

January 2021 VOL 63 NO. 7

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

-- Jeremiah 29:11



Pages 10-11

IN THIS ISSUE January 2021

Will Your New Year Be Happy?..... 3

Life Lessons..... 4

**A HYMN OF GLORY LET US SING
"Brightest and Best of the Sons of Morning"..... 5**

Elisha's First Request and Last Miracle 6

The Perfect Man 7

**WALTHER'S LAW AND GOSPEL
A Fundamental Difference..... 8**

ERROR'S ECHO Arianism..... 9

**WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU
Messiah / Hales Corners 10-11**

**NOTES FROM THE FIELD
A Kenyon Rite of Passage 12**

ILC NEWSLETTER 13

Bread of Life Readings, January 2021 14

**IN THE PIPELINE
Drew Naumann 15**

SEEN IN PASSING / ANNOUNCEMENTS..... 16

The Lutheran Spokesman (USPS 825580) (ISSN 00247537) is published monthly by the Church of the Lutheran Confession, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701, and is an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Website address: www.clclutheran.org

Periodicals postage paid at Eau Claire, WI and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes (Form 3579) to Lutheran Spokesman, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701-7134

Editor: Paul Naumann, 3732 Claymore Lane, Eau Claire, WI, 54701, E-mail to paul.naumann@ilc.edu; Assistant Editor: Craig Owings; Art Director, Graphic Designer, Page 1 Printers; Proofreaders: David Lau and Paula Naumann; Staff: James Albrecht, David Bernthal, Timothy Daub, Wayne Eichstadt, David Fuerstenau, Frank Gantt, Norman Greve, Mark Gullerud, John Klatt, Ross Kok, Joseph Lau, Delwyn Maas, Bruce Naumann, John Pfeiffer, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Sam Rodebaugh, Michael Roehl, Robert Sauers, Thomas Schuetze, Chad Seybt, Mark Weis.

Material submitted for publication should be sent to Editor Paul Naumann three months before date of publication. Announcements and other short notices should also be sent to Editor Naumann.

Business Manager: Rev. James Sandeen, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701. E-mail to jim.sandeen@ilc.edu. Individual subscriptions {foreign-U.S. currency only}: \$18.00 {\$36.00} for one year; \$34.00 {\$50.00} for two years; \$50.00 {\$72.00} for three years; sent in bulk to congregations: \$15.00.

Send address or payment question requests to: lutheranspokesman@ilc.edu

Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org
Printed in U.S.A.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, New King James Version, © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Will Your New Year Be Happy?

“I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

As you read this article it is likely that you will soon be stepping over the threshold of the old year into the new. Questions that may be on your mind at this time are, “Will 2021 be a prosperous one for me? Will it be a year in which I enjoy good health? How will it go for me financially? Will the stock market be a ‘rising bull’ or ‘declining bear?’” and other similar questions. Of course, there’s no crystal ball you can gaze into to see the events of the coming year. But what comfort is yours as a Christian, knowing (from the promises God has given you in His Word) that your future will be richly blessed in the year 2021 and beyond!

What promises, you ask? They are too numerous to mention them all in this brief article, but permit me to share a few. Your Savior-God has given you the promise, for example, to keep you from danger and shield you from harm (Psalm 91). He’s given you the assurance that He will make every unpleasant happening that occurs in your life serve for your ultimate good (Romans 8:28). If it should be that He calls you to pass through a painful trial in year 2021, He will supply you with the strength you need to bear it (Isaiah 41:10). As you give top priority to the all-important matters of your soul (things like hearing His Word, reading your Bible, receiving His Supper, training up your children in His Good Shepherd paths), He will amply provide for your bodily needs, too, so that you may lay aside every worry (Matthew 6:25-33).

At the top of the list of blessings Jesus promises to

shower on you in the coming year are the ones that pertain to your everlasting happiness. He will protect you from the unseen spiritual foes who lurk all around in the godless world (Satan and his minions), who want to hurt and destroy your faith. He will provide this protection for you through the pieces of spiritual armor He has supplied for your daily use (Ephesians 6:10-17). When in weakness you fall before the temptations of Satan, He

What comfort is yours as a Christian, knowing (from the promises He’s given you in His Word) that your future will be richly blessed in 2021 and beyond!

promises to remove your transgressions from you as far as east is from west (Psalm 103:7-11). As often as you come before His throne of mercy with a broken and contrite heart, He will apply to your soul the soothing balm of His forgiveness (Psalm 130:3-4).

Will 2021 be the last year you spend on this earth? If so, you have His promise to usher you into glory at His side (Psalm 16:11). If it’s the year He has in mind to bring down the final curtain on human history and return in glory as Judge of the living and the dead, He will grant you a happy reunion with all the saints who’ve gone on before, who anchored their hopes in their Savior, to live with them and Him, your beloved Savior, forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

Whatever the future holds, know that the Lord is going to make it exceedingly bright! This being so, step onto the untraveled road of life stretching out ahead of you with confidence, serving and worshiping Him “as you go” with a happy and thankful heart.



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

Life Lessons

Of all the political, social, and moral debates that have gone on for the past forty years, it would be hard to come up with a more sensitive topic than abortion. Since the U.S. Supreme Court decided *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, 60 million children have been ripped from the safety of their mothers' wombs and brutally murdered. That is not the debate, those are the facts. And many experts believe the true number of abortions has been greatly under reported.

Contrary to many opinions, the debate is not about when life begins. For years people entangled themselves in endless arguments about whether life begins at fertilization, or when the heart starts beating, or when brain waves are detected, or when the first breath is taken, and on and on. Very few would deny that the unborn child is alive. If only our government applied the same standard to humans that it applies to eagles! According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act "provides criminal penalties for persons who 'take, possess, sell, purchase, barter, offer to sell, purchase or barter, transport, export or import, at any time or any manner any bald eagle . . . [or any golden eagle], alive, dead, or any part, nest, or egg thereof.'" Is an egg alive? Yes, we would agree there is a baby eagle waiting to be hatched. The act provides penalties of up to \$200,000 and a year in prison for the first offense.

Peter Singer, Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, is a leading proponent of the utilitarian concept of "the greatest good for the greatest number" as the only measure of good or ethical behavior. Therefore, Singer proposes that the boundary between human and "animal" is completely arbitrary. This in turn leads the professor to his ultimate, horrifying conclusion: "Newborn babies have no sense of their own existence over time. So killing a newborn baby is never equivalent

to killing a person, that is, a being who wants to go on living."

Legalized abortion has not reduced child abuse or sex trafficking, as pro-abortion advocates once promised it would. Rather, since the passage of *Roe v. Wade*, we have succeeded in cheapening human life to its lowest possible level. In the early days some prophesied that it would lead down a slippery slope to euthanasia. These prognosticators were laughed to scorn at the time, but today we have laws allowing assisted suicide in nine states and the District of Columbia.

*If only our
government applied
the same standard
to humans that it
applies to eagles!*

The debate over abortion has little to do with "is the child alive?" and everything to do with "is the child's life valuable?" Mankind has exchanged God's law for human-created ethics and rationalizations. So what does God's Word have to say about His precious gift of life?

"So God created man in his own image; in the image of God He created him."

(Genesis 1:27) Being created in God's image gave man the unique ability to have a relationship with his Creator. It also fit man for his task of subduing all of nature under his control as God instructed.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you." (Jeremiah 1:5) God informs us that as He actively formed the pre-born prophet Jeremiah, He knew him and had plans for him.

"My times are in Your hand." (Psalm 31:15) Life is the most precious gift of God next to faith in Christ. All should have opportunity to make use of their time of grace to seek the LORD and His will.



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

TLH 128

“Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning”

<http://lutherantacoma.com/hymns/128.mp3>

“**N**ow after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’” (Matthew 2:1-2)

The magi, guided by God, did not find the “King of the Jews,” as they supposed; they found the King of all people. Jews of Jesus’ day looked to the Old Testament patriarch Abraham as their religious and ethnic ancestor. God had made a covenant with Abraham that from his descendants would come the Messiah; and for the most part, Jews considered the promise of the Messiah to be exclusive to their ethnicity. Gentiles, in most Jews’ reckoning, were not included in that promise. However, in that regard they overlooked the glorious God-given Messianic prophecy of Isaiah, who wrote, “*The LORD will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your [Jesus’] light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.*” (Isaiah 60:2-3)

The magi were Gentiles, and with the church festival of Epiphany (“manifestation”), we celebrate the fact that Jesus is King—and Savior—not only of the Jews, but also of all people of all times and all places.

“Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning” is an Epiphany hymn. Verse 1 speaks of the son (not s-u-n) that truly dispels darkness, the “Star of the East” seen by the magi, which guided them to the Christ child and which guides us also to our Savior. “*Brightest and best of the sons of the morning, / Dawn on our darkness and lend*

us thine aid; / Star of the East, the horizon adorning, / Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.”

The magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus. Verse 3 poses the question of what gifts we should offer: “*Shall we not yield Him, in costly devotion, / Odors of Edom and off’rings divine, / Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean, / Myrrh from the forest and gold from the mine?*”

Verse 4 answers that such gifts would be useless, but there is a far richer gift that even the poorest among us can offer: “*Vainly we offer each ample oblation, / Vainly with gifts would His favor secure. / Richer by far is the heart’s adoration; / Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.*”

Certainly, material offerings are good and proper and necessary to support the ministries of the Church, but God is best pleased not with our material offerings, but with our hearts. Moved by the Gospel promise of full and complete forgiveness of our sins, and eternal life in heaven solely because of the perfect life and substitutionary death of the Messiah—not just for the Jews, but for all people—our natural response is love, devotion, and submissive obedience to His will. We do this not in any way to merit His favor, but solely because of overflowing gratitude for His grace to us in Jesus Christ, the “Brightest and best of the sons of the morning.”



Craig Owings is a retired teacher and serves as assistant editor of the Lutheran Spokesman. He lives in Cape Coral, Florida.

Elisha's First Request and Last Miracle

Although I saw some as a kid, I never wished upon a shooting star. Probably because I never saw the movie *Pinocchio* and heard the song therein. Neither did my parents ever talk about the old myth of so wishing. If anything, we talked about how King Solomon was given and granted his wish from God—a wish for wisdom to rule his people with knowledge and justice.

Elisha made a similar request. It seems as if the whole countryside knew that something big was in the air. Shortly before his whirlwind ascension, the prophet Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask! What may I do for you before I am taken away from you?” Elisha replied, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” (2 Kings 2:9) Elijah had been the spiritual leader and bulwark of Israel. Like Solomon, Elisha requested a most beneficial blessing with which to better serve God’s people. He witnessed Elijah’s ascension and his request was granted.

We are told Jesus prayed often. He also testified, “*The Spirit of the LORD is upon me . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.*” (Luke 4:18-19) Our Lord was anointed, not with Elijah’s spirit, but with the Holy Spirit. Thus He was empowered to preach the kingdom of God, to perform great miracles, and to redeem the world and atone for all sin with His lifeblood. Asking for the Spirit is no mean thing.

Our own fellowship finds itself in a challenging situation—to continue the kingdom work in an evil day. The great prophets and leaders of yesterday have been taken from us. We find ourselves with limited resources and in great need of manpower. Luther and Walther, and many others of godly fame are no longer with us—even to ask for doubles of their spirit. What to do? The challenge is great, but there is an obvious first request. Ask the Lord for spiritual doubles and triples and even quadruples. It might seem like a hard ask, as was Elisha’s, but we are assured by Scripture that “*God does not give the Spirit by*

measure.” (John 3:34) We can proceed and prosper in our kingdom work, for God bestows His Spirit without limits. If only we ask.

Besides the verbal promise of Elijah, what is the evidence that Elisha received a “spiritual double portion”?

One indication might be that Elisha, during his ministry, seems to have performed twice as many recorded miracles as did Elijah. And the last one was simply amazing.

Here is what it was and how it happened. According to 2 Kings 13:20-21, Elisha became sick unto death and was buried. At that time marauding bands from Moab invaded Israel most every spring. One day the raiders interrupted a funeral. In haste the dead man’s body was placed in the tomb of Elisha. When the corpse touched the bones of the prophet, the man was revived.

Can we not glean several lessons from this amazing miracle? Even though they are dead, “*holy men of God*” (2 Peter 1:21) continue to be a blessing to His people. Their inspired words are truth and they bring life to those who read and believe them.

Furthermore, it is no small thing to be buried with The Prophet. As Paul testified, “*Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” (Romans 6:4) By this burial-connection to Christ, we’ve been raised to spiritual life. And by His resurrection power, our bodies will be raised to the life everlasting, to join Elijah and Elisha and all the blessed saints in glory. What a promised and glorious last miracle!

*The challenge
is great, but there is an
obvious first request.
Ask the Lord for Spiritual
doubles and triples and
even quadruples.*



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

The Perfect Man

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.” (James 3:1-5, ESV)

A man, being convicted of his sin, set out to do better. He reasoned that his evil thoughts often caught him off guard and might be difficult to change. His evil actions, he decided, were often a product of his thoughts and words. So he decided he would first focus on his words. If he could catch himself before he said something he’d regret, he would also have more control over the things he did and, in time, perhaps even over the things he thought.

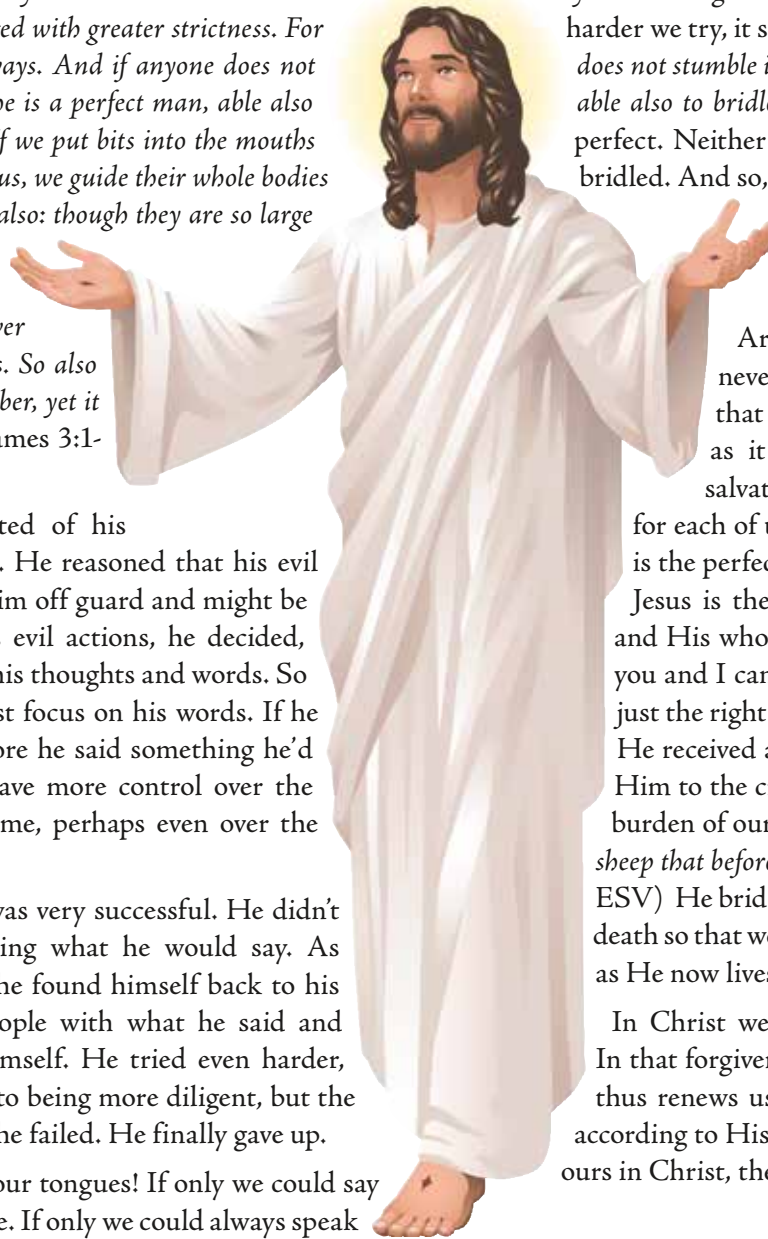
For a while, the man was very successful. He didn’t speak without considering what he would say. As time went on, though, he found himself back to his old habits. He hurt people with what he said and created problems for himself. He tried even harder, and committed himself to being more diligent, but the more he tried, the more he failed. He finally gave up.

If only we could tame our tongues! If only we could say the right thing every time. If only we could always speak with clarity and precision. If only we could tame our tongues to say the things that build each other up rather than tearing each other down. If only . . .

Sadly, as our text points out, “we all stumble in many ways.” Our tongues cannot be tamed. We try, but the harder we try, it seems, the worse we do. “If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.” But we are not perfect. Neither our tongues nor our bodies are bridled. And so, we confess with Paul, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24 ESV)

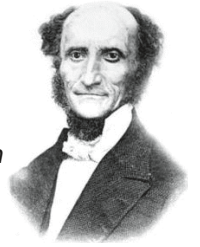
Are we doomed to live this life in a never-ending battle against a tongue that would just as soon destroy us as it would honor the God of our salvation? True, the battle will go on for each of us. But all is not lost. None of us is the perfect man, but there is One Who is. Jesus is the One Who bridled His tongue and His whole body. He lived the perfect life you and I cannot live. He always said and did just the right thing. He deserved none of what He received at the hands of those who nailed Him to the cross, but suffered as He bore the burden of our sinful tongues. Jesus was “like a sheep that before its shearers is silent.” (Isaiah 53:7 ESV) He bridled His tongue even in the face of death so that we might receive His righteousness as He now lives in us.

In Christ we receive the forgiveness of sins. In that forgiveness, God makes us perfect—and thus renews us, strengthens us, and guides us according to His will. What’s impossible for us is ours in Christ, the Perfect Man.



Robert Sauers is pastor of Luther Memorial Church in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and a member of the CLC Board of Missions.

One of the hallmarks of the Lutheran Church is its proper understanding and application of the Bible's two main teachings—Law and Gospel. Dr. C.F.W. Walther's seminal work, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, is the basis for this two-year series. Note: page numbers given are accurate for the 1929 and 1986 editions of the book.



A Fundamental Difference

“Thesis 1—The doctrinal contents of the entire Holy Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testament, are made up of two doctrines differing fundamentally from each other, viz., the Law and the Gospel.”

About a decade into homeschooling, surprising gaps can begin to surface, even regarding skills normally mastered in preschool. For example, you might discover your teenager has difficulty discerning left from right. Or is that right from left?

It's a fundamental distinction. Without it, following Google maps through multi-lane city traffic can be a terrifying experience. Without it, asking your son for the book just to his left—no, his other left—can lead to an intense father-son moment.

But far worse than the frustration of trying to find something on your “other” left is an “other Gospel,” which is no good news at all (Galatians 1:7-8). Thus, Walther warns of grave spiritual danger whenever man obscures the foundational distinction of God's Word: “My aim is rather to show you how easy it is to work a great damage upon your hearers by confounding Law and Gospel.” (page 6)

Confounding Law and Gospel has led some to misconstrue the Old Testament God as an evil deity distinct from Jesus. The Pope distorts the Gospel into the means to earn your way into heaven. Likewise, many pastors today proclaim the Law as some kind of path to success and the Gospel as mere motivation to do better.

This confusion conjures up images of a capricious God Who is nice one day, mean the next. Such doubts can make daily life seem confusing, even terrifying—like trying to navigate with a jumbled up left and right.

But everything begins to come into focus when the distinctive contrasts between Law and Gospel are simply allowed to stand: “*The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*” (2 Corinthians 3:6)

The Law reveals your sin. It commands and demands.

The Gospel reveals your Savior. It promises, offers, creates.

As complementary opposites, the Law and Gospel could not be farther apart in terms of purpose and results, yet one can only be completely true if the other is as well. Their apparent dissonance, though, finds resolution where the Law and Gospel meet—the cross, one intense Father-Son moment which gave rise to your eternal life.

Thus you find both Law and Gospel throughout the Scriptures. From the beginning, the promise of salvation in the Seed of the woman is proclaimed and echoed (Genesis 3:15). Jesus Himself reiterates that He came not “to destroy the Law or the Prophets . . . but to fulfill.” (Matthew 5:17) As one consistent message from the fall of man right up until the final day, God repeats and repeats His Law and His Gospel with the ultimate goal and desire of the soul's salvation.

This Law/Gospel distinction lies beneath and explains many apparent contradictions in the Bible. It also gives hope to every confusing moment in life, as your personal journey comes into focus through faith in Christ. There is great joy to be found in a God Who communicates both Law and Gospel so clearly, and both for your eternal good!

Knowing your Law from your Gospel is no mere preschool skill. It is the foundational premise of everything God has to say. So, if you ever find yourself lost in doubt, confused about which direction to take next, repeat it again: “The Law shows me my sin; the Gospel shows me my Savior,” and marvel how divine wisdom can be both so basic and yet, at the same time, so advanced.



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

[To read Walther's *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* for free on-line, and to access related Bible class materials, go to www.ilc.edu/Walther/]

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.

Arianism

You probably know more about Arianism than you realize. Even if the name eludes you, the heresy won't. It is well known and embraced by several religious groups today. If you're not familiar with its anti-scriptural position, you are most certainly familiar with the biblical response. You confess it every time you speak the words, "begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made."

Arius was a 4th century priest who denied the deity of Christ. He taught that Jesus did not always exist, but was created by the Father. The Father made Jesus like Himself and used Jesus to create the world. He then gave Him every honor short of being His equal. Arius based his argument on his reckless misinterpretation of Colossians 1:15-19. *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. . . . For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell."*

The Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) was gathered in order to clarify the church's position. The resultant Nicene Creed was (and still is) a full rejection of Arianism. It declared that Jesus is not merely "like" God, He is God. He is not merely of a "similar substance," but is "of one substance with the Father." Jesus is not just "His only Son." He is "His only Son, our LORD."

Sadly, old errors die hard. The pulse beat of Arianism lives on in the Jehovah's Witness who goes door to door, spouting the same ancient deceit. It is also found in other non-Christian groups that, similarly, attack the doctrine of the Trinity. This is not some small lie that sneaks in the back door. This is a frontal assault against the true God

and His Word. Arius did much more than mishandle Scripture, he blatantly distorted crystal-clear passages to prop up his heretical views.

The Bible is unequivocal: Jesus is the eternal, almighty God, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. *"I and My Father are one"* (John 10:30), He explained to His enemies. *"Before Abraham was, I AM"* (John 8:58), Jesus remarked, and thereby identified Himself as the very Yahweh Whom the JW's claim to worship. If Jesus were less than God, the Jewish Sanhedrin would have been correct in charging Him with blasphemy, and Thomas would have erred when he called the risen Christ, *"My LORD and My God."* (John 20:28) Had He been inferior to the Father, Jesus' ministry would have been compromised with lies.

The "gospel" of Arianism is nothing like the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. If He is not God, then Jesus is nothing more than an example for us to imitate. That is the best that Arianism can offer.

Remember that whenever you speak with someone who is caught in this deadly lie. Most likely, you won't convince them with "proof passages" against their false teachings, or Arianism would have disappeared long ago. But the Spirit can convince them through the real Gospel of Scripture, the fact that eternal God entered the world He created in order to take our place and save us from our sins. God Himself was in the manger of Christmas, on the cross of Good Friday, and was raised from Easter's tomb. Knowing Jesus as your example won't save you. Knowing Him as your Substitute already has.



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

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the church of the Lutheran Confession

Messiah Lutheran Church Hales Corners, Wisconsin

2020 will long be remembered for many things, perhaps most notably the worldwide Coronavirus outbreak. The year also marks the 60th anniversary of Messiah congregation, Hales Corners, Wisconsin. Our history has its share of controversies which strained the fellowship and caused painful heartaches. But ultimately, as in all things, God was working for the good of His people, and through the difficulties our spiritual family was strengthened in its love for the Lord and in its determination to hold fast to the true Word. In addition, three major building projects—the latest in 2006—have played a prominent role in congregational life.

In contrast, recent years have been generally quiet. Yet that doesn't mean there is nothing new. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, *"Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."* (Lamentations 3:22-23) Every Sunday service, every school day, and every midweek Bible class is a time to receive a fresh supply of God's mercies in Christ Jesus to meet the challenges of life in a sinful, dying world. God's mercies, new and provided in abundant supply through Word and Sacrament, have been the inspiration needed to keep "pressing on" toward the heavenly prize, as St. Paul urges. Those mercies assure all of us as believers that our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

God's mercies equip us each day for being Jesus' witnesses. The Gospel message never changes, but the pandemic has



Top: exterior of the church from the northeast. Above: a soloist in the worship service.

altered how we carry out the Lord's commission. We now rely much more heavily on our online presence to reach both members and those outside our fellowship. Sunday services, Bible classes, council and voters' meetings, and to some extent school classes and activities, have been virtual rather than in person.

One of the biggest changes in the past "quiet" years has been a wonderful affirmation of the Lord's encouragement in Psalm 78: *"What we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the*



Top, some members of Messiah. Above, Sunday school and Bible class.

LORD, his power and the wonders he has done . . . which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commandments.” (Psalm 78:3-7 NIV84)

Most of the founders of Messiah Lutheran Church have been called home to the Lord. However, their love for the Savior has lived on in their children and others of that second generation, who also selflessly gave of their time and talents for the Lord’s work. Just as the Lord urges, these children in turn taught their children the wondrous truths of God’s love. They brought them to church and Sunday school. They sat down with them for home devotions.

They talked of God’s love and what it means for daily life.

We see the continuing fruits of that today. One of the largest demographics within the congregation is made up of those twenty-five to thirty-five years old. The new generation is willingly stepping up and filling positions on boards and church council, and taking the leadership in other areas of church life. Their enthusiasm and energy, tech savviness, openness to new ideas, and above all, their obvious desire to serve Christ, are amazing gifts to the whole congregation. They are now the ones bringing their little ones to the Lord for His blessing—and so the Lord’s kingdom grows!

Another “new” development in the not-too-distant future is the retirement at the end of this school year of our longtime school principal. Mr. Ted Quade was called by Messiah twenty-nine years ago to be the first teacher and principal of the new Christian day school. His love for the Lord and dedication to teaching, along with his firm guidance and his selfless concern for students and parents, will influence new generations for many years to come. The Lord’s mercies truly are new every morning. Great is His faithfulness!



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

A Kenyan Rite of Passage

The early morning light would not be seen for another few hours. The songs and dancing, clanging of pangas (blades), and the jingle of the bells began at midnight at home and would proceed into the early dawn. The steady thrum of distant voices chanting and singing grew ever closer. Torches and flashlights crested the hill illuminating a parade of people in strange clothing, and three boys with white mud painted all over them. For someone unaware and unfamiliar with what was happening at the time, I entertained the possibility that I was no longer welcome in this community and that they were finally coming to do away with the lone foreigner in their midst. My fears were quickly allayed as they proceeded slowly but resolutely past my home along Matunda/Konambaya junction and toward the river where the young candidates would take the plunge. The frigid waters shock the nerves into submission before the ceremony begins. It is the wisdom handed down from prior generations which informs them that it is best to stay in the water until numbness has set in. Also, the water serves as a symbolic washing away of youthful adolescence before entering into the next phase of life.

This is the ritual whereby boys of a certain clan in the western region of Kenya are initiated into manhood. The Bukusu clan has held on to this circumcision custom throughout their history. Even though the advent of great industrial and technological change and the introduction of Western customs and medicinal practices have changed much in rural western Kenya, this ancient rite of passage has remained. Before heading out on their nighttime trek to the river, the elder male members of the boys' families gather around and tell stories while collectively drinking bushara from one giant pot. I still don't know exactly what bushara is, but it has the intended effect of enlivening

their dance and causing them to sweat profusely. This will culminate in a trek to the river for the deed to be done.

Meanwhile, the professional circumciser has been sharpening his blade in preparation for the pivotal moment. What seems like an eternity of waiting for those boys is now over. With a flick of the wrist it is done, and the boys walk backwards into their home to begin the recovery process. Gifts of money and other material blessings are bestowed on them as a reward for their symbolic transition into adulthood and as a consolation for the pain which they endured. Their greatest consolation now is that they are adult members of the family. True men, according to tradition. Some dismiss this ritual as being out of touch with modern life, a relic that should be left in the past. Members of other clans or tribes view this as nothing less than barbarism.

Some ancient customs are worth remembering. God gave the rite of circumcision to His Old Testament people Israel out of His faithfulness to them. For them, it was much more than a rite of passage. It would serve as a physical declaration that He had separated His people from the rest of the world.

To His New Testament Church, God has given the sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is far more than just a rite of passage or a transition into another phase of life. It is certainly very symbolic, but it is no mere symbol. In Baptism we are given much more than just a ceremony and a remembrance of things past. God gives more than any material blessing He can bestow to relieve our pain. He washes away our sin. He gives us a place in His kingdom, the richest spiritual benefits, forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.



Michael Gurath is pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Arizona, and a visiting missionary to Africa.

Our God is the Only Constant

Perhaps you've heard the saying, "Change is the only constant." That would certainly be one way to characterize the fall semester at ILC. Faculty, staff, and students had to make many adjustments to make in-person classes happen during the coronavirus pandemic. For example, to meet local and statewide regulations, students had to spend their days in the classroom spaced at least six feet apart and wearing face coverings. Because of the spacing requirements, some classes even met in the library and the dining hall. Choir was able to take advantage of the beautiful fall weather and meet on the hill outside of the gym for the whole first quarter. Instead of the whole campus meeting together for chapel every morning, we had a select live audience, with the rest watching it in classrooms via video.

The COVID-19 precautions also affected extracurricular activities. Despite the challenges of physical distancing and mandatory masks indoors, we were able to have successful fall sports seasons. In fact, the cross-country team hosted its first meet in recent memory, and the volleyball team made its first-ever trip to the WIAA state tournament. Overcoming the challenge of acting and singing with masks, the students also successfully performed High School Musical, Jr. Finding creative ways to thrive, the tour choir continued its practices, our student literary/artistic journal hosted a poetry slam, and the band performed an outdoor concert.

As we attempted to navigate the various precautions and regulations, we had to change our plans constantly. It seems that just when we had something figured out, we needed to scrap what we thought was our perfect solution and go back to the drawing board. For example, just when we had made specific plans for face masks on campus, the governor issued a statewide order negating our careful planning. Just a few days before the start of school, the local government also made changes to some of their regulations.

While all these changes can be quite frustrating and can tend to raise the stress level, they prompt us to remember the

purpose of Immanuel—to provide an education centered on Christ, Who never changes. As we are assured in Scripture, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) The flaws and contingent nature of even our best-prepared plans serve as helpful reminders that God is in charge and that He provides perfect plans that carry out His will rather than our desires. Furthermore, students, faculty, and staff were able to cherish every day that they had together on campus because they also knew that the semester could end abruptly at any time. We were able to more fully understand and share the psalmist's

proclamation: "This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24) We also were provided great comfort and calm, knowing that no matter the state of the coronavirus or what the changing precautions and safety guidelines were, we could depend on our Heavenly Father to guide and protect us according to His will. Indeed, it was

amazing how He kept the campus healthy throughout the semester!

This constant reminder of how flawed and insignificant our own plans are also speaks to our lives as pilgrims here on earth. We may think we have all the answers and all the right plans for our lives, but the Lord in His graciousness reminds us that we are not in charge. What a relief! It is with the confidence of faith in our unchanging God and His grace that we can face the uncertainties and troubles of this world. We continue to work together at Immanuel to grow and strengthen this faith through the study of His Word. Indeed, we recognize that in a world of constant change, no better foundation for education can be found than the unchanging, infallible Word of God. We also are thankful

that our school's namesake, Immanuel, will never change: "God is with us," and will be forever.

Daniel Schierenbeck is President of Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



Immanuel Lutheran High School 2020 girls volleyball team.



“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JANUARY 2021

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Jan 1	TLH 114 (LSB 900)	John 1:1-5	Jesus is described as both life and light. Think about how these descriptions are so fitting.
Jan 3	TLH 76 (LSB 383)	John 1:6-13	Jesus enlightens us and makes us His own. We do not enlighten ourselves. Left to ourselves, we would reject Him.
Jan 4	TLH 85 (LSB 358)	John 1:14	In one verse we have the most profound mystery—Jesus is both human and divine in the same person. On top of that, grace and truth come from Him!
Jan 5	TLH 86 (LSB 381)	Matthew 1:1-25	We end the twelve days of Christmas with a recital of Jesus’ ancestry and a review of the birth of Him who is called “God with us.”
Jan 6	TLH 128 (LSB 400)	Matthew 2:1-12	In this, the traditional Gospel lesson for Epiphany Day, we learn that Jesus is for everyone. We too can go to Him and worship.
Jan 7	TLH 129 (LSB 409)	Jonah 1:1-17	Jonah wasn’t getting into the Epiphany spirit when he decided he didn’t want to preach to Ninevah. He would have to learn that God wants all to be saved.
Jan 8	TLH 510	Jonah 2:1-10	Jonah repented of his sin and trusted the Lord to “bring him out of the pit.” Then he acknowledged that “salvation is from the LORD.” Now he had caught on to Epiphany!
Jan 10	TLH 503	Jonah 3:1-10	Ninevah was saved by trusting the Lord’s mercy. Trusting the the Lord’s mercy is never a bad idea, is it?
Jan 11	TLH 126 (LSB 396)	Jonah 4:1-11	Jonah loses sight of that great Epiphany theme again! He wants people saved— just maybe not Ninevah.
Jan 12	TLH 116; LSB 407	Luke 3:15-18, 21-22	John preached that Jesus was the Son of God. At Jesus’ baptism, the Father and the Spirit made that plain too.
Jan 13	TLH 68 (LSB 331)	Luke 4:14-21	Jesus revealed that He was the one who had been foretold by the prophets. He was the Son of God, chosen to bring forgiveness and peace to those burdened by sin.
Jan 14	TLH 509	Luke 5:1-11	If Jesus could give His disciples such success fishing for fish, He can certainly bless our fishing for people! He can and He does.
Jan 15	TLH 535 (LSB 737)	2 Kings 7:3-20	Who can doubt the Lord! Some couldn’t believe that the enemy Arameans would just up and walk away, but those who had trusted the Lord’s Word could believe it.
Jan 17	TLH 532	2 Kings 8:1-6	With God there are no coincidences. The woman who left when the Lord’s Word indicated famine returned home and went to the king just as he “happened” to be learning about her.
Jan 18	TLH 414 (LSB 705)	2 Kings 8:7-15	God revealed to Elisha things that would come to pass—both good and bad. Elisha wept at the bad—as do we who know that dark days are ahead for the wicked.
Jan 19	TLH 134 (LSB 394)	Luke 5:12-16	Jesus was very busy and was willing to heal the crowds of sick, but since He came first to give spiritual help, He needed to recharge His spiritual batteries sometimes, too (v. 16).
Jan 20	TLH 372 (LSB 746)	Luke 5:17-26	Jesus has power to heal us and that’s great; but even better, He has shown us that He has the authority to forgive us, our sins!
Jan 21	TLH 387 (LSB 556)	Luke 5:27-39	The “new” Gospel of free forgiveness apart from works required a new way of thinking. You couldn’t fit the old way of the Pharisees into Jesus’ new system.
Jan 22	TLH 612	2 Kings 9:1-13	King Ahab’s unbelief and wickedness called for judgment. The Lord prepared to end Ahab’s family line as He had declared (see 1 Kings 21:21-22).
Jan 24	TLH 601	2 Kings 9:29-37	<i>“Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.”</i> (Psalms 1:5-6 NASB)
Jan 25	TLH 538	Micah 1:1-9	Micah prophesied that both Israel and Judah would suffer for their idolatry. What alone can heal such sin? The blood of Jesus Christ our Lord—the blood that covers our own idolatry.
Jan 26	TLH 541 (LSB 876)	Micah 2:7-13	The Lord gave time for repentance, but the people would not, so they would face destruction. Help was on the way for Judah, though. One day the “king” would pass on before them, Jesus Christ.
Jan 27	WS 791; LSB 408	John 2:1-12	We’re still in the Epiphany season and in this classic Epiphany text Jesus “revealed His glory.” He is the glorious Son of God, and for that reason you can trust Him as the disciples did!
Jan 28	TLH 133 (LSB 410)	John 2:13-25	Nothing mattered more to Jesus than His Father’s house and His Father’s business. At the heart of His Father’s business was the Son’s death and resurrection.
Jan 29	WS 753	John 3:1-15	The Son of Man will be lifted up (on the cross) for all people, but to receive the benefits of that death one needs to be “born again,” that is, brought to faith in Christ.
Jan 31	TLH 285	Micah 3:5-12	The false prophets in Judah said only what they were paid to say and they misled the people with false hope. How important it is for us always to stand on the true Words of God!

IN THE PIPELINE

Want to meet the person who may be your next pastor or Christian day school teacher? This series profiles the men and women who are in their final year of preparation for the public teaching or preaching ministry at Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Drew Naumann

Age: 25

Program: Seminary

Year in School: Senior

Where were you born?

Valentine, Nebraska

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Tacoma, Washington, about forty-five minutes south of Seattle.

Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family.

I'm not married. I have one brother and three sisters who all live in Eau Claire and lots of extended family. I try to get to Milwaukee to visit my cousin and out to Washington to visit my Grandma whenever I can.

What hobbies, sports or extracurriculars interest you?

I like golfing, but I'm not very good at it. I also like road trips, hiking, and board games.

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

I've flown an airplane. My eighth-grade math teacher taught me how to fly his Cessna 172. No one died, so I think that makes me a pretty good pilot.

Which academic subjects especially interest you?

I enjoy literature, sermon-writing, and language studies.

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

My dad was pastor in Tacoma when I was growing up, so it was always in the back of my mind. By my senior year of high school, I'd determined not to be a pastor, and I took a



year off from school after graduation. Nothing really jumped out at me as a particularly interesting career path during that year. So, when people started talking about the "called worker shortage," I figured maybe that was a place that the Lord could use me. Suffice it to say, I'm much more excited about the public ministry now than when I first started studying for it!

What have you appreciated most about your time at ILC?

This might seem an inadequate answer, but I think it is easier to say that there isn't really anything that I haven't appreciated about my time at Immanuel, at least in retrospect. There were a lot of things that I didn't appreciate at the time during my eleven years on this campus, but I think time gives a lot of perspective. If I had to pick one thing, I look back very fondly on worshiping at chapel with my friends in high school. I never really considered how rare and special it is to be able to worship with every one of your friends every day. I don't anticipate getting to do that again in this life.

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

Steadfastness and humility. It's tough to balance the two. We should be confident in the doctrines that we have from the inspired Scriptures. But I think that it can be easy to let confidence get perverted into pride, and pride has no place in evangelism. At the same time, there isn't any room for compromise when every word of God has been given by inspiration. We are right insofar as we agree with Scripture. It's not to our credit when we are right, but it is definitely our fault when we are wrong. Paul summed it up in 1 Corinthians 9:16-19: *"For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more."*

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Museum Taken in by Fake Dead Sea Scroll Fragments.

In March, the prestigious Museum of the Bible in Washington D.C. announced that sixteen purported fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls that had been purchased by the museum had been found to be forgeries. When internal evidence led scholars to question the fragments' authenticity, the museum hired the firm Art Fraud Insights to examine the fragments. The investigation revealed that most of the fragments were distressed leather, rather than the parchment typical of the Dead Sea Scrolls. To the naked eye the materials look very similar. Under a microscope, the difference was obvious. More evidence of forgery mounted. "We saw things like ink waterfalling off the edges, ink going into cracks, ink going over thick surface deposits," said Investigator Colette Loll. That would mean that when the text was written "this material was already decomposing." The report concluded, "After an exhaustive review of all the imaging and scientific analysis results, it is the unanimous conclusion of the advisory team that none of the textual fragments in the Museum of the Bible's Dead Sea Scroll collection are authentic. Moreover, each exhibits characteristics that suggest they are deliberate forgeries created in the 20th century with the intent to mimic authentic Dead Sea Scroll fragments." Scholars now speculate that many or all of the 70-odd Dead Sea texts that have been offered for sale in recent years may likewise be forgeries. Govier, Gordon. "Fake Dead Sea Scrolls Displayed at Museum of the Bible." *News and Reporting*. Christianity-Today.com, 26 Mar. 2020. Web. 3 Dec. 2020.



Principle Ted Quade of Messiah Lutheran School of Hales Corners, Wisconsin, retiring from the teaching ministry after twenty-nine years of service. See article, pp. 10-11.



Pastors Thomas Schuetze, Chad Seybt and Timothy Wheaton at the Joint Reformation service at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Cheyenne, Wyoming, November 1, 2020.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Installation: In accord with our usage and order, Richard Kanzenbach, who was called by St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Lemmon, South Dakota, to be its pastor, was installed on October 4, 2020. Pastor Timothy Daub participated in the installation.

—Pastor Michael Roehl

Installation: In accord with our usage and order, Pastor Chad Seybt, who was called by Peace with God Lutheran Church of Onalaska, Wisconsin, and Morning Star Lutheran Church of Fairchild, and Trinity Lutheran Church of Millston, to be their pastor, was installed in three separate services on December 5-6, 2020.

—Vacancy Pastor John Schierenbeck

Nominations for ILC Professor: The Board of Regents announces the following nominations to fill the professorship vacated by the impending retirement of Professor John Reim at the end of the 2020-21 academic year: Pastors Paul Krause, Neal Radichel, Rob Sauers, and David Schaller. All comments from members of CLC congregations regarding these candidates are to be received by email or letter no later than midnight December 29, 2020 (letters postmarked December 24, 2020) to: Mr. James Burkhardt; 217 Windy Lane; Rockwall, TX 75087; email: jeb6217@yahoo.com.

—Pastor John Hein, Chairman, CLC Board of Regents

