dedicated and served as the home of St. Paul's for the next four decades. In the mid-



90's, however, persistent flooding of the Cedar River forced the congregation to move to a new home in the southwest corner of Austin. The new church and school building was constructed in 1995. This newer building has served the congregation well, not only by being far more energy efficient, but also by offering far easier accessibility for elderly and handicapped members.

St. Paul's opened a Christian day school in 1972, calling Miss Shirley Wendland and Miss Carla Thurow as their first teachers. Over the years the school faced many challenges, including the repeated flooding of the schoolrooms and sharp internal controversies in the congregation. Nevertheless, a series of dedicated teachers continued to provide a spiritually nourishing Christian education for the youth of the congregation. The school was finally closed in the spring of 2004.

The members of St. Paul's come from a wide area of southeastern Minnesota and northern Iowa. While a



Opposite: exterior of St. Paul's in 1955. Above: old sanctuary. Above right: new sanctuary. Below right: students of St. Paul's Sunday school.

core membership still lives in Austin, others come from Albert Lea, Rochester and Lake Mills, Iowa; some drive even farther. Why drive all that way? Many throughout our Church of the Lutheran Confession could answer that question. In this age of doctrinal neglect, with social justice being the mission of many denominations, and of deeds being seen as more important than creeds, by the grace of God St. Paul's, along with our brothers and sisters throughout the CLC, stands on the truth of the Word of God. Scriptural correctness far outweighs the political correctness of our society that celebrates sin rather than calling for repentance. The mission of the church is the same as it was in the days of the Apostle Paul, "So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel!" (Romans 1:15) And so Pastor Lester Schierenbeck was quoted in a local newspaper many years ago, "The purpose of the church is simply to proclaim the unconditional gospel."

This still remains the Church's God-given purpose, which St. Paul's congregation endeavors to sustain with faithful ministry. The congregation's membership has declined over the years; at one time numbering over five hundred souls, it now has only about sixty. Nevertheless, the Gospel message of a crucified and risen Savior remains the same. That powerful message is proclaimed from the pulpit and taught in Sunday school and Bible class every Sunday, as well as



in catechism and instruction classes throughout the year. Our services continue to be broadcast on a local cable access channel, with many viewers. The congregation's website is an increasingly important tool for reaching out with the Gospel. As the Lord grants us opportunity, we go forward trusting His grace and power to bless the testimony of this precious Gospel which proclaims to a sinful mankind the forgiving grace of God. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes!" (Romans 1:16)



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

2018 Mission Helper Trip—East Africa

Emirates Airlines Flight 236 departed Chicago at 8:45 P.M. on July 9th for a fourteen-hour flight to Dubai. So began the 2018 Mission Helper Trip to East Africa. Preparations for the trip, however, began months before. Purchasing airline tickets, visiting medical facilities for necessary shots, and preparing lessons to present the Seven C's—creation, corruption, catastrophe, confusion, Christ, cross, and consummation—were all completed well in advance. God's work is important and requires careful and detailed planning!

The twenty-three mission helpers were divided into three teams, headed for three different African countries: Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia. Team Kenya was the smallest of the three. Its members were Teacher Ted Quade, chairman of the Kinship Committee; Philip Strike, a layman from St. John's, Okabena; his son, Carl; Nyibol Kuan, a South Sudanese immigrant to the United States and member of Immanuel, Mankato; Blair Sydow, a vivacious member of Holy Trinity, West Columbia; and me.

During our fourteen days in Kenya, we visited two schools: St. David's in Etago (southwest Kenya) and Holy Cross-Emmaus in Moi's Bridge (west-central Kenya). We were privileged to share the Gospel in word and song with approximately 350 students and 25 teachers. In addition, we participated in four worship services with our African brethren, sharing our mutual joy in our common Savior Jesus.

One of those services was held at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Kitale—a regional capital with a population of over 100,000 people. St. Peter's is the only Lutheran church in that area. It has been shepherded for over twenty years by a layman named Calvin. He is a high school superintendent who, after moving to Kitale, was moved by the Spirit to gather scattered Lutherans in the area and begin holding services. He was introduced to our CLC through internet correspondence with Pastor James Albrecht of St. John's, Okabena.



St. Peter's meets in a public-school classroom. I was invited to speak for the service. Prior to that service, I was standing outside the classroom with my interpreter, a young man named Shadrack, when a motorcycle arrived; its cargo: two live chickens. Shadrack's comment was, "They will taste good." I did not realize it, but those chickens were to become the main course of a meal following the service. The service itself lasted nearly three hours. There was

a full liturgy, many hymns, three choirs, and my sermon on Matthew 11:25-30 with the theme, "The Christian's Greatest Treasure Is the Gospel!" What delightful fellowship!

During the meal following the service, I was introduced to and had a lengthy conversation with a visitor attending the service: Rev. Nathaniel Bol, a supervisory bishop in the South Sudanese Lutheran Church. They have no ties to any Lutheran church body in the United States. Since returning, we have been exchanging e-mails and confessional information. Perhaps the Lord will open the door to yet further opportunities for Gospel work in Africa. We await His direction and implore His blessing!

After a day-long safari at Luke Nakuru National Wildlife Refuge and a visit to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's Orphan's Project (elephants and rhinoceroses) in Nairobi, Team Kenya boarded a return flight to Dubai. Reunited, the three teams experienced an evening desert Safari—complete with camel-rides—before our fourteen-hour flight back to Chicago. It was the end of another Mission Helper Trip.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." What a privilege to share that wondrous message to the glory of our Savior's name and the blessing, we pray, of many souls!



Paul D. Nolting is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Valentine, Nebraska, as well as St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in White River, South Dakota and Peace Lutheran Church in Mission, South Dakota.

IN THE PIPELINE

This series profiles the men and women who are in their final year of preparation for the public teaching or preaching ministry at our Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Nathan Aksel Buck

Age: 24

Program: Education

Year in School: Senior

Where were you born?

Eau Claire, Wisconsin, born and raised.

Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family.

I'm engaged to be married to my wonderfully beautiful and talented girlfriend, Jessica Salter. I'm the oldest of four children: three boys and one girl. They're wonderful and talented too, I guess.

What hobbies, sports, or extracurriculars interest you?

Drawing, writing, running, fishing, hunting, stamp collecting, coin collecting, gaming, cooking, singing, and kayaking.

Tell us one thing about yourself that most people don't know.

For someone practical, I'm also extremely creative, and love spontaneous, inventive storytelling. I've been a counselor at God's Kids Camp during the summers, and always tell stories to the boys in our cabin before lights-out. This past year, I was asked by some little girls to tell one on the beach during swim time. It stretched over two days, and involved the girls as the seven bravest warrior princesses in the land, who defeated an evil red-bearded pirate who was trying to capture unicorns. In the story I was a dolphin because they found out that dolphins are my favorite animals.

Which academic subjects especially interest you?

That's a tough one . . . all of them? If I have to pick: geography, science and history.

How did you first come to consider the public teaching or preaching ministry as a career?

I only considered becoming a teacher less than four years ago. Previously I'd thought of being a GIS Specialist or an architect. I really wanted to do so many things that I realized teaching would encompass my love for every subject and convey that to help kids love those subjects too. Even after I enrolled, I wasn't entirely sure until a year in. Actually, for someone who's about to graduate and become a teacher, I have to admit (and my past teachers may agree) I often would rather have been anywhere else but school. I don't really know when that suddenly flipped



to "I want to be a teacher in school as my job", but God gradually led me toward teaching. It's been a blessing to look back and see how He's prepared me: by letting me see the teachers I had as role models, and also by helping me identify with students—both those who struggle and those who excel. A friend of mine once warned me that "you don't make money" as a Christian day school teacher, but I know that spiritual blessings outweigh material ones hands-down. I will work hard and am confident that God will provide.

What have you appreciated most about your time at ILC?

ILC is amazing and unique. I've come to appreciate nearly everything about it, from coaching cross country to being a member of the tour choir. I appreciate the fact that ILC students rank high academically, but the real reason we are different is that we are all gathered day-to-day in the Word and in Christian fellowship. The professors and staff at ILC go above and beyond to help and guide students in their academic, social, and spiritual lives like no other school does. I'll always be grateful for Immanuel.

What qualities do you think will most be needed by the future leaders of the church?

Hard to say. But no matter whether we're talking about past leaders or future leaders in the church, there is one thing needful: God's Word in full (Luke 10:42). Our society is so individualized and materialistic, we need leaders who will look outside themselves. Not just selflessly to help others under their care—as is the charge of any leader—but to find their hope and strength in Christ and His grace alone. All teachers need tact, integrity, charisma and knowledge—but while others kick morals and Scripture to the curb, the one thing needed most is to instruct all in the Gospel, as we do in our CLC schools.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS FEBRUARY 2019

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Feb 1	TLH 518 LSB 750	Matthew 5:1-12	Children of God need not be ashamed if they must suffer for Christ.
Feb 2	TLH 349 LSB 683	Matthew 6:16-24	Do not focus on earthly treasures such as honor, glory, or wealth; but appreciate those treasures that have heavenly significance.
Feb 4	TLH 370 LSB 575	Matthew 7:15-28	Watch out for false prophets, for not all who claim to be of Christ will actually enter heaven. Build your spiritual foundation on Jesus for safety and security.
Feb 5	TLH 459 LSB 780	Psalms 13	When you feel overwhelmed, bring your concerns to the Lord and His unfailing love will make your heart glad.
Feb 6	TLH 364 LSB 524	Genesis 21:1-7	At the very time God promised, Abraham's son Isaac was born. God's plan to send the Savior stayed right on schedule every step of the way.
Feb 7	TLH 326 LSB 616	Luke 7:36-50	Like the sinful woman, we all have large debts that have been forgiven. Take a moment to think about just how much Jesus has forgiven for you.
Feb 8	WS 701 LSB 343	Matthew 11:1-15	John was the Messiah's messenger, just as prophesied. This meant Jesus was the true Messiah, also as prophesied.
Feb 9	TLH 277 LSB 699	Matthew 11:25-30	Weary and burdened with our sins, we gratefully come to Jesus for rest!
Feb 11	TLH 412 LSB 411	Psalms 15	Children of God walk like children of God.
Feb 12	TLH 393 LSB 713	Genesis 22:1-18	The Lord blessed Abraham with a confident trust in Him, a faith that led him to obey even when he could not see just where he was being led.
Feb 13	TLH 398 LSB 870	Matthew 12:22-50	What people say reveals what is in their hearts, so watch what others say—and watch what you say.
Feb 14	TLH 25 LSB 717	Luke 8:22-25	You can count on Jesus, the Ruler of the wind and the waves.
Feb 15	TLH 407	Genesis 23	Abraham and Sarah were “strangers” not only in the land, but in the world, journeying to their heavenly home.
Feb 16	WS 759 LSB 486	Psalms 16	The Lord our God will keep us safe forever, not abandoning us to the grave, but raising us as Christ was raised!
Feb 18	WS 781 LSB 586	Mark 4:26-34	These two parables help us to understand the nature of the ruling activity of Christ: He rules even without our help, and His rule spreads throughout the world.
Feb 19	TLH 575 LSB 849	Mark 5:1-20	Sometimes it feels to us as if the devil has the upper hand in the world, but Jesus reminds us that He has power over the Satan.
Feb 20	TLH 652 LSB 606	Matthew 9:9-13	Jesus came for those who sorrow over their sins, and those who don't think they are sick will not trust in or benefit from His blessings.
Feb 21	TLH 383 LSB 557	Matthew 9:14-17	The Pharisees did not understand that salvation was by faith and not by fasting. Jesus' “new” Gospel did not fit with their religion.
Feb 22	WS 728 LSB 479	Matthew 9:18-26	We can trust Jesus for anything, even our own resurrections from the dead.
Feb 23	TLH 237 LSB 947	Psalms 17	We pray for the Lord's protection from evil.
Feb 25	TLH 317 LSB 569	Genesis 25:19-34	Sadly, Esau was not very interested in having a role in the promise God had made to Abraham, or he would not have given up his birthright so easily.
Feb 26	TLH 506 LSB 856	Mark 6:9b-13	The Twelve went out trusting in the Lord's care for them and preaching repentance and faith. With the same trust and message His missionaries go today.
Feb 27	TLH 211 LSB 483	Psalms 18	Our Lord is a God of salvation!
Feb 28	TLH 511 LSB 832	Psalms 19	The heavens declare the glory of God, but even more importantly, His Word does.

Every other month our CLC Board of Missions updates us with recent news from various mission fields.



Moi's Bridge eighth grade class.



Marie and Anna Sagala.

Graduation Celebration in Kenya

Graduation services were recently held at the two schools in Kenya that are supported by our CLC Project KINSHIP. Twenty-six eighth graders at St. David's, Etago, completed their final year on the hillside campus. Some two hundred miles northeast, nine eighth graders were the first graduating class of Emmaus Hill Lutheran School in Moi's Bridge. It is our prayer that the foundation in Christ that they have been given will guide them in their endeavors in their secondary education and beyond.

St. David's, Etago, was started in 2003. Over the past fifteen years, KINSHIP has been blessed with volunteers and funding to build classrooms and provide support to St. David's. During that time, enrollments at the school have been as high as three hundred students. The 2018 school year saw 158 students daily learning to become future citizens and leaders of Kenya, as Pastor Enosh and the staff of St. David's strengthen the students' educational foundation with the wonderful Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 2009, Anna Sagala was visiting Phoenix, Arizona, when she became acquainted with the pastors and members of Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School. With her newfound friends and a burning love for her Savior, she returned home to Moi's Bridge, Kenya, with the goal of building a church and starting a Christian school for the children of her community. With the assistance of the members of Holy Cross, Anna and her family were able to add a new class each year to the newly formed Emmaus Hill Lutheran School. This year's graduating class is Emmaus' first. Holy Cross was able to send a missionary to the Moi's Bridge area for a period of one year. Subsequently, and

with the Lord's blessing, the school grew to such an extent that Holy Cross asked the synod to take over its support. In 2016, KINSHIP assumed the administrative oversight of the school. Members of Holy Cross continue to support the school as a group sponsor.

This past summer, a Mission Helper team spent six days in each of these communities. Training was provided to the pastors and teachers through classes on the Law and Gospel by Pastor Paul Nolting of Grace Lutheran, Valentine, Nebraska. The six team members interacted with the students and provided Christian inspiration to all they met. Students of both schools as well as staff members of St. David's used song and verse to express their appreciation, both for their Christian education and for the visit of the mission team.

Although these two schools are about two hundred miles apart, their goal of strengthening the educational foundation of their students with the never-failing Word of the Lord is the same. We thank the Lord for giving our synod the opportunity be part of these educational programs as well as for the sponsors and volunteers who assist in this Christian education process with their prayers and support. It is our prayer that the Lord continue to strengthen not only the graduates of these schools, but also all the children who sit at the Savior's feet to hear of the saving knowledge of Christ's love for all.



Theodore Quade, Jr., is the principal of Messiah Lutheran School in Hales Corners, Wisconsin. He also chairs the CLC Project KINSHIP Committee.

Lutheran Spokesman

501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Catholic School Faces Heat For Firing Pregnant Teacher.

In December, Our Lady of Lourdes Regional School in Edgewood, Pennsylvania, made national headlines—and provoked outraged responses in the media—for dismissing a teacher who is having a baby with her “longtime boyfriend.” The teacher, Naiad Reich, said the couple has no plans to marry, and that she intends to appeal her firing. “I feel like I’m a rewriting of *The Scarlet Letter* at this point,” Reich, 31, said. The school’s hiring policy cites “immorality” as grounds for a teacher’s dismissal. N.a. “Teacher says Catholic school fired her over her pregnancy.” *U.S. News*. apnews.com, 4 Dec. 2018. Web. 12 Dec. 2018.



Rodman and C Amit, Hebrew University

2000-Yr-Old Ring May Have Belonged to Pontius Pilate.

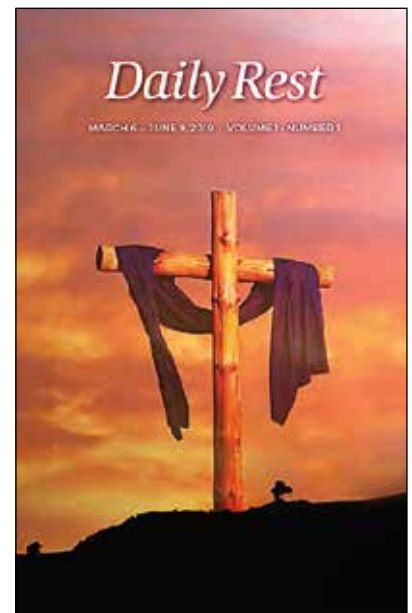
A copper ring unearthed in an archaeological dig in Herodium, about three miles southeast of Bethlehem, seems to bear the name of Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect who ruled the province of Judaea from around A.D. 26-36. If the identification is correct, it would be among

only a very few references, outside the Bible, to the ruler who condemned Jesus to death. The only other physical artifact bearing the name of Pilate is a building block, the so-called “Pilate Stone,” uncovered at Caesarea in 1961. Borschel-Dan, Amanda. “2,000-year-old ‘Pilate’ ring just might have belonged to notorious Jesus judge.” *Archaeology*. TimesofIsrael.com, 29 Nov. 2018. Web. 12 Dec. 2018.

“Neo-Paganism” Among Europe’s Fastest-Growing Religions.

For the first time in over a thousand years, a new pagan temple is being built in Iceland. It is the *Hof Ásatrúarfélagið* in Reykjavik, named for the ancient Norse religion of Asatru. This coincides with a rapid rise in the number of Europeans who identify as belonging to “pagan” religions, including Asatru, Wicca, Odinism, Druidism, and others. The UK is currently seeking seven pagan “chaplains” to serve prison inmates, and Scotland’s health service has had pagan chaplains since 2007. Christian scholars have speculated about the reasons behind the rise in pagan religions. One attraction is the “minimum commitment” of paganism, which requires little in the way of obedience or lifestyle change, especially as compared with historic Christianity. Also, says author Roger Buck, “Paganism much more easily allows for libertinism in our massively sexualized society.” Turley, K.V. “Playing With Fire? The Rise of the Neo-Pagans.” *World*. Ncregister.com, 31 Oct. 2018. Web. 12 Dec. 2018.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



NEW CLC DAILY DEVOTIONAL

As authorized by the convention, the Board of Education and Publications announces the first edition of “Daily Rest,” to be published quarterly beginning with this year’s Ash Wednesday observation on February 14. The editor of this daily devotional is Pastor David Pfeiffer. The first edition will be offered free to all families of the CLC and will be mailed in bulk to each congregation. We hope and pray that many will take advantage of this tool to bring God’s Word into their homes and hearts. Following the free first edition, the publication will be offered at a yearly subscription rate of \$15.