

November 2019 VOL 62 NO. 5

# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

ALL SAINTS DAY — NOVEMBER 1, 2019

*Those who are wise shall shine  
Like the brightness of the firmament,  
And those who turn many to righteousness  
Like the stars forever and ever. DANIEL 12:3*



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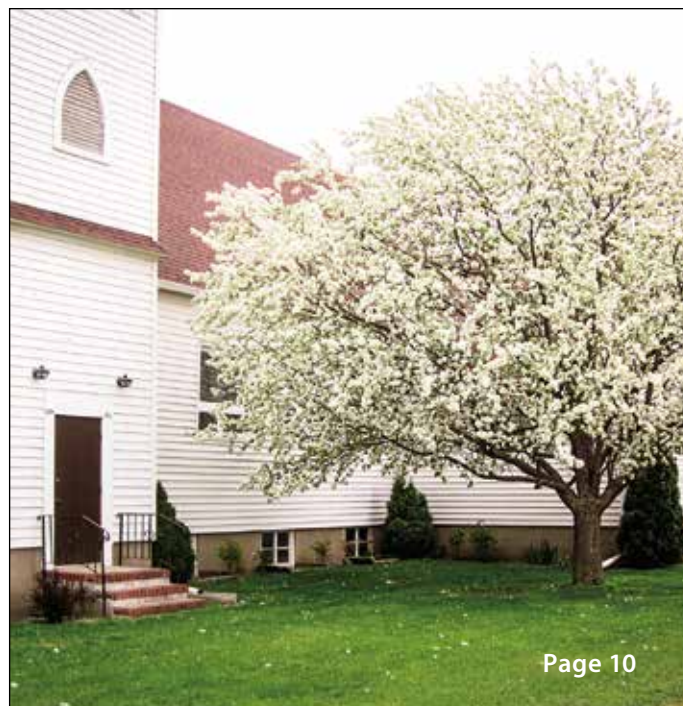
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# Saints Alive!

*“I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD” (Psalm 118:17)*

**“Saints alive!”** Maybe you’ve heard the expression; it’s an interjection sometimes used by folks to express astonishment over something extraordinary they have just witnessed. When, for example, they see a beautiful sunset shimmering on a lake, they may be moved to exclaim, “Saints alive! How awesome is the handiwork of our Creator!”

Similarly, there are Bible teachings which are breathtaking for their beauty and may evoke a sense of wonderment in our hearts. I have in mind the teaching that when the Holy Spirit leads a person to anchor his hopes for this life and the next in his Savior Jesus, He transforms him from being a sinner into a saint.

There’s a day coming up on the calendar on which this astonishing truth of the Bible is highlighted in the Christian Church. It is called “All Saints’ Day.” It falls each year on November first. The origin of this festival can be traced back to the third century. Early on it was observed as a day on which Christians who were martyred for their faith were especially remembered, with thanksgiving to God. Later All Saints’ Day came to be celebrated as a festival on which all who died believing in Jesus were thankfully remembered.

All Saints’ Day remains on the church calendar today for good reason. It provides an opportunity for us to especially remember all the dear ones of our lives (and those of the distant past) whom the Lord graciously preserved in faith during their earthly sojourn and brought safely to His side in heaven. The All Saints’ festival can also serve the purpose of helping us remember what a saint is, especially in a world that entertains many erroneous ideas about this.

## Just what is a saint, according to the Bible?

As noted above, it is a person whose record of transgressions against God’s Law has been blotted out from His sight for the sake of the Savior in whom he trusts. Among the Bible verses that teach this are *“The blood of Jesus Christ*

*His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7) *“(God) made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* (2 Corinthians 5:21) *“Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . Who forgives all your iniquities.”* (Psalm 103:1,3)

## Why is every Christian thrilled to have the status of sainthood?

The answer should be obvious. When you possess God’s gift of forgiveness through Jesus, you also possess His gift of unending life. You enjoy a loving relationship with your Lord that won’t ever be severed, not even by physical death.



What comfort this affords us when the Lord calls dear ones out of this life! Though our hearts ache for our loss, we do not sorrow as those who have no hope. We know that a beloved husband, wife, father, mother, child, or friend, having fallen asleep in Jesus, is destined to rise again. With our resurrected, glorified bodies we will live forever with them in the new heavens and earth He will create, together with all saints of all times and places.

Small wonder the psalmist was moved to declare, *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints”* (Psalm 116:15). So can we.

For all the saints who from their labors rest,  
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,  
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest. Alleluia!

Thou wast their rock, their fortress, and their might;  
Thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;  
Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true light.  
Alleluia!

Oh, may Thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,  
Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old

And win with them the victor’s crown  
of gold! Alleluia! (LSB 677:1-3)



**Thomas Schuetze** is pastor of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lakewood, Colorado.

# God's "Two-Minute Warning"

## "Dad, it's time for supper!"

said a little girl who was sent to the basement by her mom. "Tell her I'll be right there," he said, "there are only two minutes left in this football game." But with one team making every effort to stop the clock, the coaches using every available time out, and frequent commercial breaks, it's amazing how two minutes can stretch into twenty. More amazing still is the level of intensity, effort, and focus on the part of the players when they know that the game is on the line, with the clock running out. Every coach must wonder, from time to time, how to get that level of play from his team during *every* minute of the game!

Both Scripture and our own observations make it plain that we are, right now, in the final minutes of an epic contest. It isn't a sporting event, but rather the consummation of all history, just prior to the return of the Lord Jesus on the Last Day. The tell-tale signs of the last times are upon us—wars, rumors of wars, love growing cold, increasing wickedness, disregard for God's Word, and false teachers abounding (see, for example, Matthew 24 and 2 Timothy 4).

Jesus tells us plainly that no one knows the day or the hour of His arrival, which means that it could yet be a long time until He comes in glory. However, it could also be very soon. What if you actually did know the day? How would your life be different if you were certain that there were exactly thirty days until His coming, with the clock running out?

There can be no doubt that, with only thirty days to go, you would be immersed daily in the study of God's Word. There would be no choice but to make absolutely certain about God's promises to you in Christ, and what His will for you is. Next, your heart would go out to those nearest and dearest to you, your family and good friends. You would want to make sure that they too belong to the



Lord Jesus, by faith in His shed blood. And what about your fellow believers at church, your family in Christ? Meeting together to build up one another's faith would be a high priority indeed. Then, a heart of compassion for all people would make you urgently busy, with your fellow Christians, to get this saving message out to as many people as

possible. You wouldn't want *anyone* to miss out on finding a safe haven in Jesus, as the storm of judgment quickly arrives!

And now comes the coach's dilemma: we Christians are on the field, right now, near the very close of this epic contest with the forces of evil. There isn't a moment to lose as we search the Scriptures for our own assurance of salvation, and share that assurance with our loved ones at home, our church family, and all the people we can reach with the Gospel of Christ crucified. But how can we muster the kind of intensity of purpose and focus on God's kingdom work that are vital for these times?

That answer is found, first of all, in an ever-growing awareness of just how awful the Lord's judgment will be over sin on the Last Day—sin very much like our own! Second, we need to be reminded and impressed constantly with the high price that Jesus paid on the cross to weather the storm of God's judgment in our place, to set us free from all guilt. Finally, we need to respond to God's "two-minute warning." He's blown the whistle, and the clock is ticking: "*Now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.*" (Romans 13:11-12)



Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus! Keep us focused on Your promises to us and Your purpose for us, as this world soon draws to its close.

**Bruce Naumann** is associate pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



TLH 568, LSB 785

## “We Praise Thee, O God, Our Redeemer, Creator”

A hymn that is written for a special occasion can have a short lifespan. References to specific events and circumstances can make a hymn inappropriate for general use.

This could have been the case with a hymn that was first written as a prayer of thanksgiving for a military victory.

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, the Dutch were seeking independence from Spanish rule. A major turning point in this struggle was the victory of the Dutch in the Battle of Turnhout in 1597. To thank God for this victory, the Dutch poet and composer Adrian Valerius (1575-1625) wrote a hymn.

The original Dutch text of the hymn contains references to the battle and deliverance from oppression, things that would not be meaningful to congregations far removed from the historical situation in which the hymn was composed. For this reason, those who have translated the hymn into English have also tried to adapt it for general use as a hymn of thanksgiving.

References to the original occasion of the hymn are evident in the still widely used translation of Theodore Baker (1894), which begins, “We gather together to ask the Lord’s blessing. He chastens and hastens His will to make known. The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing.” The simple act of gathering to ask the Lord’s blessing was significant for the Dutch Protestants because under the Roman Catholic king of Spain they had been forbidden to assemble for worship. And they regarded their experience of oppression as a chastening from God.

In the translation in use among us (1904), Julia Cady Cory eliminated references to war and made the hymn into a song of thanksgiving that can be used by Christians in all times and situations. The “perils” that “overtake us” become the dangers that threaten us all. The “battles we win” with the Lord’s help become the battles that we face bearing

up under trials and fighting against temptations from the devil, the unbelieving world, and our own sinful nature. The updated version in the *Lutheran Service Book* makes this even clearer by changing “battles” to “struggles.”



Adrian Valerius (1575-1625)

These struggles are not just common in human experience; they are universal. Life itself in this sin-corrupted world is one long struggle from beginning to end. It is for this reason that it has become common among us to refer to Christian funerals as victory services. To continue steadfast in the faith to the end is a victory indeed.

With the hymn we give thanks to God for not forsaking us in our struggles. At all times we can sing, “Thy strong arm will guide us, Our God is beside us.” And this isn’t wishful or fanciful thinking on our part, for God has promised His children, “I will never leave you

nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)

This prayer of thanksgiving begins and ends addressing God as our Redeemer as well as our Creator. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we come to God expressing our thanks for His blessings. It is the “holy name” of the triune God that we bless and to Him that we sing “glad praises.” We Christians do not direct our expressions of thanks to some vague and nameless deity, but to the God Who has made Himself known in His Word and Who gave His only begotten Son to bear our sins and win salvation for us.

The popularity of this hymn is due at least in part to its pairing with the tune “Kremser,” which *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal* describes as “almost carol-like in its character.” It was a Dutch folk tune arranged by Austrian choir director and composer Eduard Kremser (1838-1914).



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

# The Pouting King Ahab

*“So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would not eat food.”*

(1 Kings 21:4)

**A**fter the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel separated into two competing kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom of Samaria and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Of the nineteen kings who ruled in Samaria, all were evil—but King Ahab was the worst. As stated in 1 Kings 16:30, “Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him.”

When Ahab came to power, he married the Phoenician princess Jezebel; a name still synonymous with treachery, idolatry, and immorality. During Ahab’s twenty-two-year reign (875-854 B.C.), he and Jezebel committed one godless act after another. They schemed. They stole. They murdered. They scorned God’s prophets and God’s Word. They gleefully promoted idolatry in Samaria, building a temple and altar for the storm-god Baal and erecting totem poles for his consort Asherah.

Jezebel was so committed to her Canaanite gods that she provided room and board for eight hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal and Asherah. And when she gave orders to slaughter the prophets of the true God, including Elijah, Ahab consented. Theirs was a marriage made elsewhere than heaven. They were partners in crime, inciting each other on toward ever-increasing evil. We’re told in 1 Kings 16:33, “Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.”

Ahab’s bloody rule and bloody end are recorded in 1 Kings 16-22. In fact, more chapters are devoted to Ahab than any other king of Samaria. Yet, the picture portrayed is not one of greatness but great wickedness; and along with wickedness, childish petulance. Ahab was both an evil

ruler and a royal pouter. Twice he is described as “sullen and displeased.” (1 Kings 20:43 and 21:4) The Hebrew words used have the sense of anger, stubbornness, heaviness, and moroseness. Hence, Ahab was pouting.

The best example of Ahab’s pouting is found in 1 Kings 21 and the account of Naboth’s vineyard. Remember, Ahab was a wealthy king—wealthy enough to build cities; field an army; support hundreds of false prophets; and own two palaces, one in Samaria and the other in Jezreel. Yet, despite Ahab’s power and prosperity, he still coveted what was not his, namely, Naboth’s vineyard. The more Ahab saw the vineyard, the more he wanted it—not to produce grapes, but to grow vegetables.

However, when Naboth refused to sell the vineyard, Ahab reacted like a petulant child. He pouted. He returned to his palace, flung himself on his bed, faced the wall, and refused to eat or speak. While Scripture makes no mention of slammed doors, a protruding lower lip, and cries of “I never get what I want!”—these things likely happened too. Imagine what the palace guards thought.

Pouting may seem insignificant when compared with the other misdeeds of Ahab: idolatry; a blatant disregard for God and His Word; complicity in the murder of Naboth and the theft of Naboth’s inheritance, that prized vineyard. Yet, Ahab’s constant pouting is a telling insight into Ahab’s character. He was a greedy king, driven by a sense of entitlement. Eventually, that greed and entitlement led to his death and the demise of his entire family.



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

# God Bless You!

*“Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

(Hebrews 13:20-21)

**T**oday, the words “God bless you” have become little more than an automatic response, politely spoken after hearing another person sneeze. But blessings in Scripture are special requests of God to look upon His people with mercy and impart to them a special benefit of His grace. True blessings of God are most undeserved, but at the same time provide us with the most good.

## Which God?

When people react to a sneeze by saying “God bless you,” one can be left wondering which god is meant; but when it comes to the blessings in Scripture, there’s no mystery as to which God is meant. Our text calls Him “*the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.*” This God of peace certainly couldn’t be the god of Judaism, or Islam, or any other religion because no other religion teaches that peace with God is obtained in this way.

The God of the Bible is the only “God of peace” because He makes peace with sinners! He does this through the blood of the everlasting covenant and by raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus’ perfect blood atoned for your sins, and when God raised Jesus from the dead He declared to you peace—forever!

Paul told the Ephesians about this God of peace “*who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*” (Ephesians 1:3) God blesses you, then, in the very same way in which He secured your peace—“in Christ”! The very same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power God uses to bless you. The very same blood of the everlasting covenant that has secured your forever-

peace with God also secures for you every other spiritual blessing. Without Jesus, we are forever cursed. In Him, we are blessed forever with every spiritual blessing.

**Without Jesus,  
we are forever  
cursed. In Him,  
we are blessed  
forever with every  
spiritual blessing.**

The writer to the Hebrews wants God to “*make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.*” Doing what is according to God’s will is rightfully called a blessing, and yet too often for us it feels like a chore. Romans 12 describes doing God’s will as a “living sacrifice” and our “reasonable service.” And yet, we get hung up on that word *sacrifice*, focusing on what it costs us: loss of leisure time, physical exertion, and so on.

## We need God to work in us

That’s why the blessing of our text is one that we all desperately need. We need God to work in us those good works that agree with His will. And He does! Just as in the Old Testament God faithfully provided the animals His people needed to make the required sacrifice, so too does God provide through the Gospel in Word and sacrament what we need to present ourselves as living sacrifices. Yes, you are truly blessed when God is “*working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.*”

By God’s grace and Spirit may we seek every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus in our own lives and in the lives of others. Amen.



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



## 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.*

# Transcendental Meditation

This might be the perfect, modern American cult. It requires minimal effort (meditate for 15-20 minutes twice a day), demands no repentance, is mainly self-focused, and promises the world. Want more happiness? Better health? Increased intelligence? Stress relief? Improved relationships? Enlightenment? Success at work? The ability to treat depression without medications? It offers these and more.

## But can it deliver?

Developed in the 1940's, Transcendental Meditation (TM) is really just a repackaging of ancient pagan beliefs (Hinduism). After getting a master's degree in physics, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi studied under Swami Brahmanada Saraswati. His teacher charged him with preserving his meditation technique by taking it beyond the borders of India to the entire world. Efforts inched along at first. Then, in the late 1960's, it caught the break it needed to move into the mainstream, thanks to its most famous adopters: The Beatles.

When drugs, fortune, and fame left the "Fab Four" unfulfilled, they stumbled upon a practice that promised them meaning and happiness in life. They became willing followers of the Maharishi and devout disciples of his techniques . . . until the day they realized that TM left them just as empty as did everything else. Little did they know—the Maharishi was no more enlightened than they were.

The goal of TM is to transcend the problems of this world by focusing on one thing in order to experience a new layer of consciousness. Each person is assigned a private "mantra"—a special word given them by a licensed instructor. "Mantra is a specific thought which suits us, a suitable sound for us which we receive from a trained teacher of Transcendental Meditation. By using this

mantra, the practitioner experiences the thought of that sound and starts minimizing that thought to experience the finer states of that thought—until the source of thought is fathomed and the conscious mind reaches the transcendental area of being."

TM claims millions of adherents worldwide. In order to practice it, a person must first learn its official doctrines and techniques. Though the cult is "non-profit," training is not free. Profits underwrite the group's cause and further its reach.

It is no secret who lurks behind the mask of TM. The Bible warns, "*The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?*" (Jeremiah 17:9) And, "*The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*" (Genesis 8:21) Yet, TM directs people to find answers in their own darkened, rebellious hearts.

From Scripture we know that enlightenment and happiness cannot be found by chanting mantras or searching within. Enlightenment is a gift of the Holy Spirit working through Word and sacrament. "*Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach).*" (Romans 10:6-8) Answers to life's great questions are not uncovered by self-focus or meditation, but by hearing the Gospel.

Luther used the Latin phrase *incurvatus in se* as a way to describe how all people are by nature. Every person is born "curved in on self." This is a universal problem that is also permanently embedded into your flesh and mine. Thankfully, we have a Savior Who looked away from self and laid down His perfect life in our place. He alone provides true happiness and meaning for this life and for the life to come.

**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 have presented a brief overview of those confessional documents that make up the Book of Concord. This is the last article in the series.

# The Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration

**W**hen Will Durant sought a title for the volume of his magnificent eleven-volume *The Story of Civilization* covering the Middle Ages (Volume 4), he came up with *The Age of Faith*. One Lutheran reviewer suggested that it would have been better to use that title for the volume on the Reformation (Volume 6), for that was truly the era when real faith reigned. But since faith is unseen, perhaps even better for Volume 6 would have been *The Age of Confessions*. This was a time when serious Christians not only sought to live their faith in the quiet of their personal lives, but also sought to make it clear to others, and to take a stand on the truth.

But even among those who confessed the Augsburg Confession, divisions arose after Luther's death, threatening to divide the heirs of the rediscovered Gospel. These were doctrinal differences that arose from overstatements and compromise statements, as well as from new questions that had arisen.

### No one wanted such division.

All agreed that unity in the Gospel is God's desire for His children. And many efforts were made on many fronts to attain that unity. But it proved hard to reach. Disagreements seemed to multiply.

Part of the problem involved politics. Only those who agreed to the Augsburg Confession were granted a degree of religious freedom and privileges by Emperor Charles V. Others were granted no legal status in the empire. This led many to want to crowd in under the protective umbrella, claiming agreement—and the benefits. We mostly agree, they said, and surely our few reservations on this or that point should not exempt us. And some on the Lutheran side were willing to accommodate them by altering the wording of the Augsburg Confession a bit. In this way a larger political alliance could be formed in the face of Catholic foes.

Then, too, Germany as a whole and the Lutheran territories in particular were divided among many rulers,

each with his own issues and concerns. Consider how the four main authors of the Formula of Concord lived and worked under different princes. Jacob Andreas worked in Wuerttemberg, Martin Chemnitz in Brunswick, David Chytraeus in Mecklenburg, and Nickolaus Selnecker in Saxony.

Their personalities, too, could pose problems. These second-generation reformers were pious men and highly gifted, determined to uphold the truth of Scripture and oppose error, but they could be impatient and insensitive of others, proud and overbearing, suspicious and sensitive to perceived slights, even abrasive. In short, they were all too human. Selnecker even felt it necessary to keep a lengthy diary of Andreas's behavior to document his claims that Andreas was unreliable in keeping his promises!

And yet they hammered out a lengthy document that all agreed stated what is true and rejected error related to twelve highly-contested teachings. This was submitted to a larger group for review and revision. The document was finally signed by over eight thousand leaders in the church, and united two-thirds of German territory under one confession.

The title helps explain this miracle—it is *The Formula of Concord*. The word *concord* means “with united heart.” Despite all their differences, they were united where it counts. They shared the heart-felt conviction that Scripture is God's truth. They shared a willingness to submit humbly to His every word.

Perhaps the difficulty of reaching this unity helps explain why there is both an “Epitome” (a brief digest) and a “Thorough Declaration of the Formula of Concord.” The short form assures us that this confession is accessible to everyone; the long form assures us that the answers are complete and the objections are fully answered.



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



# Gift of God Lutheran Church Mapleton, North Dakota

**G**ift of God Lutheran Church began as (and remains to this day) the sole church presence in the steadily growing community of Mapleton, North Dakota, about fifteen miles west of Fargo. It began as a preaching station in the 1990's, served by pastors from neighboring congregations in Hecla, South Dakota and Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. The most significant service held at our church was probably the Sunday after Sept 11, 2001, our first service in the current church building. As you may imagine, that Sunday many people were shaken and felt drawn to a church. Ours was no exception, placed by God as we are in the middle of a fairly rural community in eastern North Dakota. We have been filling spiritual needs ever since.

We became a full-time mission-subsidized congregation in 2005, and have remained one to this day. We hope and pray that we will reach self-supporting status in the very near future. Matthew Gurath was called as the first resident full-time pastor in 2005 and served until 2014. Our congregation is thankful to the synod at large (many of you who are reading this) for granting us loans to purchase the church building in 2001, and to build our own parsonage in 2006. The parsonage is a couple of stone's throws across the railroad tracks from the church.

From September of 2014 to the present, Pastor Del Maas has faithfully served Gift of God Lutheran Church.

One of our guiding principles has always been to make visitors feel a sense of belonging when they come to worship with us.

For the last couple of years we have been blessed to hold Wednesday afternoon



Mapleton is a city in Cass County, North Dakota, United States. It sits on the banks of the Maple River. The population was 762 at the 2010 census, and was estimated at 1,112 as of 2018. Mapleton serves as a bedroom community of the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area. The core cities are ten miles to the east of Mapleton.

#### **History**

Mapleton was platted in 1876, soon after the railroad was extended to that point. The city took its name from the Maple River. A post office has been in operation at Mapleton since 1875.



Gift of God's children's Christmas Eve service, 2018.

Captions





worship services in a senior care facility in West Fargo. This has been a great opportunity to share the Gospel with 15-20 people a week. We got our foot in the door at this facility when an acquaintance who worked there alerted the pastor that its activities director was searching for someone to provide soul care for the residents. God certainly called us to that place and still supports us in our endeavor to serve those people in their golden years.

About three or four years ago our congregation began a ministry to support young people who attend the local colleges (North Dakota State University, Minnesota State University Moorhead, and others). During the school year we meet on the NDSU campus once a month for Bible study time and just an overall gathering together around the Word. This study is proving as much a blessing for the leader as it is for the college students! Every year for the past five years, on the second Friday in December, we hold a CBS (Christmas Bible School). We have gotten quite a number of parents who drop their children off at our church and we teach them a Christmas Bible story and do an engaging craft. It is really a festive and fun experience, and we take the calling from our Lord seriously that we as big people are to lead the little people to Jesus.



Top: Gift of God ladies' group with a craft project. Above: the chancel.

Gift of God currently holds services every Sunday morning at 9:30 A.M. In addition, every other Sunday Pastor Maas travels over to our sister congregation in Ponsford, Minnesota, and holds an afternoon service. The congregation is glad of the opportunity to share our shepherd with our brethren in Ponsford—we are in this journey together!



Godspeed to all of you from the Great Plains of eastern North Dakota!

**Matthew Gurath** is a former pastor of Gift of God Lutheran Church in Mapleton, North Dakota. He and his family remain members there.

# An Inspiring First Visit to India

*“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”*

(Romans 10:14 NIV)

[The following is a report from Pastor Jyothi Benjamin, in his own words, about the recent visit of Pastor David Pfeiffer to India. The report is lightly edited for clarity.]

June 22nd, 2019—Rev. David Pfeiffer’s first visit ever to India, a country of well over 1.35 billion people. We praise God for Reverend David’s wonderful, inspiring visit to the Church of the Lutheran Confession in India (CLCI) from 24th to 27th June, 2019. Our CLCI pastors were thrilled to welcome this tall and striking-looking visiting missionary from USA and warmly welcomed him to the mission field of the CLCI. It was a great and edifying opportunity for us to have this man of God be part of our CLCI mission work.

Brother David’s trip to India was well received, and our CLCI pastors, seminary students, and children were greatly benefited. We saw our Lord’s grace throughout in this visit. Reverend David expressed his love for the people of CLCI in many ways.

## Surprise Visit to the Seminary Graduation:

Reverend David’s presence at the seminary graduation on June 25<sup>th</sup> was a real surprise to everyone, including all the graduates. With his presence, the graduation ceremony became very exciting. Seminary graduation

is always an emotional and wonderful time of the year as we see the fruits of our labor—our graduates—going out into the world to fulfill their calling. So in this emotional time our graduates need to hear an encouraging sermon. Students can be filled with fear of the future, not knowing which gates God is going to open for them. Reverend David very well understood the emotional feelings of the graduates.

Reverend David encouraged them by preaching a wonderful sermon based on John 10:1-10, “Jesus is the Gate: All faithful shepherds go in to the flock and out to abundant life through Him.” Not only graduates, but all the participants were so blessed to hear this uplifting and encouraging sermon. The graduates were filled with courage. I am sure that the Lord will take care of them, so that each is able to accomplish the tasks that he is called to do.

All the seminary graduates, and also our Bible Correspondence course graduates, were truly honored to receive their certificates through this honorable CLC visitor. Also, Reverend David handed out monetary gifts to the graduates, donated by the CLC’s Project KINSHIP. During the graduation ceremony, youth and seminary students presented some melodious hymns and Christian





songs. Following the commencement exercises, a wonderful feast was held to honor the graduates.

### Special Children's Meeting:

On that same night, Reverend David attended the children's meeting at the CLCI campus. The CLCI children were really happy to see the honorable visitor. They welcomed him with beautiful flowers, with melodious songs, and performed a few "action songs" with dance. Reverend David shared the Word of God with the children and encouraged them in the Lord and presented them beautiful gifts.

### Pastoral Conference at Ongole:

The next day Reverend David led a Bible study at a pastoral conference for Prakasam district CLCI pastors. Reverend David presented our CLCI pastors with some unique insights on the Book of Romans. Our Prakasam district CLCI Pastors were thrilled to hear the wonderful lessons from the visitor and enjoyed learning about the power of the Gospel. I am sure that our pastors were especially blessed to hear Reverend David's teaching on the importance of Abraham's story, faith, and God's faithfulness from the Book of Romans. During the pastoral conference one of our CLCI pastors asked a question regarding the connection between baptism and circumcision. Without any hesitation Reverend David answered his question with wonderful explanation and clarified his doubt so beautifully by taking an extra ten minutes' time. All the pastors in the conference really benefited from the knowledge of Reverend David. This is what we want from the honorable CLC USA. Reverend David's trip to the CLCI once again reemphasized the importance and faithfulness of the Lutheran doctrines.



### Night Public Gospel Meeting at Thakkalapaadu Village:

As part of our CLCI evangelism program, on that evening we held a special public Gospel prayer meeting in that village. Reverend David preached on "God's Mighty Victory at the Red Sea." Everybody was thrilled to hear that much-needed sermon. As a matter of fact, this village is full of horrible customs of false beliefs and rituals of sacrificing animals to idols and evil spirits. That night I had a tough time in translating that sermon, because I was filled with great excitement when I heard about the "warrior aspect of God's nature," which was a new thought to me. At the end of the prayer meeting many people came forward for individual prayers with the visiting missionary.

This shows that the Word of God ignited many minds and touched the hearts of many people in that village as the Word was broadcast through the loud speakers and gave much comfort to their frightened hearts. Reverend David prayed for many sick people individually with much patience.

Without any doubt I can say that Reverend David's visit to the CLCI was a great success to the CLCI ministry. Once again, I thank the honorable CLC for your kind labor of love and work in sending this visiting missionary to India for our spiritual benefit. We once again thank and praise God for the wonderful assistance we have been receiving from the respected CLC Mission Board, KINSHIP Committee,

CLC visiting missionaries, and volunteers. You all have been contributing so much to the life and growth of the CLCI.

**Pastor Jyothi Benjamin** is the Chairman of the CLCI. His home is in Nidubrolu, Andhra Pradesh State, India.



# “BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS NOVEMBER 2019

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Nov 1	TLH 490	Deuteronomy 18:1-8	The Levites were to devote themselves to the work of the Lord and that was a full time job supported through the people's offerings.
Nov 2	TLH 32 (LSB 689)	2 Peter 1:1-11	Remembering how you have been cleansed of your sins, follow your Savior diligently in a life of self-control and brotherly love.
Nov 4	TLH 290	2 Peter 1:16-21	The Bible is the sure and certain Word of God—every word just as He intended it to be written for our learning.
Nov 5	TLH 287 (LSB 581)	Deuteronomy 27:1-10	The Lord's Word was to stand in a place of prominence over the people when they entered the promised land.
Nov 6	TLH 263 (LSB 666)	2 Peter 2:4-11	Do not be afraid, the Lord knows how to deliver you from temptation and from the ungodly.
Nov 7	TLH 265	2 Peter 2:12-22	Be on your guard because false teachers are very deceptive and tempting to follow.
Nov 8	TLH 293 (LSB 693)	Deuteronomy 30:1-20	What blessings are ours through faith in Christ! What disaster is unbelief!
Nov 9	WS 794	2 Peter 3:1-9	Don't be disturbed by those who think Christ will never really return. The Lord will not forget His promise.
Nov 11	TLH 215 (LSB 701)	2 Peter 3:10-18	The Day of the Lord will surely come, so let's look forward to it with gladness and remain faithful unto the end.
Nov 12	TLH 624; LSB 866	Deuteronomy 31:9-13	Note God's continuing education plan for Israel. We should have one in place too.
Nov 13	TLH 318; LSB 640	1 John 1:1-10	If we refuse to admit our guilt when we are actually guilty, we are telling Christ that we do not need His forgiveness.
Nov 14	WS 737 (LSB 491)	1 John 2:1-14	Keeping God's commandments is an expression of our love for Him.
Nov 15	TLH 487	Deuteronomy 34:1-12	God blesses us through faithful leaders in our churches.
Nov 16	TLH 449	1 John 2:15-29	God works faith and truth in your heart so that you can resist the antichrists.
Nov 18	TLH 2 (LSB 981)	1 John 3:1-3	We have been made God's own children through faith in Christ Jesus.
Nov 19	TLH 535; LSB 600	Joshua 1:1-18	The Lord is with you, therefore be strong and of good courage whatever you may face.
Nov 20	TLH 322; LSB 612	1 John 3:4-15	A believer in Christ does not go on sinning without any repentance. May the Spirit always enable us to confess our sin and trust in Jesus for forgiveness.
Nov 21	TLH 441 (LSB 781)	1 John 3:16-23	Love is a matter of doing, not just of saying we will do.
Nov 22	TLH 410 (LSB 718)	Joshua 3:7-17	The ark of the Lord went before the Israelites and opened the way across the Jordan. Similarly, it is the Lord who opens the way to our promised land of heaven.
Nov 23	TLH 297 (LSB 580)	1 John 3:24-4:11	God is love, so naturally He works in us that we love one another.
Nov 25	TLH 351 (LSB 700)	1 John 4:12-5:5	The one who loves is one who has been born of God and has already overcome the world. Lord, help us to show our faith by acts of love.
Nov 26	TLH 395 (LSB 696)	1 John 5:6-21	Have confidence in God and keep yourselves from the wickedness of the world.
Nov 27	WS 793 (LSB 893)	Joshua 4:1-9	What do you do to help you remember what the Lord has done for you?
Nov 28	TLH 36 (LSB 895)	Joshua 5:10-12	Oh give thanks for the Lord's preservation of the people of Israel and for His preservation of us too!
Nov 29	TLH 651 (LSB 752)	Joshua 6:1-20	The Lord did not just lead them to the promised land in order to leave them on their own, but He raised His mighty arm to fight for them and protect them.
Nov 30	TLH 295 (LSB 579)	Joshua 8:30-35	The Word of God would lead the people in their new land (cf. Deuteronomy 27:1-10).



## IPC Volunteers Support the Servants of the Word

**W**e read of a problem in the early New Testament church. It involved using, in a coordinated and effective way, the gifts that the Spirit of God had given to the Christians.

*“Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.’” (Acts 6: 1-4)*

The overall work of the ministry was suffering because those gifted for “table-serving” were not being used while at the same time, those gifted for teaching the Word of God were being sidetracked. So the work was reassigned according to the Spirit’s allocation of gifts, and we read that *“then the Word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem.”* (Acts 6:7a).

And so our churches today realize the value of having lay-people use their gifts from the Spirit to support those gifted to be teachers and pastors of the Word. We have boards of property and elders and deacons and ladies’ aids and help from ushers and counters and secretaries and other such “support groups” so that our called servants can tend to the Word of God and not be sidetracked.

That principle also carries over to those servants called by the larger fellowship: professors on the campus of Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary.

There is, of course, a group of paid supporters: office personnel, groundskeepers, kitchen staff, janitors, and the like. But to stretch our Cooperative Budget Plan offerings

a bit further, the 2010 Convention of the CLC established the Immanuel Professorage Committee (IPC), a committee of volunteers to maintain and improve the thirteen homes owned by the CLC for housing professors.

Minor issues involving plumbing, electrical, appliances, or heating and cooling are handled by the IPC. In addition, the IPC has organized bigger improvements including re-shingling, new windows and siding, remodels of bathrooms and kitchens, and floor coverings. Most of the thirteen homes are over fifty years old, but have seen little improvement over their years until now.



This past summer, the IPC oversaw the updating of one professorage for the arrival of the Dan Schierenbeck family, a remodel of bathrooms for the professorage used by the Sipperts, and improvements to the professorage now being used by the Reim family. Next

up is a complete rework of the professorage formerly used by the Sullivan family in an effort to get it ready for the professor being called for the 2020-21 school year.

The IPC has the potential to save money and stretch your offerings. For example, the IPC can re-shingle three roofs for the price of hiring outsiders to do one roof. The IPC tries to save money by buying materials wisely and by using volunteer help.

But for this to work, the IPC needs the support of the larger fellowship. Obviously, offerings are needed to buy supplies and fund repairs. Likewise, volunteers are needed to accomplish major makeovers. IPC would like to thank all those who have served over the years and invite others to join in future efforts.



And, of course, we can use your prayers as we all seek to “serve tables” so that our professors can serve our youth with the Word of God.

**Paul Tiefel, Jr.**, is associate pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

# 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.

### Victory for Religious Freedom in Arizona.

The Arizona Supreme Court ruled in September that a Phoenix law violated the free speech rights of religious business owners Joanna Duka and Breanna Koski. They are owners of Brush & Nib Studio, a small business which designs and creates custom wedding invitations. Duka and Koski use their art to create designs for anyone, they just don't create certain messages that violate their religious beliefs. The Arizona Supreme Court ruled that a stringent Phoenix law, the "Human Relations Ordinance," violated their free speech protections under the state constitution and their free exercise rights under Arizona's Free Exercise of Religion Act. The law demanded artists such as Duka and Kosi express messages that conflict with their core beliefs if asked — and they faced fines or even jail time if they declined. The court held that the Phoenix law, which coerced artists to create messages with which they fundamentally disagreed, would violate the principle that "an individual has autonomy over his or her speech and thus may not be forced to speak a message he or she does not wish to say." Russel, Nicole. "New Arizona Supreme Court ruling is a huge win for religious freedom." *Opinion*. WashingtonExaminer.com, 18 Sept. 2019. Web. 22 Sept. 2019.

### Re-Purposing Christian Churches – Into Mosques?

"Over the past few decades, vacant and underutilized churches have become a familiar sight in American cities. In some cases, a congregation or a religious governing body – say, a Catholic diocese – will sell the church to developers, who then turn them into apartments, offices, art galleries, museums, breweries or performance spaces. But what about churches in neighborhoods that aren't

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Nominations for ILC President:** The Board of Regents invites nominations for the office of President of Immanuel Lutheran College. The current term of Professor Steven Sippert concludes on June 30, 2020. He has requested that he not be considered for another term. We thank him for his faithful service in this key administrative function at our campus. All pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of the CLC are entitled to nominate a man from the faculty of Immanuel Lutheran College to serve a two-year term beginning July 1, 2020. Nominations are to be received by email or letter no later than midnight December 15, 2019 (letters postmarked December 1, 2019) to: Mr. James Burkhardt; 217 Windy Lane; Rockwall, TX 75087; email: jeb6217@yahoo.com.

### Notice of suspensions.

Due to his unwillingness to provide spiritual care for souls as outlined in Titus 1 and elsewhere in Scripture and his refusal to receive Christian admonishment, Roland Gurgel was suspended from the ministry roster of the CLC. Subsequently, he resigned from the CLC, and Bethel congregation, Humble, TX, which he was serving, was dissolved. Contrary to the counsel of the conference visitor and some congregation members, Shepherd of the Valley, Weslaco, TX called Pastor Gurgel to serve them, a call which he accepted. Since the congregation called a pastor outside the fellowship of the CLC, the presidium has suspended Shepherd of the Valley from membership in the Church of the Lutheran Confession. –Pastor Michael Eichstadt, CLC President

### Anniversary.

Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church will hold a special anniversary service to celebrate sixty years of God's grace. The service will take place on Sunday, November 3rd at 9:30 A.M. Former called workers have been invited to help us commemorate this special occasion. –Pastor Michael Gurath



Attendees at the Great Lakes Pastoral Conference in Madison Heights (Detroit), Michigan, September 24-26, 2019.

doing well, areas that are less attractive to developers looking to turn a profit? In Buffalo, New York, two empty Roman Catholic churches were recently converted – not into apartments or offices, but into other places of worship. One became an Islamic mosque, the other a Buddhist temple. . . . Several former Christian churches in Buffalo's East Side also now serve as sites of worship for other religions. Two mosques, Bait Ul

Mamur Inc. Masjid, and Masjid Zakariya, used to be Saint Joachim's Roman Catholic Church and Holy Mother of Rosary Polish National Catholic Church, respectively." Krishna, Ashima. "A new solution for America's empty churches: A change of faith." *Art and Culture*. TheConversation.com, 30 Aug. 2019. Web. 22 Sept. 2019.