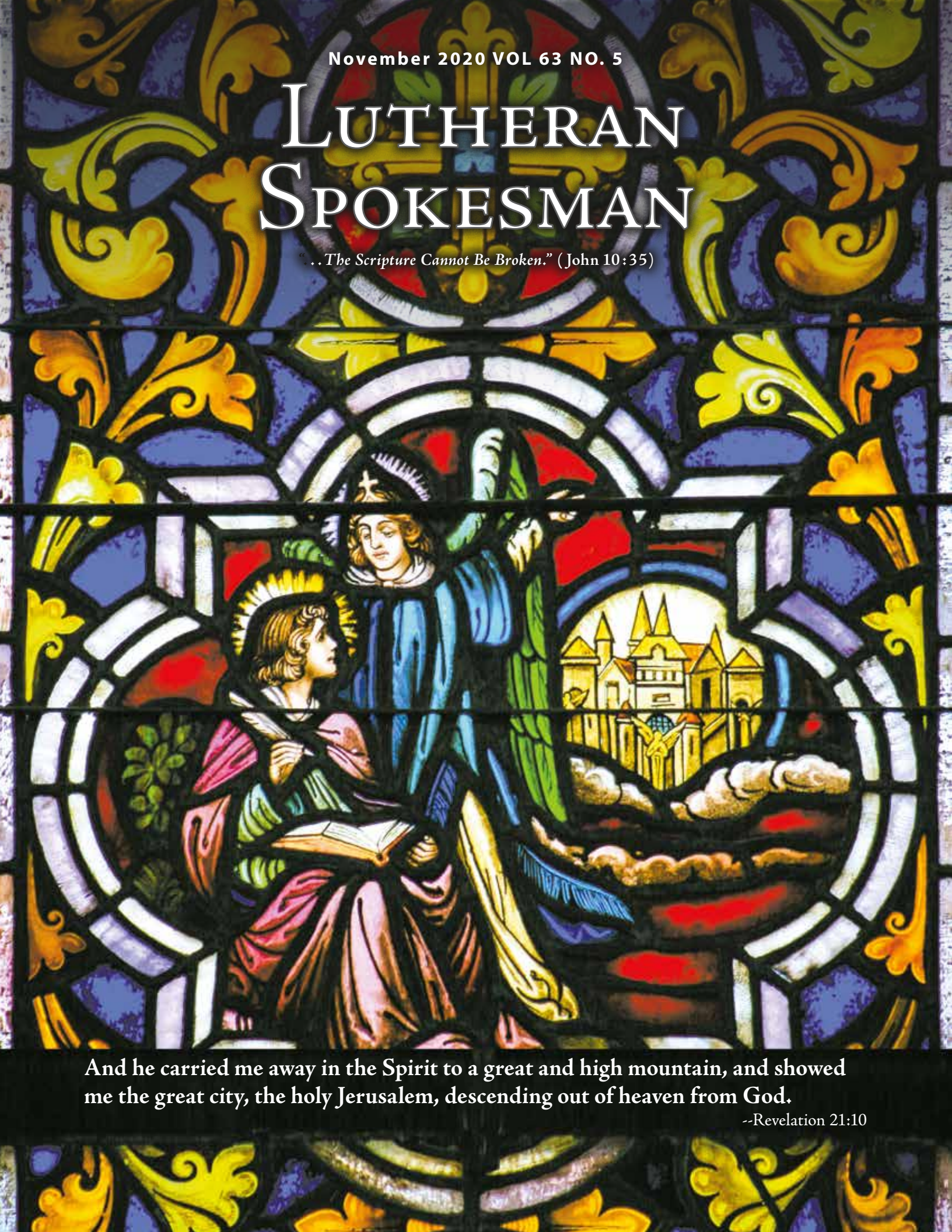


November 2020 VOL 63 NO. 5

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

-Revelation 21:10



Students singing at Immanuel Lutheran Church and School in Winter Haven, Florida. See more on pages 10 & 11.

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A Dwelling Place Worth Dwelling On

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’” (Revelation 21:3-4 ESV)

Life in a sin-broken world is hard enough. We don’t need to make it any harder. Yet that’s exactly what we do whenever we allow God’s exciting words of promise to lie dormant and inactive in our hearts. When, for example, was the last time you spent any time contemplating the reality of heaven—not just in a general way, but really allowing yourself to think about, to get excited about, what your existence will be like in heaven? By God’s divine promise, heaven is your eternal future through faith in Jesus Christ. Put that promise to work. As Christians, we obviously believe that heaven is real, and that one day we will exist there, but we routinely rob ourselves of the everyday blessing of that reality.

Why would we ever neglect such a precious gift? For some it is the apparent absurdity of the thing. How could a sinner like me end up in a place like that? The answer, of course, is that Jesus made it so. He washed me, sanctified me. He earned the robe of righteousness with which I am covered.

For others the problem is that we have grown so accustomed to the way things are that we cannot grasp any other existence. I once visited a man in a hospital who was recovering from a rather serious surgery. He was obviously in pain, and I noticed that not only was his morphine bag full, he never once touched his PCA (self-medication) button. I asked him about it, and his reply was simply,



“It scared me.” He went on to explain that he had tried it once, and that it not only relieved the pain from his surgery, it relieved a world of physical and emotional discomfort that he suddenly realized he was experiencing on a daily basis.

“I never realized how much pain I had until it was gone.” How difficult for us, who now know sin, failure, sorrow, frustration, fatigue, and dread, to imagine an existence without those daily burdens. But that’s what heaven will be like.

For others the problem is a misconception of heaven. They are caught up in earthly images of pearly gates, streets of gold, and winged angels strumming harps. God gave us some of these impressions, but only as a simplified preview of what we are now incapable of grasping. How, for example, would you describe color to a man born blind, or a symphony to one who has never heard sound? It’s impossible without a point of reference, which they lack. So too, when our eyes finally see and our ears finally hear, the reality of that existence will far exceed anything that we could now imagine.

All of this is ours. It is waiting for us. Jesus did that for us. That’s the place He left to enter our world, an existence made foul and oppressive by our sin. By His perfect life, offered as the sinless sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, Jesus removed the only barrier that could prevent us from joining Him in His heaven. He removed that barrier by paying the debt for mankind’s sin. Heaven is now our inheritance, by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Stop robbing yourself of the joy and excitement of what will be!



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

Alert Against the Adversary

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”
(1 Peter 5:8)

Some of you might be familiar with the motion picture *The Ghost and the Darkness*. In the late 1800’s, the British Empire was trying to build a railroad across East Africa between Kenya and Uganda. One of the big obstacles they faced was a pair of man-eating lions. The lions would lurk in the tall grass near the work sites and camps, waiting for workers to be alone and vulnerable. One estimate says that these two lions killed 135 people. Would you want to work on that railroad or sleep in an unprotected camp, knowing what was waiting in the tall grass?

Peter warns us of a greater threat lurking in the “weeds.” *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”* A greater threat than the Tsavo man-eaters portrayed in *The Ghost and the Darkness*, greater even than COVID-19, is your adversary or enemy, the devil. He is on the prowl in the tall grass, looking for his moment to strike. He is looking for weakness. He is waiting for you to be off guard and spiritually wandering off from God’s Word for his moment to strike.

The devil, or Satan, was once an angel of light, one of God’s holy angels. Isaiah calls him *Lucifer*, meaning “light-bearer” (Isaiah 14:12-15). Ezekiel may be alluding to him in Chapter 28, where he speaks of him as having been “full of wisdom and perfect in beauty,” adorned with every precious stone (Ezekiel 28:12-19).

Yet Lucifer was “puffed up with pride” (1 Timothy 3:6), and with his pride came a haughty spirit (Proverbs 16:18). Satan thought he was greater than God and led a band of angels in rebellion against Him. But the creature is not greater than its Creator. Thus Satan and his evil angels were defeated, and heaven was no longer their home. Instead, God prepared the fires of hell for them (Matthew 25:41).

Since Satan could not defeat his Creator, he has been attacking God’s creation. He lies in the weeds, appealing to people’s pride with the same deceptive lie that appealed to him. “You can be like God,” he told our first parents in the Garden (Genesis 3:5). He continues that lie today: “You can be like God, deciding

what is truth for you, what is right and wrong.” Through the pride of belly-serving false teachers, he lies and twists the Word of God, leading people to stray from their faith.

Thus Peter warns each of us to “be sober, be vigilant.” Satan is lurking in the weeds waiting for his moment to strike with lies, and to appeal to your sinful pride.

In East Africa, Lieutenant Colonel John Henry Patterson hunted and killed the two lions called *Ghost* and *Darkness* in 1898. While there were many more lions in Africa, railroad workers could rest easy knowing the man-eaters had been killed.

By dying on the cross and rising from the dead, Jesus crushed Satan and left him powerless. This accuser has been thrown down (Revelation 12:10). Even though we confess that we are sinners, Satan can no longer accuse us of sin, because Jesus already suffered for our sins. God remembers our sin no more (Jeremiah 31:34). Through Christ, death no longer has power over us because just as Jesus rose from the dead, we too shall rise. The writer to Hebrews says of Jesus’ death, “that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Hebrews 2:14-15)

Dear brothers and sisters, be on alert against the lies of this lion on the prowl. Yet you may humbly rejoice that through your faith in Christ, he cannot prevail against you.

Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpower us.
This world’s prince may still scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none. He’s judged; the deed is done!

One little word can fell him. Amen! (TLH 262:3)

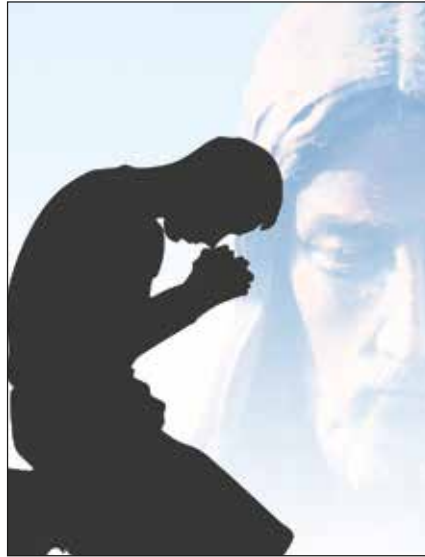


Nathan Pfeiffer is pastor of Berea Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.

TLH 429, LSB 708

“Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart”

Martin Schalling’s (1532-1608) Lutheran roots were deep. A graduate of the University of Wittenberg where Luther had once taught, he had been a student of Luther’s dear friend Philip Melancthon. He was also a close friend of Nicolaus Selnecker, one of the authors of the “Formula of Concord”. Surrounded by such “Reformation royalty,” Schalling was a teacher, a superintendent, and then a court preacher by 1576.



The years following Luther’s death in 1546 were tumultuous ones for those trying to hold to the true teachings of Scripture. There was a lot of pressure on the faithful to give up some of their Biblical positions in order to establish greater unity among the Protestants. Schalling felt this pressure and was tempted to yield to it. Yet the Lord used him in the work of the kingdom, especially through the only known example of his hymn writing: “Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart.”

The song is the prayer of a Christian who has suffered the trials of life and is looking forward to heaven and all its glory. It was published around 1567 as a hymn “for the dying.” The theme of the first stanza is, “Lord, do not ever leave me.” It begins with the heartfelt request, “Lord, Thee I love with all my heart; / I pray Thee, ne’er from me depart.” The presence of the Lord Jesus is something we count on throughout our lives. If Jesus were not with us here on earth, our earthly experiences would be without true pleasure. Likewise, if Jesus were not with us in heaven, heaven itself would be uninviting and dull. Please Lord, You Who have purchased me with Your precious blood, stay with me always—in sorrow and in joy!

The second stanza asks for strength to glorify Christ and serve others throughout one’s life. “Lord, grant

that I in ev’ry place / May glorify Thy lavish grace / And serve and help my neighbor.” Life does not get easier as we get older, and the longer we live, the more we need Jesus’ guiding hand. Psalm 23 says, “The LORD is my shepherd, . . . he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” (NIV84) The longer we live, the more opportunities Satan has to ruin us, so we pray, “Let no false doctrine me beguile, / Let Satan not my soul defile. / Give strength and patience unto me / To bear my cross and follow Thee.”

Then comes the glorious closing stanza which holds heaven in full view! “Lord, let at last Thine angels come, / To Abram’s bosom bear me home, / That I may die unfearing; / And in its narrow chamber keep / My body safe in peaceful sleep / Until Thy reappearing.” The composer Johann Sebastian Bach thought so highly of this prayer that he used this verse to close his epic choral work *The Passion According to St. John*. How fitting a choice it was too, for as Christians contemplate the suffering and death of Christ for their sins, they can’t help but look ahead to their own deaths and the resurrections of their bodies!

“And then from death awaken me / That these mine eyes with joy may see, / O Son of God, Thy glorious face, / My Savior and my Fount of grace. / Lord Jesus Christ, My prayer attend, my prayer attend, / And I will praise Thee without end.” To which there is nothing

left to say except, “AMEN! Come, Lord Jesus!”

David Schaller is pastor of Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sister Lakes, Michigan. He also prepares the “Bread of Life” devotions for the *Lutheran Spokesman*.



REMEMBER

זכר

Human beings, young and old, forget. We forget promises, events, names, and locations. Then, something happens to trigger a long-forgotten memory. It comes back to mind.

How is it with God's memory? In Psalm 25:6-7, we read, "Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!" (ESV) Had God forgotten His mercy? Does David need to remind Him of His steadfast love? No. As he says, "they have been from of old." Reaching back into eternity, God has been practicing mercy and love throughout time. Why, then, is David reminding God of this?

As one studies the Hebrew Old Testament, he is struck with the effective nature of words that relate to thought and feeling. In English, such words tend to be restricted to the mind. In Hebrew, they include the effecting of the thoughts of the mind. Example: love is not a feeling. It is an activity. If love is restricted to the mind or heart, it is not love. It may be infatuation or desire or appreciation or adoration or even self-love (I love you = I want you for my own purposes).

So it is with the word *remember*, especially when it is applied to God. It is not a mental process alone. It is remembering for a purpose. When God "remembers" something, it is not because He had forgotten. What we observe in the thought processes of the omniscient mind is this: God is calling something specific to His mind in order to act upon it.

Think of it this way: God writes a book. In it are all of His plans for the history of His creation. He places the book on a shelf. At all times, God knows where the book is and what it contains. When the right time comes, He takes the book off the shelf, opens it up to the right chapter, and puts into effect what is written there.

David is asking the Lord to open His "memory-book" to the Mercy chapter and carry out what is written there. God had not forgotten His steadfast love. "Remember Your Mercy" is a call for action. When every requirement has been fulfilled, God re-calls His mercy and immediately acts on it. At times, everything is just right, except that God's child has not prayed as David did. "You do not have because you do not ask." (James 4:2) God wants acts of faith. He wants us to "remind" Him of things He already intends to do.

Not only does David want God to remember something; he also wants Him to NOT remember something: "Do not remember my sins." That is, "Do not call my sins to Your mind for the purpose of taking action." Acting upon that memory would mean eternal punishment. In the book of Jeremiah, we hear God's response: "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (31:34) It's not so much, "I will forgive and forget," as it is, "I will not re-call their sins to My mind for the purpose of punishing them." That purpose was carried out when God beheld His Son on the cross and re-called the sins of the whole world for the purpose of punishing Jesus.

We join David in his prayer: "Do not remember my transgressions. According to Your steadfast love remember me." Only when the Lord excludes our sins from His active thoughts, only when His memory of us is immersed in His steadfast love, only when He looks on us and remembers the righteousness of Christ—only then are we secure in our salvation.

Now, hear the word of the Lord and be secure: "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins." (Isaiah 43:25) AMEN!



John Pfeiffer is retired from the pastoral and teaching ministry. He is a former president of Immanuel Lutheran College.

Christian Faith is Never Alone

“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”

(James 2:14-19)

Christian faith is a wondrous gift from God. Through faith we lay hold of treasures that our Savior won for us. Through faith we are adopted into God’s family, we enjoy His forgiving love, and we possess the certain hope of everlasting life in heaven.

This saving faith is not a mere “head knowledge.” The demons are well versed in Bible teachings, but their knowledge doesn’t benefit them.

The kind of faith that enables us to receive spiritual and eternal blessings involves “heart knowledge.” Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit enlightens our understanding concerning God’s saving truths, works a heartfelt trust in them, and enlivens our hearts to love God and delight in His holy will.

While we are saved through faith alone, faith is never alone. It is quite naturally accompanied by good works. Just as an apple tree produces apples, so also Christians produce fruits of faith in the form of laudable deeds. Martin Luther, expounding on the nature of Christian faith, wrote that “Faith is a living, busy, active, efficacious thing, so that it is impossible for it not incessantly to do good works. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked it has already done them.” This doesn’t mean we will always be doing good works, but that Christian faith will always bring forth works of love.

In the section of James before us, the inspired writer was

exposing what amounted to a phony, dead “faith” which does not save. While there were some of his readers who had a correct knowledge of Christian teachings, their hearts hadn’t embraced them. And their lives showed it. Even though they spoke words of well wishes for their brothers and sisters who needed help with clothing and food, they—being faithless—didn’t lift a finger to assist them.

In the parable Jesus told concerning how He would separate His believing sheep from the unbelieving goats on Judgment Day, He says to His sheep, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” (Matthew 25:34-36) In making reference to the good works of His sheep, Jesus wasn’t indicating they were saved because of those works, but rather that their good deeds gave evidence of their having saving faith.

The key to having saving faith is always being connected to our Savior Jesus Christ, Who is our source of spiritual life (John 15:4-5). May He ever work in us a true and living faith.



Mark Gullerud is retired from the pastoral ministry. He lives in Sunnyvale, California.

BEST. JOB. EVER!

Are you a young person pondering a career? Have you considered becoming a pastor or a Christian day school teacher? This twelve-part series is meant to coincide with the work of the President's Committee on Partners in the Public Ministry (CPPM). Its aim is to help you think more deeply about the great importance—and many blessings—of the public teaching and preaching ministry.

The Best Retirement Plan



“Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day.” (2 Timothy 4:8 ESV)

One of the first gifts I received from my father-in-law was a T-shirt that had these words printed on the front: “I work for the Lord. The pay isn’t great, but the retirement plan is out of this world!” It’s supposed to be a humorous way to present the blessings of serving in the public ministry. Unfortunately, it implies a theological error of the worst kind. The implication is that those who work in the public ministry are compensated by the Lord with eternal life in heaven. Holy Scripture is perfectly clear that eternal salvation is a gift of God’s grace and that the only One who earned salvation for us is Jesus Christ. This He did by His work of living a perfectly righteous life and then by becoming the sacrifice that takes away the sin of the world. *“In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”* (Ephesians 1:7 ESV)

If we are to think of heaven as a “retirement plan,” then we should mentally disconnect it from any work that we perform, including the work of serving in the pastoral ministry. The Apostle Paul did, however, express confidence in what awaited him on the Last Day, writing to Timothy, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved His appearing.”* (2 Timothy 4:7-8 ESV) Paul expresses how this crown

of righteousness would be awarded. He speaks of having kept the faith. That faith of which he speaks is faith in Christ Jesus, the world’s Savior.

Paul’s confidence is not in how faithfully he served in the ministry, and not even in how earnestly he fought the good fight or how strongly he finished the race. His confidence was in the faithfulness of the One in Whom he believed, namely the Lord, the righteous Judge.

James expresses this same idea when he writes, *“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”* (James 1:12 ESV) There are many trials that come with service in the ministry. The only way to remain steadfast under those trials is by relying on the grace and promises God makes in His Word. Therefore, this “crown of life” which God promises is made in connection with that grace that comes to us through Christ.

At the end of one’s life, it is only such promises of grace that provide any comfort and any true rest. Every faithful minister of Christ will look back on his efforts and work as littered with many faults and failures on his part. What he has earned is only condemnation. What Christ has earned —what God promises—is a gift of grace. This is God’s retirement plan, one which we public ministers of the Gospel will share with all who trust in that grace and those promises.



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

ERROR'S ECHO

In this series we take a look back at some of the most notorious errors and heresies that have threatened the church over the centuries, as well as the subtle (and not so subtle) ways in which those false teachings continue to haunt 21st century thought and theology.

The Adoptionism Error

The joy of an echo is standing on a cliff's edge, shouting into the canyon, and waiting for the sound to bounce off the rock walls and return. There is no similar joy in error's echo, but the effect is the same—a false teaching arises and, at some point in the future, it is heard again.

Most false teachings originate with human reason trying to constrain the true God within human limitations, or as a way of excusing sin, or purely out of the imagination of self-centered natural sinners. Adoptionism is an example of using reason in an attempt to explain the inexplicable.

The early Christians emphasized the oneness of God in contrast to the many gods of the Greeks and Romans. They proclaimed that they worshipped only one Ruler—one Monarch. Sadly, some went too far and lost the triune nature of God in the process. This over-emphasis of God's oneness and loss of the Trinity is called "Monarchianism."

Adoptionism is a specific type called Monarchianism—Dynamic Monarchianism. Paul of Samosata, who lived in the middle of the third century, was the most notable teacher of this error.

Paul was the bishop of Antioch (Acts 11:19-30; 13:1 and following) and was the chief advisor to Queen Zenobia of Palmyra—a desert kingdom between Damascus and Mesopotamia. Zenobia was so powerful that she was able to defy Rome and effectively become the ruler of the eastern portion of the Roman Empire. This lasted until A.D. 272, when emperor Aurelian utterly defeated Zenobia and took her back to Rome. Even though the church had recognized and condemned Paul of Samosata's error in A.D. 265, only after Zenobia's defeat could it successfully depose him as bishop.

Bishop Paul did not believe that Jesus Christ is true God. Instead, He taught that Jesus was a man to whom the *dunamis* (Greek word for "power") of God was given and in whom it was particularly evident (thus, "dynamic" Monarchianism). It was believed that Moses and other Old Testament prophets also had been given this power, but Jesus had it in the highest degree. Jesus was said to have used the *dunamis* with such faithfulness that the Father adopted Him as His Son (adoptionism). In this way,

human teaching demystified the Trinity, reduced the true God to the level of human comprehension, and took away Jesus' divinity.

The bible clearly teaches otherwise, "*Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*" (Colossians 2:8-9)

Once Jesus' divinity and His sacrificial atonement for sins are removed, there really is no Gospel left to believe. Jesus then is a man Whose saving work is in His teaching and His example, not His sacrifice. A sinner's salvation then is no longer a gift won by Christ when He died and rose again, but is attained by the degree to which he is able to live like Christ.

Even though Paul of Samosata was eventually deposed as bishop, the echo of his error has continued to bounce around the canyons of Christianity. Adoptionism is itself an echo of the Ebionite error (cf. *Lutheran Spokesman* August 2020). It was still being heard in the days of the Reformation, for the Augsburg Confession declares, "Our churches also condemn the Samosatenes, old and new, who contend that God is but one person." (Article I)

Today, the echoes are heard every time "living like Christ" is set forth as a goal unto itself or as a condition for salvation. The echoes are heard in every confession of Jesus that does not declare Him as the genuine and eternal Son of God. To this, God says, "*He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.*" (John 5:23)

No matter how many times errors concerning Jesus, the Son of God, come bouncing back in new forms with new human appeal, we can stand on Scripture and declare: Jesus is "*the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*" (Matthew 16:16) It is the truth upon which Jesus has built His Church and the powers of hell cannot overcome it (Matthew 16:18).



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

Immanuel Lutheran Church and School

Winter Haven, Florida

If you placed a pin dead-center in a map of Florida, you would be approximating the location of the city of Winter Haven. There is much to do in the area. Conveniently located between Tampa and Orlando and only twenty-nine miles from Disney World, Winter Haven's central location has allowed it to become the home of Legoland Florida in 2011, which annually brings fifteen million visitors to the town of forty-five thousand residents. Other prominent features of Winter Haven are the lakes which dominate the landscape. Twenty percent of the city is covered by its fifty lakes. Because of this unique geography, Winter Haven has historically been a center for the sport of water-skiing.

Immanuel Lutheran Church is technically not located within the city limits of Winter Haven, despite its mailing address, but is situated in an unincorporated community at the edge of town known as Inwood. The area is packed with Christian churches—fourteen different active congregations are located within a mile of Immanuel. Lutheranism is foreign to most of the people of the community; only one percent of the population of Winter Haven identifies as Lutheran.

The history of Immanuel begins with Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, the local congregation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This group formed as a preaching station in 1948 and called its first full-time pastor in 1950. In 1952, three families within the congregation grew concerned over the unionistic practices of their pastor, withdrew their membership, and began meeting as a new congregation in affiliation with the Orthodox Lutheran Conference. Eventually, Pastor G.W. Fischer of Immanuel Lutheran in Mankato, Minnesota, took medical leave from the active ministry and moved down to Florida, where he began conducting services for this small group. The congregation found its footing with the gracious financial assistance and spiritual encouragement of the Mankato congregation and officially organized as Immanuel Lutheran Church in 1957. The first full-time pastor of the congregation was Pastor Richard Kuehne, who had been serving in



Mankato as the 7th and 8th grade teacher at Immanuel Lutheran School. The Winter Haven group joined the CLC at the synod's inception.

Christian education has played a vital role in the history of our congregation and remains our most important outreach. The school was begun in 1958 as a half-day kindergarten with nineteen students attending, and God has blessed our congregation with the ability to continue housing a Christian day school for each of the past sixty-two years. We currently have twenty-three students in first through eighth grade, who are taught by Megan Goodwin and Neil Bernthal. Most of these children are non-member students from the community, and this highlights why our school has been such an important part of our congregation's mission work.

Several families have joined the congregation over the years after first enrolling their children in our school. One former student had been attending a local Episcopalian church with his parents, but after earning his driver's license he started driving himself to services here, eventually becoming a member. Even when the



church membership doesn't increase as a direct result of the school, the Holy Spirit is still working through the Word of God which is daily fed to the students, some of whom might not receive it otherwise. Several years ago, the mother of a second grader told me that her son had demanded they start praying before meals. When his dad told him that he did not believe there was a God, his son replied, "God died on the cross for you, and you don't believe in Him?" We thank the Lord for allowing us to continue this important work.

As part of the outreach for the school, we've taken on a few different ventures in the community. For a few years we've hosted a bi-annual wiffleball tournament on select Saturdays. As young teams of friends from the community descend upon our property, we hand out school information to all the parents in attendance. In the past three Decembers we have also taken part in the local Christmas parade. Our float—complete with traditional Christmas hymns, a stable and manger, and even a live goat—appears among the various festive floats and bands and dancers in the parade. Various students and church members walk alongside our float and hand out thousands of church/school fliers to the parade viewers.

One challenge that faces Immanuel is its widely spread-out membership. Fifty of the 104 congregants drive for over an hour one way to attend worship services; some regularly drive more than two hours. Twice per month an early Sunday morning worship service is conducted on the north side of Orlando to help reach various distant members. This has also been a convenient service to

attend for any CLC members vacationing at Disney World or visiting Florida's beaches. But even this service is still very distant for many. Our membership populates nearly every region of the state, with members living in coastal towns like St. Augustine to the north, Ft. Lauderdale to the south, Cape Coral to the southwest, and Titusville to the east. Though this presents some challenges, our spread-out membership is a testament to the conviction that faithfulness to God's Word is not to be sacrificed.

You might know Florida as "The Sunshine State," but it's also one of the rainiest states in the nation. During a recent two-week period, Winter Haven received over four inches of rain. While this causes the grass to grow at an alarming rate, it also serves as a reminder of God's faithfulness. *"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."* (Isaiah 55:10-11) We thank the Lord for causing His Word to nourish and sustain our congregation and our school. We continue to look for every opportunity to preach Christ crucified, trusting that the Lord will give the growth.



Samuel Rodebaugh is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida.

Despite COVID, the Word of God Is Working in Nepal

[Ed.: the following is a report about current activities in the Himalayan Church of the Lutheran Confession Nepal (HCLCN), our sister church body in Nepal. It is written, in his own words, by the indigenous pastor who is our main contact in Nepal. Names of people and places are being withheld because of the risk of persecution. The report is lightly edited for clarity.]

In the year 2020, the world is fighting against Coronavirus. The world was halted for several months, hundreds of thousands of lives are being lost, and scientists and researchers are working round the clock to find a vaccine so that life can return to normal.

The pandemic has affected Nepal too. Since the Nepalese Government is imposing lockdown, the HCLCN is directly affected too. The HCLCN affiliated churches are now closed since April 21, 2020. All the HCLCN churches are closed until further notice from the government. The churches suspended all their weekly gatherings, but some of the churches that have internet access are doing online services using social media like Facebook Live and Zoom.

The HCLCN is working in Nepal to build and develop, and to train more workers for the harvest in the land where just 1.4% of the people are Christians. We were excited for the year 2020, as we had several plans that could help growth of our work in the country.

The HCLCN used to organize conferences and visitations and mission trips every year. This year too we had planned several conferences, mission trips, and seminars, and we were excited that we would grow bigger and better. Unfortunately, up to date it is not possible to travel anywhere due to the strict lockdown. However, we would like to thank the brothers and sisters at the CLC that shared their resources so that we could distribute food items to people in need. More than fifty families were helped by the assistance.

Regarding the Himalayan Bible Institute (HBI), we had completed courses at two HBI locations—one in



Above, a Nepalese family gathers for remote worship during the COVID crisis. Below, musicians warm up for a socially-distanced service. Opposite, congregants say a prayer of thanks for food aid provided with CLC support.



Kathmandu, State 2, and another in Dang District, State 5. We have two batches of students who completed their studies, and we planned to graduate fourteen students for the ministry. It was scheduled for April 2020. Sadly, we lost a student in August, due to lack of medical attention during the lockdown. Now we plan to graduate thirteen students at the earliest possible date.

The HBI is closed this year as we could not train students due to lockdown. Therefore, we paused the training. We plan to start two more batches next year. We expect applications from the students beginning in early January.



The mission helper program in Nepal began in 2011. We were blessed to welcome the CLC Mission Helpers in 2011, 2014, and 2017. We love their presence as they bring the joyful Word of God to unreached children in the country. We look forward to having them in 2021.

We would like to thank the CLC Board of Missions and all the brothers and sisters at the CLC for praying for us and sharing their resources to construct a building for the HBI in Chitwan district. We plan to begin the construction work in November if the situation permits.

The pandemic has affected every area in the country. At the time of this writing, the country has been under lockdown for more than five months. It is hard and painful that we should remain at home. The stay-at-home orders

are more strict than before. The rise of the COVID-19 cases in recent days is making everyone worry.

But there is a hope that someday the Lord wipes away the problem and brings a new dawn of joy and comfort. We are witnessing to people through technology, and people are asking for prayers. We look forward to going out to the mountains to proclaim the Word of God to the lost souls. We are sure that God is in control and whatever He wills, He does. We pray that the Lord will bless the sincere and faithful believers. We pray that the situation gets better so that many more people can hear the Word of salvation. Please pray for Nepal!

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS NOVEMBER 2020

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Nov 2	TLH 393 (LSB 713)	1 Kings 16:29-34	Things weren't getting better in Israel. Enter Ahab, the worst of their kings to date. Even Joshua foretold that the Lord's curse would be upon him (Joshua 6:26).
Nov 3	TLH 28	1 Kings 17:1-24	But the Lord is not asleep! To counteract Ahab, the worst of kings, God raised up Elijah, the greatest of prophets. How faithful and loving is our God toward His people!
Nov 4	TLH 612	Amos 1:1-15	The Lord not only had His eye on the sins of Israel, but also on the sins of the nations around her too. Their cruelty and wickedness would bring down judgment from God. The way of the wicked will perish.
Nov 5	TLH 453	Revelation 9:12-21	The second woe foretold of false teachers and idolaters (Mohammed and his followers) whose wicked actions would violently kill one third of mankind. But even in the face of this, the rest of the world would not repent of its wickedness.
Nov 6	TLH 49 (LSB 577)	Revelation 10:1-11	The mighty angel's book fits the doctrine of the papacy—good sounding words on the surface, but rotten and disturbing when “swallowed” and believed.
Nov 7	TLH 525	Amos 2:1-16	Even Judah and Israel would fall under the Lord's judgment. These words are harsh, but in mercy God warned the people ahead of time. A few would heed that warning and repent.
Nov 9	TLH 296 (LSB 589)	Amos 3:1-15	Israel had received a great deal of special blessings and attention from God, but they had still gone astray. May we never despise God's attention and love toward us through impenitence.
Nov 10	TLH 468; LSB 857	1 Kings 18:1-15	Obadiah worked for wicked King Ahab, but secretly helped the Lord's prophets. How does God still use well-positioned workers to carry out His will and help His people?
Nov 11	TLH 266	Revelation 11:1-13	“The Word they still shall let remain. . . .” Although heresy would make strong attacks against Christianity, there would be those who would proclaim the Gospel faithfully in the midst of it.
Nov 12	TLH 657 (LSB 537)	Revelation 11:14-19	The Lord's enemies and the enemies of His Christ are strong, but they will not prevail. Christ will reign forever and ever! Hallelujah!
Nov 13	TLH 518 (LSB 750)	1 Kings 19:1-18	What a merciful God we have! Elijah was ready to give up, but God did not give up comforting him and convincing him that he was not alone. We have a Savior, Jesus Christ, who does the same.
Nov 14	TLH 111; LSB 861	Amos 4:4-13	There are times when the Lord sends us hardship to correct us and make us see the folly of our sins more clearly. Sadly, Israel ignored His chastisement. When our sins get us into trouble, let's turn to the Lord.
Nov 16	TLH 496 (LSB 827)	1 Kings 19:19-21	Elijah had been despairing, but God still very much had the upper hand over His enemies! Not only were there a number of believers left, but another prophet would follow Elijah to keep on preaching the Word.
Nov 17	TLH 531; LSB 747	Revelation 12:1-6	At first this might sound like a picture of the birth of Jesus, but Christ had already come. The woman symbolizes the Holy Christian Church, and her child represents believers of all times. Although the serpent (Satan) seeks to devour Christians, God keeps us in the faith.
Nov 18	TLH 604	Amos 5:1-15	It's very sad that Israel would come to an end because of her sins, but we can also be glad that God hates evil and does not let it prevail in the end. Can you spot the Lord's merciful invitation to Israel in these verses too?
Nov 19	TLH 15 (LSB 816)	1 Kings 20:1-22	God showed He was in control of the armies of nations and used Ahab's victory over Ben-Hadad to show that He was the true God, the Lord. Your God too is the Lord!
Nov 20	TLH 29	1 Kings 20:23-30	Again we see that our God is the Lord of Hosts (that is, Lord of Armies), for again He causes Ahab to win a victory over Ben-Hadad, even though Ahab's advisors didn't believe it could be done with such a small fighting force.
Nov 21	TLH 254; LSB 521	Revelation 12:7-12	The Lord our God simply does not lose His battles! Satan our accuser and his host have been defeated. The death of the Lamb (Jesus) and the Word of God overcome any of his accusations against you! Rejoice, heaven and earth!
Nov 23	TLH 539 (LSB 872)	Amos 6:1-7	In spite of God's warnings, the people of Israel carried on as though their sins were of no concern. We too need to guard against feeling too comfortable when we do wrong. When you sin, repent and look to Christ for forgiveness.
Nov 24	TLH 338 (LSB 687)	Amos 7:1-9	Amos interceded for Israel when he saw visions of tragedy coming. The Lord relented, but eventually Israel would be measured to determine its straightness. It would be found to be crooked and judgment would come.
Nov 25	TLH 263 (LSB 666)	Revelation 12:13-17	Satan is beside himself with anger at God's victory over him, so he will terrorize God's believing children to the very last. Yet they will escape and be saved.
Nov 26	TLH 570; LSB 789	Psalms 106	Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! Time and again we despise His blessings. Time and again He forgives us. Time and again He continues to provide for our needs. Amen! Praise the Lord!
Nov 27	TLH 452 (LSB 661)	Revelation 13:1-10	These visions are similar to those of Daniel (Daniel 7). The picture of the beast coming out of the sea fits what we know from history about the Roman Empire, including its wicked rulers and the Roman Church (with the papacy).
Nov 28	WS 796 (LSB 886)	Revelation 13:11-18	The popes of the Roman Church continue their influence, as the appearance of the second beast shows. This church appears innocent (like a lamb) but in reality “enslaves” people throughout the world and denies the Gospel of Christ.
Nov 30	TLH 60 (LSB 345)	1 Kings 20:31-43	After winning a second victory over Ben-Hadad, Ahab disobeyed the Lord by allowing Ben-Hadad to go free when he was supposed to die. God would now bring about Ahab's death instead.

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

Graduation in a Time of COVID



During the past six months at Immanuel Lutheran College, students, parents, and staff have learned that expectations do not always match reality. When the students left campus for spring break on March 13, no one expected that the rest of the school year would have to be conducted at home through distance learning.

While the college and seminary were allowed to have a small indoor graduation at Messiah Lutheran Church on May 30, the prospect of hosting a larger gathering of twenty-five high school graduates with family and friends seemed unlikely.

However, on Saturday, August 1, under sunny skies shaded by the tall green pines, all twenty-five of the high school seniors were able to return to campus along with family members for an outdoor graduation service.

The seniors were reminded that the name of our school—Immanuel, “God with us”—was literally born out of events that shattered human expectations. Expecting to live an ordinary life in the small town of Nazareth, Mary and Joseph were informed by an angel that Mary would miraculously conceive her first Child by means of the Holy Spirit.

The reality was that this Child, Who was true God and true Man, would save all people from their sins. Jesus Christ bridged the gap between the expectation of eternal death and the reality of eternal life by His sacrifice on the cross.

The senior class verse from Galatians 2:20 is a wonderful reminder of how Jesus loves us and remains with us, even



during these uncertain times: *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

Just a few weeks after the closing of the school year, ILC started the new school year with an outdoor opening service on Sunday, August 23. In spite of the various gathering restrictions, we are grateful to the Lord for each day that we can hold in-person classes and worship our Immanuel together!



Joel Gullerud is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Golden Treasure Unearthed in Israel.

"About 1,100 years ago, someone stashed a small fortune of pure gold coins in a clay jar and nailed that jar to a hole in the ground, likely with the hopes of retrieving it one day. Whoever it was, they never reclaimed the treasure. The hoard — a hefty pile of 425 gold coins — remained buried until a group of youths volunteering ahead of their mandatory army service in Israel unearthed it on Aug. 18, according to the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), which organized the excavation. 'I dug in the ground and when I excavated the soil, saw what looked like very thin leaves,' Oz Cohen, one of the youths, said in an IAA statement. 'When I looked again I saw these were gold coins. It was really exciting to find such a special and ancient treasure.'" Most of the 24-carat gold coins date to the Abbasid period, also known as the Islamic Golden Age. The Abbasid caliphate (A.D. 750-1258) ruled from what is now Iraq, where innovations in art and architecture led the cities of Baghdad and Samarra to become the cultural capitals of the Muslim world, according to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. At its height in A.D. 850, the caliphate ruled parts of Northern Africa and much of the Middle East. The caliphate fell when the Mongols sacked Baghdad in 1258. Geggel, Laura. "Stash of pure, 24-carat gold coins unearthed in Israel." *News. LiveScience.com*, 25 Aug. 2020. Web. 16 Sep. 2020.

China Cracking Down on Christian House Churches.

"House churches across China have experienced intensified persecution in recent months, with Communist officials telling Christians they are not permitted to believe in God in the atheist country. Bitter Winter, a publication produced by the Center for Studies on New Religion which covers human rights issues in China, docu-



"Socially distanced" members of the Great Lakes Pastoral Conference, which met in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, September 29-30.

mented numerous instances where Christians were threatened and harassed by Chinese Communist Party officials. In June, a group of officials in the county-level city of Leiyang, in the central province of Hunan, raided a house church. They confiscated the church's donation box and destroyed 10 Bible verses on the walls, telling the Christians their actions were 'the result of their disobedience' and that it was 'illegal to hold religious gatherings without a permit or joining the Three-Self Church.' In May, the Religious Affairs Bureau in the province's Yongzhou city shut down a house church for 'holding illegal gatherings without permits' and confiscated all valuables in the venue,

including a computer, a photocopier, and Bibles. In April, police in Dengzhou city in the central province of Henan raided a house church, confiscated its Bibles and hymnbooks, and took eight congregation members to a police station for interrogation. One Christian later revealed that a police officer said to him that they could 'not believe in God in China.' Klett, Leah. "China: Police shutter house churches nationwide, order Christians to stop believing in God." *CP World. ChristianPost.com*, 30 Jul. 2020. Web. 16 Sep. 2020.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Candidates. The Board of Regents for Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary invites "all pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of member congregations of the Church of the Lutheran Confession" (CLC Constitution) to nominate an individual or individuals to fill the vacancy which will be created by the retirement of Professor John Reim at the end of the 2020-21 academic year. The position would require someone seminary trained with the ability to teach primarily music, college Greek, and other potential disciplines, commencing with the 2021-22 academic year. The person would serve as the director of the mass and tour choirs, potentially teaching piano and organ. Those submitting nominations are strongly encouraged to verify that the individual would be willing to be nominated and would need to include information regarding the nominee's educational background and teaching and/or professional experience, also indicating how the person might help our school in technology expertise, extra-curricular activities, or administrative positions. Nominations are to be received by email or letter no later than midnight November 20, 2020 (letters postmarked November 10, 2020) to: Mr. James Burkhardt; 217 Windy Lane; Rockwall, TX 75087; email: jeb6217@yahoo.com.
--Pastor John Hein, Chairman, CLC Board of Regents