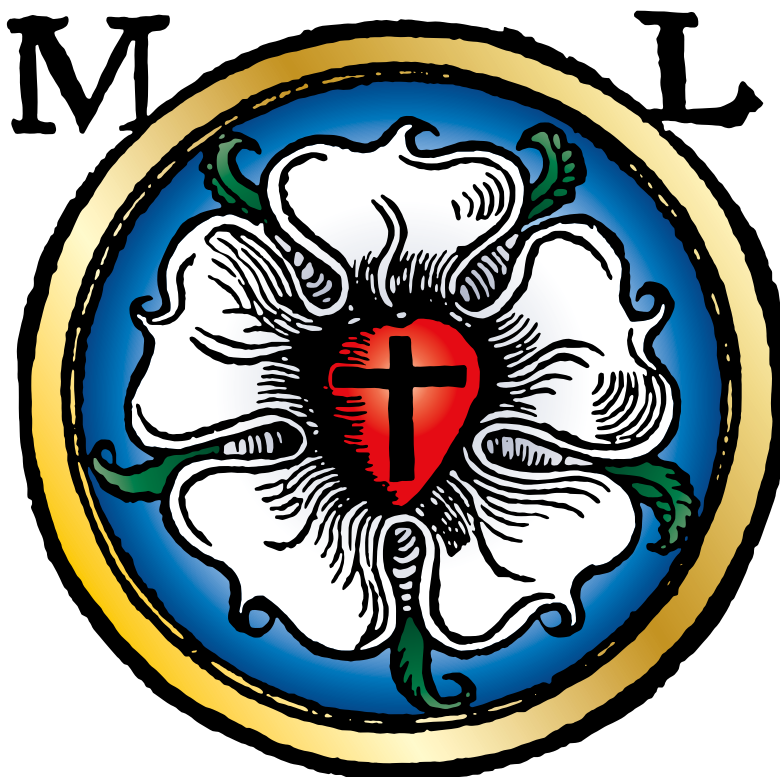


LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

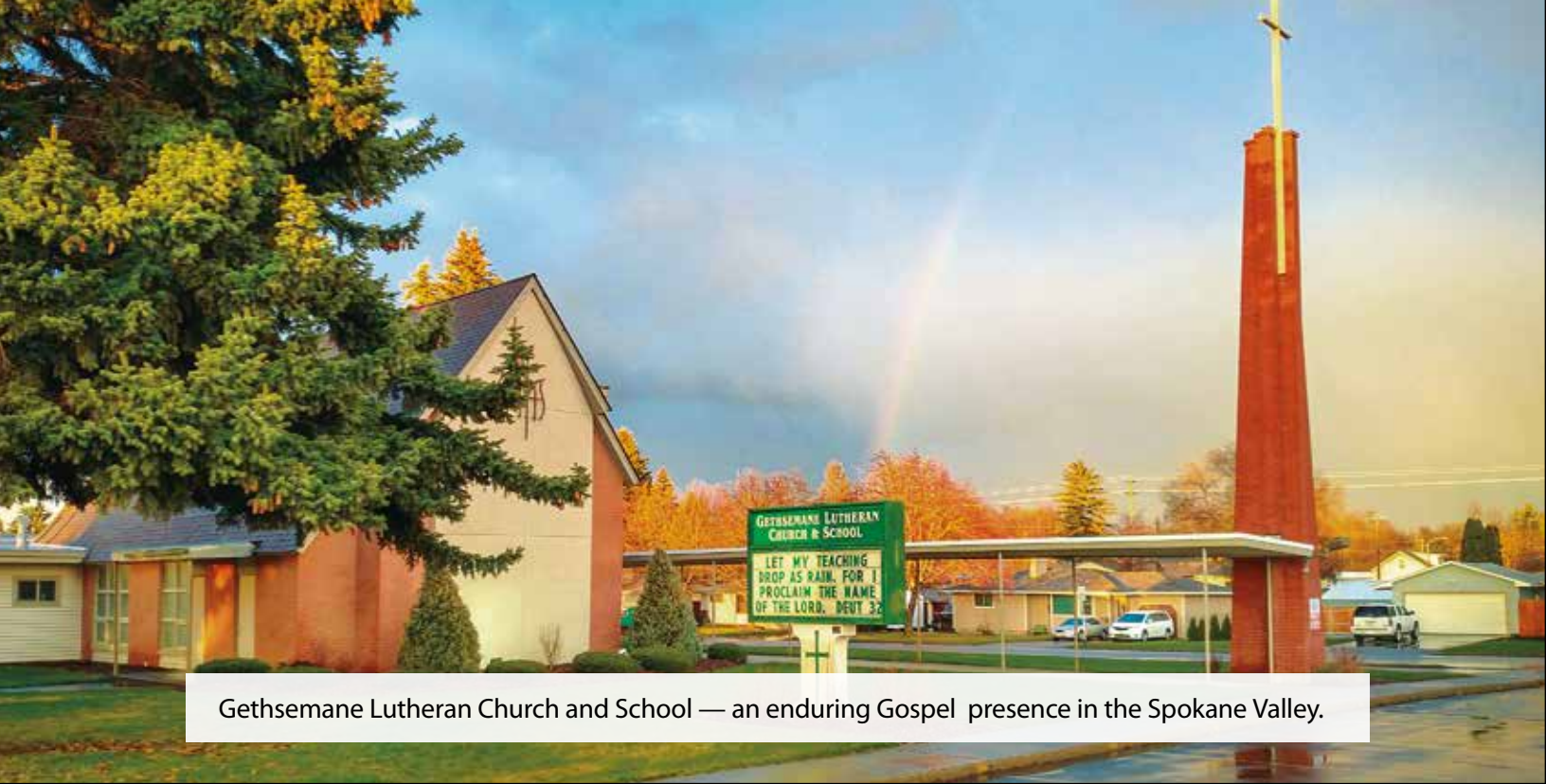
“...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken.” (John 10:35)



MARTIN LUTHER'S PERSONAL SEAL.

The Reformer explained the seal in a letter to Lazarus Spengler in 1530: “First, there is a black cross in a heart that remains its natural color. This is to remind me that it is faith in the Crucified One that saves us. Anyone who believes from the heart will be justified (Romans 10:10). It is a black cross, which mortifies and causes pain, but it leaves the heart its natural color. It doesn't destroy nature, that is to say, it does not kill us but keeps us alive, for the just shall live by faith in the Crucified One (Romans 1:17). The heart should stand in the middle of a white rose. This is to show that faith gives joy, comfort, and peace—it puts the believer into a white, joyous rose.

Faith does not give peace and joy like the world gives (John 14:27). This is why the rose must be white, not red. White is the color of the spirits and angels (cf. Matthew 28:3; John 20:12). This rose should stand in a sky-blue field, symbolizing that a joyful spirit and faith is a beginning of heavenly, future joy, which begins now, but is grasped in hope, not yet fully revealed. Around the field of blue is a golden ring to symbolize that blessedness in heaven lasts forever and has no end. Heavenly blessedness is exquisite, beyond all joy and better than any possessions, just as gold is the most valuable and precious metal.”



Gethsemane Lutheran Church and School — an enduring Gospel presence in the Spokane Valley.

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The Goal Was Unity, Not Division

Recently I came across the name of yet another Christian denomination that was new to me. I now don't even recall what it was, but that led me to wonder just how many Christian denominations exist today. I was astounded by the answer. According to the two-volume *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson; Oxford University Press, 2001) there are over 33,000: "World Christianity consists of six major ecclesiastico-cultural blocs, divided into 300 major ecclesiastical traditions, composed of over 33,000 distinct denominations in 238 countries." (Vol. I, p. 16).

Nor is this a declining trend. In the eighteen years since that book was published, the number of denominations has reportedly grown significantly. Although the supposition that there are over 33,000 Christian denominations is based in large part on the definition of "denomination" (a definition that is about as hard to pin down as a peeled grape) one fact is clear: Christians today have no trouble separating from others and forming themselves into autonomous groups.

It wasn't always so. Other than the "Great Schism" of 1054 between eastern and western Catholicism, the Christian church saw no substantive division until the Lutheran Reformation of 1517. Prior to the Reformation, in other words, if someone claimed to be Christian it meant that he was either Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox (which, in reality, were just twin sons of a different father). There were some splinter groups during the 1,500 years prior to the Reformation, but such groups were routinely condemned as heretical and mercilessly crushed. The wall that enclosed "the Christian church" was broken by the Reformation, and once the outflow began, the exodus was stunning. In just seventeen years (by 1534) Christian could mean Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian, Calvinist, Zwinglian, or any one of their ever-growing number of offshoots. Rome has been trying to reverse the flow ever since.

The central argument that Rome still uses to this day, their stated *raison d'être*, is that doctrine must be centrally

defined and regulated to prevent confusion and division within the church and corruption of the Christian faith. Lost in that argument is the fact that the very cause of the Reformation was the preexisting corruption of the Christian faith by that central authority. The *sola scriptura* ("Scripture alone") Reformation pillar gave notice to the world that the only true "central authority" was the Word of God. Every Christian therefore has all the authority he needs when he is armed with his Bible.

God does not desire discord and division. He wants harmony and unity.

Yet, as with all divine gifts, man has sorely abused his God-given freedom. Having been freed from his Roman captors, modern man now imagines that he is subject to no authority of any kind—including God's Word. *Sola scriptura* has been replaced with *sola*

humanitate ("humanity alone"). The current abundance of denominations is a testament to man's pride, as well as his stubborn refusal truly to submit his thoughts, opinions, and emotions to the authority of God's Word. Martin Luther didn't set out to divide the Christian church. His goal was to fix the one that already existed. When that church excommunicated him, he continued to proclaim the unaltered Word of God. Others affixed to him and to his followers the name *Lutheran*.

God does not desire discord and division. He wants harmony and unity. But that unity must be based always and only on the verbally inspired Word of God—*sola scriptura*. Our goal must also therefore be unity and harmony, not separation and discord. As Peter warned, "There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed." (2 Peter 2:1-2 ESV) When error appears (as it will), we must cut ourselves off from it. Yet

that necessary division can never serve as our goal or mission in life. The goal of the Reformation was unity, based always and only on the unaltered Word of God.



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

MISSIONS: Possible

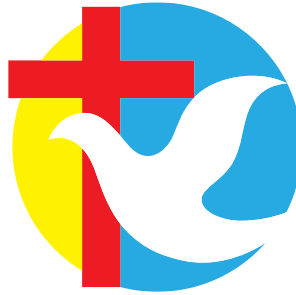
We are often told that some things in this life are just impossible. “Can’t be done,” “Won’t work,” and “You’re not qualified,” are a few of the phrases we hear. The sad reality is that these phrases often prove true. There are plenty of situations and opportunities in our lives that are simply beyond our reach. If you want to stir up angst in young people, ask them what they want to pursue for a living. College students worry they won’t be able to handle their class load, and even if they are able, what about the debt? Many wonder whether they will qualify for the positions they desire. Others may worry about whether jobs will even be available in the fields of their choice.

Consider the gifts.

The only advice I would have is to *try*. Consider what gifts the Lord has given to you and try to use them in the service of His kingdom. This may require starts and stops, changes of career or location; and there is nothing wrong with that. We would encourage all young people to consider working in the public ministry, yet we must remember that not everyone is called to be a pastor or teacher. The Lord chooses those who would serve Him in this capacity (Ephesians 4:11-12). No one should feel coerced or pressured into the public ministry, but rather hear and respond to the still small voice of the Gospel to feed the lambs of Jesus.

This brings us to an occupation or calling for which you are perfectly suited, fully equipped, and in which you are guaranteed to be 100% successful—mission work.

Can you know, in your heart, that you are perfectly suited for mission work? Absolutely, because the Lord has called you. Jesus told His followers, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20)



Every man, woman, and child in Christendom has received this command. Mission work is not just for missionaries and pastors. We should all be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in us; you are perfectly suited to share Jesus with others.

How equipped are you to do mission work?

This is where many bail out on their calling. We often hear excuses such as, “I don’t know what to say,” “I don’t like talking to people I don’t know,” and “I don’t know the Bible well enough.” However, God expects you to use your gifts and talents in His vineyard. He promised His followers that He would give them the words they should speak before their accusers without practice or rehearsal, “*for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.*” (Mark 13:11) Talk about on-the-job training! The Holy Spirit, Who lives in our hearts, shows us the meaning of the Scriptures and gives us the words to speak! You are definitely equipped for mission work!

Guaranteed

What job comes with a guaranteed 100% success rate? Mission work. We can make such a claim by focusing on the goal of our mission work—to preach the Gospel. The last time you spoke to someone about your faith, did you share the free forgiveness found in Jesus’ blood? That was a mission success! It is not our job to convert. Conversion is in neither our purview nor power—it is the job of the Holy Spirit. As others have aptly put it, “We need to share the Gospel and then get out of the Holy Spirit’s way!” You will be 100% successful in sharing the Gospel!

A calling for which we are all suited and equipped, and whose success is guaranteed 100%? Let’s all get out there and do some mission work!



David W. Bernthal is a retired teacher. He is a member of Luther Memorial School in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

A Wakeup Call

Has the Reformation become a victim of its own success?

Remember lying in bed suffering from the telltale red rash of measles, burning up with a fever one minute and shivering uncontrollably the next? How about being told not to scratch the itchy chicken pox scabs, but still frantically doing so when Mom wasn't looking? The swollen glands of mumps made it painful to swallow for days. If you are sixty or older you may vividly remember all these symptoms and truly appreciate the value of modern vaccines. On the other hand, if you're a millennial who never experienced these diseases firsthand, it's hard to relate to the danger they pose. As a result, vaccination rates in the U.S. have fallen and outbreaks of measles have been reported in a number of cities. It's been said that vaccines are a victim of their own success. They have controlled disease so well that people have become apathetic toward the threat.

The same could be said of the Reformation.

By God's grace, we are the beneficiaries of very many gifts that reformers like Martin Luther fought hard to win. At the top of the list is the Gospel, which proclaims our forgiveness; clothes us with Christ's perfect righteousness; and proclaims us heirs of heaven by faith in Jesus, not by virtue of our own efforts and works. A Bible translation in our own language, a wealth of hymns with which to sing God's praises, and a thorough Christian education in the Small Catechism all have come down to us through the Reformation.

Most of us have had these blessings our entire lives.

None of us lived through those dark, tumultuous Reformation times when the battle for the truth of the Word was outwardly vicious and dangerous. So has the Reformation become a victim of its own success? Do we take our blessings for granted and undervalue their importance? Do we make it a daily priority to sit at Jesus' feet to read His Word? Or is all our time swallowed up by the cares and pleasures of life? Every Sunday the Lord spreads a feast

for the soul in Word and Sacrament. But has it become routine to tell ourselves, "I'll catch church next week when I don't have other things to do"? Can you imagine losing our spiritual treasures—not having the Word at hand to read, not having fellow believers with whom to gather, and not knowing where to turn for comfort and strength? If we don't take the threat seriously, it could happen.

The Lord sent the Christians of ancient Laodicea a wakeup call in a letter: *"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth."* (Rev. 3:15-16 CSB) Lukewarm coffee isn't very palatable. Likewise, lukewarm Christians deserve God's condemnation for their lack of appreciation for the saving Gospel.

The good news is that it is not too late.

Health officials have intensified their push to have children vaccinated in order to prevent more severe and widespread epidemics. If physical well-being is that important, how much more so is one's spiritual health! There is no time to waste. The Lord's mercies are new every morning. He assures us of His unwavering love and forgiveness for all our failings. We still have the priceless Gospel. We still have the Word readily accessible. We still have the freedom to gather as believers to praise the Savior and take His Word out to the world. We still rejoice in the Lord's invitation, *"Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the water; and you without silver, come, buy, and eat! . . . Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and you will enjoy the choicest of foods."* (Is. 55:1-2 CSB)

May that joy and peace show in humble service, harmony with one another, and love for all souls. Instead of slipping into careless indifference, may we with each passing year treasure more and more the salvation Jesus sacrificed His life to win for all sinners.



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

Poison in The Soup

“Bam! Let’s kick it up a notch!”

So Emeril Lagasse would fairly shout, to the hearty roar of the audience on his TV cooking show. And then the famous chef would add some more spice, hot sauce, or some other ingredient to his culinary creation. Bam! Another dish fit for a king.

The Book of Kings relates the account of a soup fit for the prophets (2 Kings 4:38-41). The sons of the prophets were men studying under the tutelage of Elisha. During a famine in the land, they became hungry, so Elisha instructed his servant to prepare a soup—probably and primarily made of lentils. But one in the group concluded he needed to “kick it up a notch.” So he gathered some wild gourds, sliced and diced and added them to the soup. The gourds might have been *Cucumis Colocynth*—belonging to the botanical family which includes edible melons and pumpkins. But while these gourds may have been attractive to the eye, they were actually bitter to the taste and poisonous. Thus, instead of spicing up the soup, the first taste resulted in the cry, “*O man of God, there is death in the pot!*”

The remedy for this poison in the pottage was realized when Elisha added some flour. By way of this visible sign, God neutralized the poison in the soup so that all could eat without suffering any harmful effects.

Can we not see a parable in this account?

Modern religious chefs often attempt to kick God’s Word up a notch, wanting to spice up the old saving truths of Scripture. What they add might seem attractive to human desire and reason, but in every case it is bitterly poisonous and can even be fatal to the soul.

Bedeveled by the claims of science, many conclude that the spice of millions of years must be added to God’s own



Modern religious chefs often attempt to kick God’s Word up a notch, wanting to spice up the old saving truths of Scripture.

creation account to make it more palatable and reasonable! At the other end of earth’s history, the millennialists would add a thousand years of Christ’s earthly rule to the pot. This seems very attractive to those wishing for heaven on earth, but it detracts from the Gospel, and contradicts Jesus’ own words, “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” (John 18:36) In each case, it is like adding attractive rhubarb leaves to a healthy green salad—tainting it with poison.

The heart of the Gospel message is that salvation is by God’s grace alone, received by faith in Christ alone, based on Holy Scripture alone. But the proud and sinful mind concludes, “We need to kick this up a notch.” And so human works and decisions are added as necessary for salvation. This is like adding deadly nightshade berries to a tasty blueberry pie. In all cases, when men add spicy concoctions from their own minds and attractive gourds from the world, they are not improving, but instead adulterating, the “*pure milk of the word*” (1 Peter 2:2) with poison—poison which can kill saving faith.

The soup of the prophets was purified by adding wheat flour. We are mindful of our Lord Jesus who said, “*I am the bread of life . . . the living bread which came down from heaven.*” (John 6:35,51) He Who is the Truth and the Word gives life through His Word. The poison of false doctrine comes from the devil, “*but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*” (John 1:17) And so the antidote to all the poisonous teachings of the world must always be God’s truth in Christ and the pure “*word of God which lives and abides forever*” (1 Peter 1:23). By that Word we are nourished and by that Word we are kept safe unto eternal salvation. Eating, let our cry ever be, “O God, in You there is life!”



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

“Pray for us.”

Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

(Hebrews 13:18-19)

When was the last time we prayed for our pastors, missionaries or teachers? Oh yes, these servants of the Word are customarily included in the Sunday General Prayer spoken on our behalf. But how often have we included them in our personal prayers?

In an active prayer life, we offer mealtime prayers, the Lord’s Prayer, and supplications for ourselves and for those near and dear to us. However, do intercessory prayers for our called servants receive as much attention?

The writer to the Hebrews called upon his readers to pray for him and his fellow workers. Quite frequently the apostle Paul beseeched readers of his epistles to speak of him and his coworkers in their prayers (see 1 Thessalonians 5:25, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, Romans 15:30-32, Ephesians 6:18-20, and Colossians 4:3). And he in turn remembered them in his prayers.

Since we read in Holy Scripture that such intercessory prayers were encouraged and made, surely the Lord deems it very important and most helpful for His people to be regularly engaged in them. It is certainly a powerful means of providing support for kingdom workers, for in so doing we are petitioning the almighty God of heaven and earth to supply the necessary aid for His servants in fulfilling their high callings.

But then, what should we pray for? In his letter to the Hebrews, the inspired writer said to these Christians, “*But I especially urge you to do this* (that is, pray for him), *that I may be restored to you the sooner.*” It was this spiritual counselor’s fervent hope that he be permitted to come to them as soon as possible for the sake of the kingdom. Was there some kind of hindrance standing in the way of a timely return to them? Was his delay due to sickness, imprisonment, or work? They were not told. God knew. And so, they would need to leave this in the hands of the Lord to do what was best for His under-shepherd and His sheep.

Well, what about us?

What should we pray for when interceding for servants of the Word who work among us? We may be inclined to say to the Lord, “You know what these workers are dealing with and the kind of help they need, so kindly supply them with the aid they require.” We could certainly offer this kind of petition, since God knows better than we do in such matters. But there is much to be said for taking a personal interest in the lives and work of our called workers. This would help us in making specific requests of God for them.

Aside from learning such particulars, we can pray that God bless them with good health and strength so that they can continue in their work; that they be faithful in preaching and teaching the pure Word of God; that the Lord give them the spiritual fortitude to lovingly reprove, rebuke, admonish, and exhort with all longsuffering; that the Good Shepherd fill

His servants with the zeal to feed with the sweet Gospel the precious souls entrusted to them; that God keep them safe from all harm and danger; and that He bless their labors so that spiritual fruit can be produced to His honor, glory, and praise.

In the Apostle Paul’s first letter to young pastor Timothy, he gave this exhortation that was intended not only for Timothy, but also for all Christians: “*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.*” (1 Timothy 2:1) In Hebrews 13:18-19 it was not only the Hebrews who were urged to pray for servants of the Word, but by extension we too receive the same encouragement.

May God help us to remember to regularly carry this out in our prayer lives.



Mark Gullerud recently retired from the pastorate of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Bowdle, South Dakota, and Zion Lutheran Church in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Since we read in Holy Scripture that such intercessory prayers were encouraged and made, surely the Lord deems it very important.

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTS

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.

The New Age Movement

Imagine thinking that the magazine that you are currently holding is God (god), as was the tree from which the pages were made, as is the ground from which that tree grew, as is the sun which the tree used to produce its food.

No, you aren't living in the latest sci-fi movie that revolves around some mysterious, universal "force" to develop its plot. These are the tenets of what is commonly referred to as "The New Age Movement."

The New Age Movement is difficult to define, but not impossible. The basic premise of this pagan religion is that *God (god) is all, and all is God (god)*. Rather than being a personal Being with a specific will, intellect, and intentions, God is defined more as an impersonal essence that is at work in the universe allowing and even causing the universe to constantly develop into a higher state of existence. But don't let the fact that it is called "The New Age Movement" fool you into thinking that this belief is actually new. It is an ancient occultic idea that is to be found in all of the basest paganism which many cultures have believed. Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Native American mysticism, and the pantheism of ancient Europeans all have their roots in the basic tenets of what we now call "The New Age Movement."

The New Age Movement, as such, is not actually a separate religious belief system. It is rather an adaptation and modernization of ancient mystical beliefs. As a term, "The New Age Movement" was coined and defined in the 1970's by a self-described theosophist named David Spangler. Spangler claimed that he had discovered new waves of spiritual energy that were ushering in a "new age" of heightened spiritual consciousness. This would result in international peace and the abolishment of racism, poverty, violence, and war. While most followers of Spangler's teachings still believe this movement into the New Age is yet to come, there have been some leaders within the ideology that have, in the past, predicted the actual arrival dates, none of which, of course, occurred.

One of the main reasons many have been attracted to

the New Age Movement ideology is out of desperation for cures for various ailments, including psychological ailments, which they have not found in western medicine. The use of crystals, acupuncture, yoga, and transcendental meditation have been promoted as means by which the current ailments afflicting our society as well as our bodies and minds can be reversed and even removed. Without specifically questioning the benefits of such approaches, the mysticism within the New Age Movement attributes supernatural abilities to such practices by claiming supposed divine energies at work through them, thus leading those afflicted down a path of idolatry in search of a higher mode of existence.

Besides the idolatry, one of the main theological problems with the ideas behind the New Age Movement is the failure to recognize that the cause of all of man's afflictions, from the global to the personal, is not a failure to attain a higher spiritual consciousness, but rather a corruption of the original design, which is sin. With the corruption of sin in the world and in our own minds and bodies, what we witness in the world is much brokenness, finally revealing itself in death. The only treatment for sin is the blood of Jesus Christ, Who is the very image of the invisible God (see Colossians 1:15).

The true God is not an impersonal force that haphazardly permits mankind to develop into higher states of being through vague flows of spiritual energy. Rather, He is a very personal Being Who took specific steps to rescue us from sin by giving and offering up His Son for us all. In this age in which we are currently living, this grace of God that has appeared is teaching us, already, *"to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives"* as we are *"waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."* (Titus 2:12-13 ESV).



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

“THIS WE BELIEVE”

In ongoing observation of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we are presenting a brief overview of those confessional documents that make up the *Book of Concord*.

The Formula of Concord—Epitome

The devil deceived Eve in the most unassuming manner—a question: “*Has God indeed said?*” (Genesis 3:1) Throughout church history, Satan has continued to deceive not only by direct lies, but also through the more subtle form of questions; and the Lord has consistently delineated between truth and error by the sharp edge of His powerful Word.

Shortly after Luther’s death in 1546, several questions arose: “*Could the Reformed mean the same thing we do, in essence, only with different words?*” “*Does not the will of man have some part in conversion?*” “*Could there not be some concession made with Rome to maintain at least an outward peace?*”

These are the kinds of questions any Christian might wrestle with. But they threatened the unity God establishes by His Word when He requires that His church glorify Him “*with one mind and one mouth.*” (Rom. 15:6) Some pastors of Lutheran churches were removed from office for overstating their opinions as matters of binding doctrine. Others sought out “*likeminded*” allies rather than treating all brethren as equal. Such suspicion and sin—if left unresolved—could only tear Lutheranism apart into sects of mutual overreaction or spoil the pure Lutheran confession with the delusion of compromise.

In 1576 Elector August of Saxony gathered seventeen Lutheran theologians to address the various rumors and gossip of divisions within the fellowship. For a year, a subcommittee labored to produce a formal resolution. Their *Torgau Book* was an eloquent settlement to the controversies in sermon form. But August envisioned a more accessible document, one any man could pick up and read, and thereby understand where his church stood. He tasked Jakob Andreaë with formulating this concise confession, the “*Epitome.*”

For each point of controversy, Andreaë used a thesis-antithesis approach to contrast God’s truth and man’s

error with a resonant clarity, following the example of the Apostle John: “*By this you know the Spirit of God:*

[Thesis] *Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,*

[Antithesis] *and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God.*” (I John 4:2-3)



Jakob Andreaë (1528 – 1590)

The articles of the Formula of Concord (Original Sin, Law and Gospel, the Lord’s Supper, and so forth) might seem like confirmation material, but the devil loves to attack the most basic of doctrines that he might ensnare young and old alike.

Error will continue to intrude itself until Christ’s return, as the devil asks that same first question in different words, but the Epitome shows how the Spirit turns Satan’s wily efforts upside down, so that by the resulting confession of truth, “*those who are approved may be recognized among you.*” (I Corinthians 11:19).

This is the way of our God, Who settled the greatest of conflicts—the schism between sinful mankind and his righteous Creator—when the strange and bitter strife of the cross gave way, on Easter morn, to a triumphant resurrection, and therefore forgiveness of sins and everlasting life.

Some Christians think there is something wrong with them if they have a question. Questions will come. The real danger is letting them fester unresolved. Bring them to Bible study, family devotion, your pastor, or a fellow member. God has given you a fellowship for that very reason.



Don’t fear sharing your doubts! You will be calmed and strengthened when your questions are resolved by God’s clear Word.

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

Gethsemane Lutheran Church

Spokane Valley, Washington

A Gospel Opportunity

“Come to the land of Opportunity and Greenacres,” cried the advertisement in Midwestern newspapers at the turn of the century. Instead, the settlers who came to the Spokane River Valley “found 10 acre plots that were mostly rocks.”

Opportunity was the winning entry in a \$10 neighborhood-naming contest in 1905 as real estate promoters tried to lure people west. Forty-six years later, a different kind of opportunity began when the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod sent Pastor Robert Dommer to Opportunity so that he might serve a three-family mission congregation there.

By the end of September 1951, Valley Lutheran Church was worshipping in its first chapel—a renovated filling station. Twenty-six souls gathered for the first worship service.

A year later, the congregation formally incorporated under the name *Gethsemane Lutheran Church*. In another year a synodical loan was approved and five acres were purchased. By December 1954, the first worship service was held in the new parsonage/chapel. By 1957, a new church and fellowship hall had been built and the former chapel was renovated to complete the parsonage.

“Shortly after the completion of the new church facility, Gethsemane congregation withdrew from membership in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The congregation found they could no longer justify the fellowship practices of their church body and acted in



The library and classrooms of Gethsemane Lutheran School.

obedience to God’s command to ‘avoid those causing divisions and offenses.’ As of January 1958, Gethsemane Lutheran Church was an independent congregation.” (congregational history)

Without synodical subsidy, Pastor Dommer secured part-time secular employment as did his successor, Pastor Robert Reim. By the time seminary graduate John Schierenbeck began serving the congregation, the Church of the Lutheran Confession was able to provide mission subsidy.

Opportunity for sharing the gospel and Spirit-created growth abounded in those early years. The congregation’s historical record notes, “as our congregation grew and grew, so did our needs for a parochial school.” Construction of an education wing began in the spring of 1974, kindergarten began in the fall of 1975, and one year later Nancy Haertl began serving as the first full-time teacher of Gethsemane Lutheran School.

The Lord richly blessed the congregation with spiritual and numerical growth and with resources to expand the physical plant—educational space and chapel enlargement (1975), followed by another addition (1983), and a duplex teacherage (2004). By the mid-1980’s, Gethsemane had 400 baptized members, 137 pre-communicants, and 47 students enrolled in the school.

In 2003, Opportunity and several nearby communities were incorporated into a new city—Spokane Valley. Spokane Valley has a population of about 100,000, is the largest suburb of Spokane, and the tenth largest city in the state. The greater Spokane metropolitan area has



Sanctuary of Gethsemane Lutheran Church at Christmas time.

a population of about 550,000. In other words, there is Gospel opportunity among the many souls around us.

After the 1980's, membership at Gethsemane declined significantly. Currently, the congregation numbers two hundred souls (forty-nine pre-communicants). Gethsemane Lutheran School's enrollment also declined, and as a result, the school was closed in 2008. However, even while closing the school, the congregation fervently prayed that it might reopen in the future. The Lord graciously granted that blessing in 2016 when Jeffrey Karnitz accepted the call as principal/teacher, and six students enrolled in 1st-5th grade. In 2017, Claire Abbas accepted the call to serve as a second teacher. This year the enrollment is fourteen students in grades Kindergarten-8th grade (with no students in 4th grade).

Gospel opportunity abounds at Gethsemane through Sunday worship services, Bible Class, and Sunday School. Two midweek Bible studies—one at church and another in a home—add to the opportunity for growth and fellowship around the Word. The Gethsemane seniors meet monthly from fall through spring. The Gethsemane women hold a luncheon each Christmas and spring. One outreach effort was to invite residents of a women and children's home across the street to a Christmas luncheon.

The Lord blesses His church with varied gifts (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12). This is evident as Gethsemane members serve one another and the Lord through such activities as congregational leadership and teaching in our Sunday School and Vacation Bible School (forty-five students this year, including numerous non-members). We have a layman-led children's sermon each week. We have the blessing of three organists and a retired organist in the

wings if we need her. Church and Sunday School choirs add to our worship. Members have made wood carvings of Christian and Lutheran symbols for the sanctuary and new sanctuary furnishings—pulpit, lectern, altar, and baptismal font.

With Gethsemane's school reestablished, we are turning to a greater focus on evangelism and looking for opportunity to share the Gospel beyond our walls.

The years have taken their toll on portions of our facility. The need for replacement and repair plus needs for more building and parking space have led to a renovation/expansion study and potential building project.

As we pursue each new opportunity—at times being redirected by the Lord—we know that the accomplishment and glory are His and His alone. Further, we are reminded of our Savior's prayer in the garden from which we draw our name, *"not [our] will, but Yours, be done."* (Luke 22:42)

Gethsemane members hail from several regions of the country. There are those of Lutheran and non-Lutheran church backgrounds. Some have been lifelong members of Gethsemane, others are new. The one thing we hold in common is our Savior and a love for His truth.

We may live and serve on the western edge of our country, but we invite all of our brothers and sisters to come, visit, and worship with us. We would love to have the opportunity to share face-to-face in the bond which is ours by faith in Christ Jesus.



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

Pastors who have served Gethsemane:

Robert Dommer (1951-1959),

Robert Reim (1959-1967),

John Schierenbeck (1967-1980),

Douglas Libby (1980-1987),

Paul Fleischer (1987-1991),

Robert List (1992-2016),

Wayne Eichstadt (2016-Present).

What is the CLC Mission Helper Program All About?

The CLC Mission Helper Program was established by a CLC Convention resolution in 1996. The program was designed to offer opportunities for individual members of CLC congregations to volunteer their time and talents in foreign mission fields. The name of the program reflects the idea that volunteers would help our missionaries by doing the work that our missionaries just didn't have time for.

During the first couple of years of the program, several individuals traveled on their own to serve in a variety of capacities in Asia and Africa, or else they accompanied our missionary or CLC representatives on visitations. A few individuals volunteered and traveled to India to help teach English to orphan children. Others traveled to Africa to help rehab a building for use as a seminary.

It was in 2000 that the idea of offering a pre-arranged group trip that would allow more individuals to participate

arose. The first official group Mission Helper trip, in July of 2001, provided the opportunity for five individuals to assist our missionary in India for about four weeks. With the Lord's blessings on this first trip, the Board of Missions gave approval to begin scheduling group trips to India every other year. This continued until 2010, when the decision was made to begin offering trips every year with a rotating schedule of destinations.

The CLC Mission Helper Program now organizes annual trips to East Africa, Nepal, and India.

Thought has been given to adding trips to Myanmar and Togo in coming years. The Mission Helper Program is now mostly focused on child evangelism efforts. This fits right in to the original purpose of the program. There are many children in foreign fields who have never heard of God's



Some of those served by a 2018 mission helper trip to Kenya.



Above: mission helpers visit a Nepali shanty town in 2017.
 Right: Zambian children hear about Jesus from mission helpers in 2018.



plan of salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Over the past twenty-three years, more than 140 individuals have participated in the CLC Mission Helper Program, traveling either as individuals or as part of a group trip. Since the first trip in 1997, more than twenty trips have been taken and blessed by our Lord. The Gospel has been proclaimed to thousands of children in India, Nepal, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia.

You can find more information at the Mission Helper website: www.MHT.LutheranMissions.org. The website describes the purpose of the program this way:



God's LOVE for sinners like us is the reason for the CLC Mission Helper Program.

The main purpose of the CLC Mission Helper Program is, quite simply, to provide opportunities for members of the CLC to assist in carrying out our Savior's Great Commission to teach and preach the Gospel and to be His witnesses throughout the world. Many things are accomplished when we make the effort to travel overseas to assist in the work that our brothers and sisters in Christ are doing in other parts of the world. Consider just a few examples:

1. The truth of God's saving Word is taught as we share what we have been so blessed to learn.
2. A bond of brotherly love and concern is fostered in the hearts of the Mission Helpers and those we assist as we work together, side by side, to the glory of our Savior.

3. Mission Helpers use their God-given talents to serve our Savior as we serve others by teaching God's Law and Gospel.
4. Mission Helpers return home to the U.S. with a fresh and first-hand appreciation for the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for the privilege of being an ambassador of Jesus Christ.

There's much more that could be written about the CLC Mission Helper Program, and there are many stories that could be told. Probably the best way to find out what the program is all about is to find those who have participated in the past and ask them about their trips. Or, you can find your way to one of the many Mission Helper Trip blogs that describe the trips in the volunteers' own words.



What is the CLC Mission Helper Program all about? It's all about the privilege of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ wherever our Lord provides the opportunity!

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

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS OCTOBER 2019

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Oct 1	TLH 34; LSB 820	Deuteronomy 6:1-12	Be careful that you do not forget the Lord!
Oct 2	TLH 432; LSB 754	1 Peter 5:5-7	Instead of depending on yourselves, you can cast your anxiety on the Lord! This is true humility.
Oct 3	TLH 357; LSB 529	Hebrews 1:3-9	Jesus is above the angels. In fact, He is equal to the Father, the “exact representation” of His being.
Oct 4	WS 715; LSB 369	Hebrews 2:5-15	Everything is subject to Jesus, and yet He joins our human family and becomes our Brother so that we might be saved!
Oct 5	TLH 396	Hebrews 3:12-19	We are reminded how important it is to encourage one another to remain in the faith.
Oct 7	TLH 380; LSB 565	Deuteronomy 7:7-16	Like Israel, we were not chosen because we were such strong people, but because of the Lord’s great love.
Oct 8	TLH 376; LSB 761	Deuteronomy 9:1-6	Nor were we chosen because we were such righteous people, but rather because of the Lord’s great love.
Oct 9	TLH 158; LSB 564	Hebrews 4:14-5:6	God designated Jesus to be our High Priest—to intercede for us and make atonement for our sins.
Oct 10	TLH 610; LSB 511	Hebrews 6:1-12	God’s greatest desire is that we inherit the salvation He has promised us, so with strong words He warns us against turning away in unbelief.
Oct 11	TLH 331; LSB 614	Hebrews 6:13-7:10	Jesus is the Son of God and He is our hope, just as was promised to Abraham.
Oct 12	TLH 220; LSB 624	Hebrews 7:11-28	Jesus is the “perfect” (complete) High Priest, because His sacrifice atoned for our sin perfectly (completely).
Oct 14	WS 745	Deuteronomy 10:12-22	We have an awesome God, worthy of all honor, glory, and praise!
Oct 15	TLH 316; LSB 626	Hebrews 8:1-13	The New Covenant is based on the forgiveness of sins, a forgiveness which moves the heart to love and serve God willingly.
Oct 16	TLH 157; LSB 454	Hebrews 9:6-15	The blood of Christ cleanses us.
Oct 17	TLH 163; LSB 634	Hebrews 10:1-18	The death of Christ was a sufficient sacrifice for sins—once and for all.
Oct 18	TLH 401; LSB 692	Deuteronomy 11:26-32	Stay with the Lord and find blessing and every good, but turn from Him and the result is only sorrow.
Oct 19	TLH 434	Hebrews 11:4-16	Though we cannot see the future with our eyes, the faith which God gives us trusts that the Lord has it in hand and will care for us.
Oct 21	WS 766; LSB 671	Hebrews 12:1-2	Keeping the faith through life is difficult. Be encouraged both by those Christians who have gone before you and by Christ Himself Who endured suffering on account of the joy to come.
Oct 22	TLH 51	Hebrews 13:20-21	God, who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, will work powerfully in you as well.
Oct 23	TLH 225; LSB 686	Deuteronomy 13:1-5	False teachers are all around us and we need to be ever vigilant lest we be led astray by them. The Word of God will guide us.
Oct 24	TLH 50; LSB 924	Deuteronomy 15:7-11	Helping those who are in need demonstrates love for them and love for God.
Oct 25	TLH 346	2 Timothy 1:8-12	We need not be ashamed of the Gospel or any suffering we face because of it.
Oct 26	TLH 501	2 Timothy 2:1-13	Any soldier of Jesus Christ will endure hardship, but God will remain faithful to His people.
Oct 28	TLH 605; LSB 513	2 Timothy 3:1-9	Do you think the world is getting worse? If so, you’re right. But evil will not win in the end. It will reach a point where it “will progress no further” once and for all.
Oct 29	TLH 485; LSB 828	2 Timothy 4:1-4	What can we do in this worsening world? We don’t have to just wring our hands, for we’ve been given the grace to preach the Word!
Oct 30	TLH 568; LSB 785	Deuteronomy 16:13-17	God blesses us with so many good things and we show our thanks by returning a portion to Him.
Oct 31	WS 777; LSB 744	Jude 1-4, 16-25	Because ungodly people do arise in the church, we are urged to “contend earnestly for the faith” and not fall prey to the unfaithful or unbelieving.

Committee on Partners in the Public Ministry

A preliminary report to look into the great need the CLC has for teachers and pastors.

“Lord, Jesus, have compassion.” In the Gospel of Mark we read the following account. *And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.* (Mark 6:34)

What a Savior! Not only was He busy fulfilling the Law of God in route to Calvary and the great exchange of dying for the sins of the world and imparting His righteousness, but also He was concerned about the individual. These people needed help, a spiritual guide, and Jesus provided that help by teaching them many truths from God’s Holy Word. Incidentally, read on in chapter six and see how the Savior also helped with the physical problem of hunger by miraculously feeding the five thousand. A Savior full of compassion!

We, in the Church of the Lutheran Confession, are likewise in need of that Savior’s compassion. Perhaps you have seen the number of vacancies in the CLC pulpits and classrooms. There are not enough workers to go around. President Eichstadt appointed six individuals for a special committee to take a look at the situation. Here is a preliminary report.

A Look Back

In the past nine years, we have had fourteen retirements and six resignations (total twenty) from the pastoral ministry. In this time ILC has graduated ten individuals for the pastoral ministry and two (total twelve) were received through colloquy. Obviously we did not keep up with replacing our aging clergy in the past.

A Look Ahead

In the next seven years, we have the potential for eight graduates from the Seminary (four in Seminary and four in pre-theology in college now). On the other end we have sixteen pastors who will be age seventy – seventy nine in seven years. Obviously, we will not be keeping up with replacing our aging clergy in the future.

What can be done? **Step one!** Approach the Lord Jesus in prayer. In a different event we read a similar reaction by a compassionate and teaching Jesus. Read Matthew 9:35-38.

Jesus invites us to pray for laborers. **Step two!** Reassess your own opinion of the value of God’s Word.

Perhaps we have these days of shortages so we can reevaluate how very precious God’s Word is so that we will treasure it highly and support its preaching in pulpits and classrooms with our prayers and offerings.

Step three! Support your called worker. That support can be a word of encouragement, an act of kindness, a compassionate ear and heart, and, of course, remembrance in prayer.

Step four! Encourage young people to consider the public ministry.

The committee has contacted recent retirees to see if they can serve as vacancy pastors. The committee plans to reach out to twenty men who left the public ministry to see if there was more that could have been done to support them, and to gather their suggestions. The committee is surveying graduates of Immanuel Lutheran High School who did not continue at Immanuel College to see why they did not pursue the public ministry. Other avenues of keeping the topic before the members of our fellowship are also being explored. (Spokesman, Branches, themes for camp and the like).

Coming in Fall 2019

Finally, a ready-to-use resource has been prepared and made available for pastors to lead their congregations in a Mission and Ministry Worship Service. Look for that sometime in the fall.

The committee recently settled on a name: Committee on Partners in the Public Ministry. The thought behind that name selection is that all of us have been commissioned by the Savior for the spread of the Gospel. We welcome new ideas or suggestions as we seek to serve our fellowship and our Lord.

All of our words and actions will not really solve the problem, but they do reflect the value we place on God’s Word. As we go to the Savior with our plea, we can expect His answer. *Lord Jesus, have compassion. Lord Jesus, send forth laborers into Your harvest.*

CPPM Committee Members

Pastor Mark Bernthal (Chairman). Andrew Albrecht, Caleb Meyer, Teacher Andrew Roehl (Secretary), Pastor Rob Sauers and Pastor Paul Tiefel

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.

Church Offers Free Wedding, First Month's Rent to Cohabiting Couples Who Agree to Live Separately.

In an effort to stem the rising tide of cohabitation among young adults, one Dallas church is taking an innovative approach. To couples who agree to live separately before marriage and complete an eleven-week counselling class, Concord church promises a free wedding, including free tuxedos, free wedding dress, free rings and free flowers. If the couple is hindered from living separately before marriage because of budget factors, the church pledges to pay the deposit and first month's rent on an apartment for one of them. "Our goal and desire is to call people to honoring God in their relationships, to not just live together, but really choose a covenant marriage," said Pastor Bryan Carter. "You can be committed to each other and be committed to God. We just want to help people honor God in their relationship." Aaron, Charlene. "Free Weddings that Honor God: This Pastor's Amazing Strategy to Help Couples Make the Right Choice." *US. CBNNews.com*, 14 Jun. 2019. Web. 15 Jul. 2019.

New York Times Changes "Heartbeat" to "Embryonic Pulsing."

In its ongoing advocacy of abortion rights, the New York Times has adopted a significant change to its style sheet: henceforward it will refer to the beating heart of an unborn child as "embryonic pulsing." The language was first noticed in a May 2019 article criticizing a bill before the Louisiana legislature, which NYT referred to as the "so-called fetal heartbeat bill," as if it were a matter of debate whether an unborn child really has a heartbeat. This contrasts starkly with a 2016 Oxford University study, in which scientists found that an unborn child's heart may begin beating much earlier than previously thought, as soon as twenty-one days of pregnancy. That study spoke in straightforward terms of "heartbeat," "human embryo" and "heart

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Anniversary

Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church of Phoenix, Arizona, will be celebrating their 60th anniversary on Sunday, November 3rd, 2019.
—Pastor Michael Gurath

The 2019 Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference

Gethsemane Lutheran Church, Spokane Valley, Washington — October 1-3

Agenda:

- Review and Analysis of the EHV Translation
—Pastor Benjamin Libby
- Types of Christ in Scripture (what determines them, benefit of non-type similarities, etc.)
—Pastor Mark Tiefel
- Balancing the Family and Ministry with Consideration of 1 Timothy 2:5
—Pastor Wayne Eichstadt
- NTX: Revelation 3:14-22—Pastor Luke Bernthal
- OTX: (essayist choice) —Pastor David Reim
- Chaplain—Pastor Michael Gurath
- Communion Service Preacher—Pastor David Naumann

—Pastor Mark Tiefel, Secretary



The 2019 Minnesota Pastoral Conference

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota
October 1-2

Agenda:

- Old Testament Exegesis: Habakkuk 3:1-7
—Pastor George Dummann
- New Testament Exegesis: 1 Timothy 6:11-21
—Pastor Neal Radichel
- A Review of What It Means to Be on the CLC Roster—Pastor Em. David Schierenbeck
- A Biblical Look at the Religious Nature of Secular Education—Pastor Nathanael Mayhew
- 500th Anniversary of the Leipzig Debate
—Pastor Theodore Barthels
- Pastoral Agenda Samples (Booklet)
—Pastor Douglas Libby
- Book Review: *Gnostic America* by Peter Burfein—Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer

—Submitted by Pastor John Hein

muscle," not "embryonic pulsing." Bilger, Micaiah. "New York Times Tries to Dehumanize Unborn Babies, Calls Baby's Heartbeat 'Embryonic Pulsing.'" *National. LifeNews.com*, 31 May 2019. Web. 15 Jul. 2019.

Silent Majority of Small Churches.

In an article for *Christianity Today*, columnist Karl Vaters criticizes a common assumption among church leaders – that if your church is small, then you're doing something wrong. The fact is that over 90% of churches in America have fewer than two hundred members, and over half of all Christians attend small churches. "But if you take a look at the dominant teaching about

church leadership," says Vaters, "you might think that all those churches are broken, and all those fellow believers are doing something wrong. Why? Because we're constantly making one big mistake . . . We're not helping small churches be strong, healthy and effective at the size they are now. . . . Let's stop failing our peers in ministry. We need to give them tools to lead their current congregation well instead of treating their current size as a problem to overcome." Vaters, Karl. "The Main Way We're Failing Small Churches (And How To Start Succeeding With Them)." *Pivot. ChristianityToday.com*, 25 Feb. 2019. Web. 16 Jul. 2019.