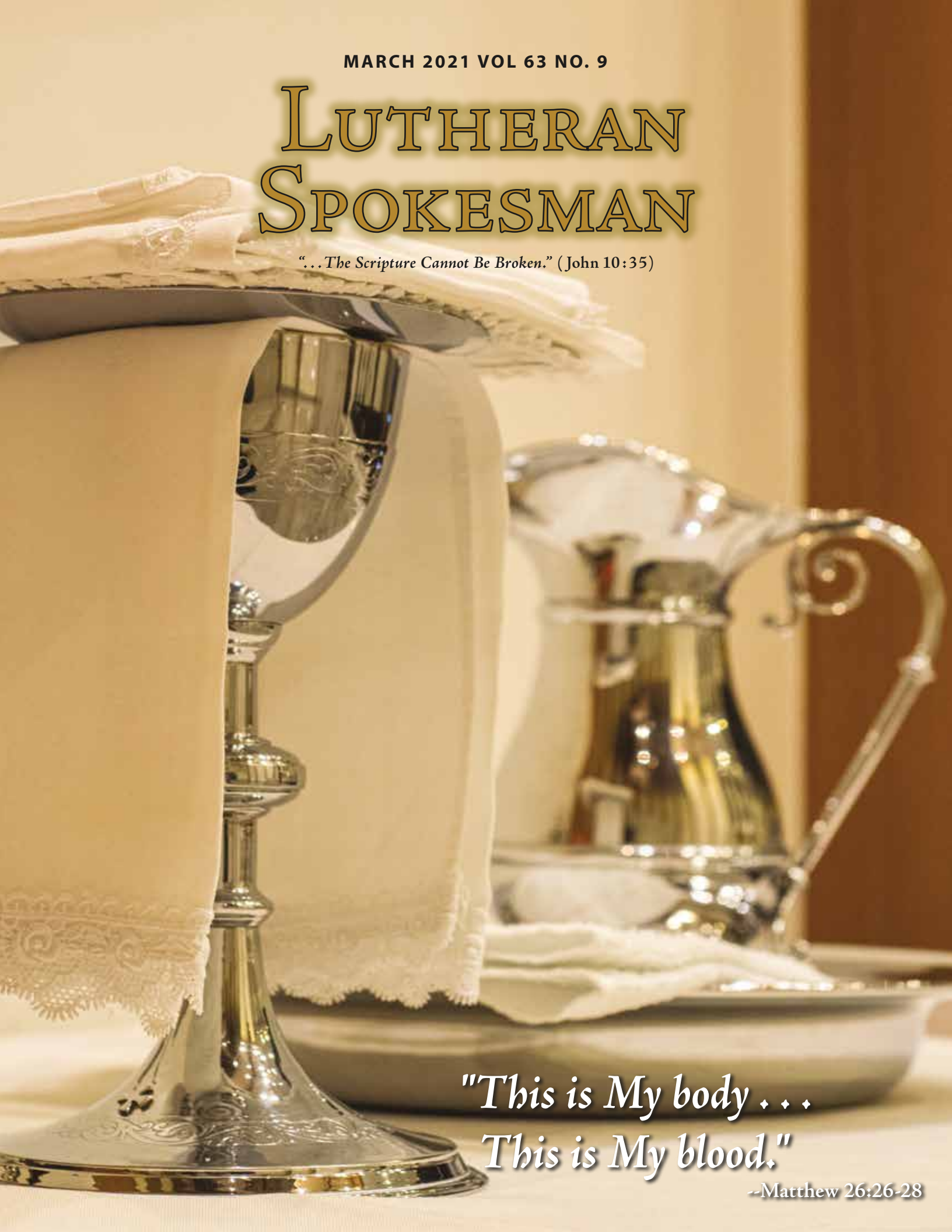


MARCH 2021 VOL 63 NO. 9

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



*"This is My body . . .
This is My blood."*

-Matthew 26:26-28



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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 Sauer, David Schierenbeck, Thomas Schuetze, Chad Seybt, Mark Weis.

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The Great Maundy Thursday Disinformation Campaign

The devil had a dilemma. In the Lord's Supper, God had just bequeathed to mankind a gift that held the potential to cripple the devil's plans for mankind's eternal destruction. Perhaps man didn't yet realize the power of the gift, but Satan did, and he immediately set to work. What he needed was an ongoing disinformation campaign—obviously—since the truth would continually remind God's children of the Gospel itself, and against that Gospel Satan knew he was powerless. So Satan initiated a disinformation "campaign of opposites."

The first phase of his campaign was to promote the idea that what Jesus had instituted in the upper room on Maundy Thursday was not a gift but a requirement—not something God would do for man, but something man must do for God—Law, not Gospel. Anything but Gospel. And it worked, as even those who called themselves Christians came to regard this "Lord's Supper" as something that they would offer to God as, at minimum, a partial payment for their sins, something they must do to pay down on their sin debt.

The plan worked well until God raised up men like Martin Luther and Martin Chemnitz, through whom He restored the truth of the Gospel itself: Jesus has already paid, in full, for the sum total of all mankind's sins. A sinner is not saved by doing, but through faith in the fact that Jesus has already done all that is required.

The devil had to adapt. He didn't abandon the original part of his plan, since it was still wildly effective in many circles. Instead, he added a second phase or parallel attack—a new "opposites plan" designed to replace God's intended peace and comfort with terror and uncertainty. This new plan was designed for those who already knew that Jesus alone could provide any sin payment, and his remedy was diabolically clever: convince mankind that their forgiveness is not continuously full and complete when saving faith is present. It is, rather, parceled out only occasionally—in installments—and only when man does what he must do to activate the installment. The plan was to create the false impression that sin accumulates in a Christian's life, like garbage in a trashcan, to be removed only periodically. This

was spiritual terrorism, as those who looked to Jesus alone for forgiveness came to imagine that they walked about through life with an accumulating debt of sin, a debt that was paid only periodically, which then began to accumulate again almost immediately. Comfort and peace were replaced by terror and doubt, as salvation became a most doubtful proposition. Would my time of grace end with unforgiven sins still on my account, or would I be fortunate enough to die right after the garbage of my sins had been picked up and carried off? If forgiveness is only occasional, the odds are grim, at best.

The natural result of Satan's second disinformation campaign was both tragic and predictable. Terrified sinners again turned inward for the solution. I must do something. I must continually ask God for forgiveness. I must go to communion. I must struggle to overcome all temptation. I must leave this earth with words of repentance on my lips. Only then will full forgiveness be mine.

Yet what exactly was it that Jesus actually bequeathed to His children on Maundy Thursday? He did not leave us in doubt: "*This do in remembrance of me.*" "Remembering Jesus" means remembering that He paid mankind's sin debt, once and for all, on Calvary's cross. It means remembering that forgiveness and eternal life are our personal possession every moment that saving faith resides in our hearts. Faith is credited as righteousness. We are not washed clean occasionally; we exist every moment as God's pure and holy saints, by grace, through faith. 1 Corinthians 6:11 assures us not that we are being washed, but that we have been washed, sanctified, justified. As a special reminder of the uninterrupted forgiveness that is always ours, He gives us His true body and blood in the sacrament—the very body and blood that earned that forgiveness two thousand years ago, once and for all.



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

Union in Communion

A “Why is this night different from all others?” If you had grown up in a Jewish household, you would probably know the significance of this question. Each year, at each Passover, one of the children at the table would have asked this question of the head of the Passover meal.

On the night of His betrayal (Maundy Thursday), as the Lord Jesus celebrated the last Passover with His disciples, that question would take on a new and more important meaning. Sitting at the table with the disciples that night was the Passover Lamb of God. Soon His blood would be shed as He was punished for the sins of the world. Because of His shed blood, God passes over our sins and spares us from the eternal plague of hell that we deserved.

As the Passover meal that night progressed, Jesus instituted a new meal. This new meal, Jesus ordered, was to be done in remembrance of HIM. While this meal would also have reminders in it, so much more is given than just the historical symbols of the Passover meal. In Holy Communion our Lord gives us HIMSELF.

Paul writes, “*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*” (1 Corinthians 10:16) The Greek word for “communion” means a “sharing” or “partnership.” In Holy Communion, the blood of Christ and the body of Christ come into one with the wine and the bread.

During the Passover meal, the bread that Jesus broke would have been large loaves of flat, unleavened bread. Matthew writes, “*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’*” (Matthew 26:26) In Holy Communion, Christ’s body is communing with the bread.

During the Passover meal there were typically three or four different cups of watered-down wine that were shared over the course of the meal. The cup that was passed around at the end of the Passover meal was the “cup of blessing.”

It is that last cup that Jesus took after supper. Matthew writes, “*Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.’*” (Matthew 26:27-28) In Communion, Christ’s blood communes with the contents of the cup—the wine.

What an amazing gift this is to the communicant! This is the Gospel coming to you personally, one-on-one. Christ Himself comes to each communicant personally saying, “*This is My body, given for YOU. . . . This is My blood, shed for YOU. . . . Take and eat . . . take and drink.*” At that moment it is just you and your Savior as He communes with you personally giving you His very self. What an amazing blessing and comfort as Jesus gives you personally the very body and blood which He gave on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins!

But there is more “communing” going on in Holy Communion. “*For we being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.*” (1 Corinthians 10:17) When you commune in Holy Communion, there is also a union taking place with your fellow communicants. You are saying that Christ has made “the many” of us one with one another. As one, we all believe that we are sinners in need of the Shepherd’s forgiveness. As one, we all say we are members of Christ’s flock. As one, we want to be fed by the Good Shepherd Himself for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith.

Why is this night different from all others? If you didn’t know before, you know now. On the night before the Lord died for you, He instituted a meal where He Himself feeds you with Himself, and we express our oneness with each other. Thanks be to our Savior for His gift of grace and fellowship in Holy Communion!

At that moment it is just you and your Savior as He communes with you personally giving you His very self.



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

TLH HYMN 305 (LSB 636)

“Soul, Adorn Thyself with Gladness”

As we come to receive the Lord’s Supper, what is it that is on our minds? Is it the meaning of the sacrament and the great blessing from God that it is to us? Is it the cares and troubles of life in this world?

It is probably both. We come to the Lord’s Supper because we believe in Jesus Christ and treasure this sacrament that He instituted for our blessing. We make an effort to put away sinful thoughts and troubling thoughts as we come to the altar to partake of it. But we are also sinners who live in a sinful world and are not always successful at putting away unworthy thoughts when we come to Communion.

This great Communion hymn by Johann Franck (1618-1677) draws us away from the troubles of this world and opens our eyes to the blessings that Christ gives us in the sacrament. He invites us, **“Leave behind all gloom and sadness / Come into the daylight’s splendor / There with joy thy praises render / Unto Him whose grace unbounded / Hath this wondrous supper founded.”**

And then in stanza after stanza the hymn writer gives us reasons for putting aside sorrows and troubles and adorning ourselves with gladness as we come to Communion:

We come as members of the Holy Christian Church, which is the bride of Christ. **“Hasten as a bride to meet Him / And with loving reverence greet Him; / For with words of life immortal / Now He knocketh at thy portal.”**

When we come to Communion we receive something of great value. With the bread and wine Christ gives us His true body and blood that He gave and shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins. **“Though the wealth of earth were proffered, / Naught would buy the gifts here offered / Christ’s true body for thee riven, / And His blood, for thee once given.”**

The blessings of Holy Communion are undeserved gifts from Jesus, our dearest friend. **“Ah, how hungers all my spirit / For the love I do not merit! . . . For the Friend who**

here invites us / And to God Himself unites us.”

In Holy Communion, Christ invites us to share in a mystery of divine grace. **“Human reason, though it ponder, / Cannot fathom this great wonder / That Christ’s body e’er remaineth / Though it countless souls sustaineth. / And that He His blood is giving / With the wine we are receiving.”**

The Lord’s Supper is evidence of the love of God in Christ. **“Lord, by love and mercy driven / Thou hast left Thy throne in heaven / On the cross for me to languish / And to die in bitter anguish, To forego all joy and gladness / And to shed Thy blood in sadness. / By this blood redeemed and living, / Lord, I praise Thee with thanksgiving.”**

Holy Communion is a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb, where all who believe in Jesus Christ will enjoy perfect fellowship with Him forever (Revelation 19:7-9). **“From this Supper let me measure, / Lord, how vast and deep love’s treasure. / Through the gifts Thou here dost give me / As Thy guest in heaven receive me.”**

Unlike many other Lutheran hymn writers, Johann Franck was not a pastor. His education was in law rather than theology. He was a devout layman who worked as a lawyer and served as a public official.

Franck lived through the Thirty Years War, a time of severe hardship and suffering. A hymn like this, written during such times, teaches us how God turns even trying times into a blessing for His children. It is when the comforts and seeming security of this world are taken from us that we most treasure the true comfort and security of the Gospel in Holy Communion.



John Klatt is a retired pastor. He lives in Watertown, South Dakota.

Relief in Troubled Times — Worship the Lord!

King David did not have a carefree life. He often wrote of sorrow, tears, and loneliness in his psalms. Those same psalms, nevertheless, reveal deep faith. Whatever the circumstances of his troubled times, however intense and prolonged, David trusted God.

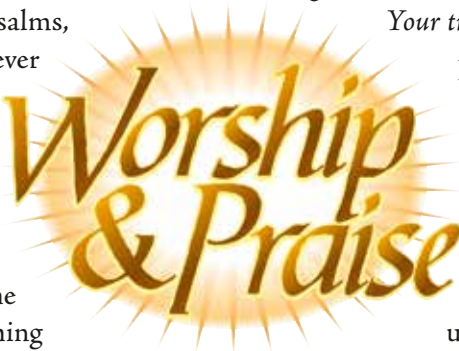
David praised and thanked God in troubled times as well as on occasions of celebration. Giving thanks may be the last thing we feel like doing when something unpleasant comes our way. Focusing on how miserable we are, however, has never provided us with answers or solace, and it never will.

King David knew that the first and best response to troubled times was to worship God—particularly with giving thanks. When things are going well, we thank the Lord! When facing troubled times, we thank the Lord! David understood the value of this from what he had learned from God’s Word and his own experiences. Thankfulness begins to form when God’s people press the “pause button” and take time to remember that God’s mercy is always in force, His grace covers all, and for His children He will work all things together for their genuine good. All means all, including their poor choices.

“I will give You thanks with all my heart . . .” (NASB, here and throughout) David began Psalm 138 by giving thanks to God. Worship was not one of many compartments in his life, worship *was* David’s life. Everything else had its place in the context of his life of worshipping God.

“I will sing praises to You before the gods.” (verse 1) David was thinking of the idols in the pagan nations surrounding his nation, and he boldly praised God even though many around him would disapprove. False gods are still around today—things like fame, money, and power. Hostility is increasing toward those who claim allegiance to Christ. For such a time as this, we pray for the Holy Spirit to fine-tune our memories of what God in His Word has said to us and of what God has done for us. Then we can praise the Lord with lives that give thanks to Him.

In the second verse David wrote, “I will bow down . . . and give thanks to Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth.”



Here, the basic meaning of *lovingkindness* is mercy—God’s willingness to spare us from what we deserve for sinning against Him. God hears the deepest cry of our hearts when the truth of our waywardness weighs down on us. He responds by reminding us that the ultimate truth for us, for our entire life, is His mercy.

We may be troubled when things don’t go the way we planned. But God knows what He’s doing to refine and strengthen our faith. We can grow in our appreciation for His wisdom and love by remembering that He designs all these experiences with our ultimate victory in mind. Thorns exist in the world because of sin, but God can and does use thorns in ways that bless us.

“The LORD will accomplish what concerns me; Your lovingkindness, LORD, is everlasting.” (verse 8)

David wrote like this even when tears were in his eyes. Indeed, his bed was often soaked with tears. He made it through those nights trusting that the Lord would see him through it all.

“Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.” (verse 7)

Psalm 138 is the prescription God gives us when facing troubled times –

1. Remember how good, loving, and capable God is; and
2. Worship Him with thanksgiving for all that He has done, is doing, and will do to deliver you.



Delwyn Maas is pastor of Gift of God Lutheran Church in Mapleton, North Dakota.

Forked Tongue Issues

“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.” (James 3:9-12 NIV84)

As a wide-eyed ten-year-old with his first television exposure, I found the Saturday morning westerns captivating. Along with the white-hatted cowboys inevitably saving the day, another memory was the occasional reference to someone speaking with a “forked tongue”—deceptively divisive, saying one thing and doing another, promising but not delivering.

Earlier in the book of James (3:1-8) our inspired Christian life-counselor James dealt with the power and destructiveness of this tiny organ, the human tongue. Like a horse's bit or a forest fire's small beginnings, the untamed havoc wreaked in our evil world by the tongue is evident to us all.

The real problem, however, is not with the physical organ, but rather with the sinful heart of fallen man (Matthew 15:19). Cutting out the tongue for slandering or lying, as was practiced in some early civilizations, does not remove the real problem.

And sadly, that problem is also our problem. James is addressing redeemed Christians, believers engaged daily in a lifelong struggle with their own flesh (Romans 7:18-20). Out of hearts awash in the regenerative and renewing fresh-water springs of the Gospel come forth both pure and salt (bitter) water. On the otherwise productive branches of living Gospel trees (John 15:5) can sometimes be found foreign and unwanted fruit.

The same Sunday tongue that joyously sings “O that I had a thousand voices to praise my God with thousand tongues”

can in daily life curse, slander, or verbally or digitally harm his fellow man. The same tongue that often speaks kindly and lovingly to others can at other times erupt in outbursts of anger or hatred. The same tongue that boldly confesses his Savior and faith when among brethren is sometimes loudly silent when it should be speaking or sharing or defending the faith among others. “My brothers, this should not be!” Let each of us take brother James's words to heart personally. Look in the mirror (James 1:23). Examine, take to heart, honestly confess our own consistently inconsistent

**Honestly confess
our own consistently
inconsistent Christian
hearts and lives
and tongues. Seek
and find forgiveness
at the cross.**

Christian hearts and lives and tongues. Seek and find forgiveness at the cross. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord” with full faith-confidence in His promise that “He will lift you up.” (James 4:10) Thank God daily that “mercy triumphs over judgment.” (James 2:13)

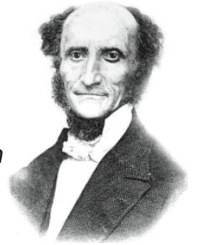
What is James' wonderful solution for our divided minds, forked tongues and inconsistent Christian lives? Let that living, powerful, true and “unforked” tongue—the Word of God—knife through our fleshly, self-righteous facade, piercing to the depths of our soul, exposing all. And let that same Gospel of forgiveness and life in Christ heal our hearts as our souls are daily spoonfed with the faith-nourishing and strengthening Bread and Water of Life. In that faith and hope we echo the hymn writer's striking contrast between our inconsistent earthly tongues and our eternally unforked, God-glorifying tongues:

*“When this poor lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song
I'll sing Thy power to save.” (TLH 157:5)*



David Schierenbeck is a retired pastor and a member of the CLC Board of Doctrine. He lives in St. Paul Park, Minnesota.

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 Most Difficult Christian Art

“Thesis III—Rightly distinguishing the Law and the Gospel is the most difficult and highest art of Christians in general and of theologians in particular. It is taught only by the Holy Spirit in the school of experience.”

In introducing this thesis, Walther warns his audience (primarily seminary students) of conceit, thinking they know more than they do—perhaps akin to teenagers believing they know more than their parents. Upon first impression, we too may consider this thesis overstated. Is distinguishing Law and Gospel really that difficult? After all, weren't these basic concepts mastered in catechism class? Walther rightly makes clear, however, that the more one knows, the more one grasps the vastness of one's ignorance. It is not the defining of "Law" and "Gospel" that poses a challenge, but the application and use of these doctrines. Walther argues that only the Holy Spirit can teach these things, using the school of experience.

Walther cites two biblical examples—David and Peter—who, although both thoroughly familiar with the Law and the Gospel, yet had difficulty applying this knowledge to themselves after committing the grievous sins of adultery, murder, and betrayal. It is only after the work of the Holy Spirit that they could express a confidence in their forgiveness in Christ. Likewise, Martin Luther was plagued over the guilt of his sins and received comfort only after the Holy Spirit worked through the Gospel message. Luther writes, "O yes, we can readily make the distinction in words and preach about it [the Law and Gospel], but to put it to use and reduce it to practice, that is a high art and not easily attained."

Satan strives to confuse believers by mingling Law and Gospel, especially as the hour of death draws near. He wants the dying to doubt their worthiness to enter heaven. He wants them to focus on the Law and its condemnation. Luther wrote, "In your tribulations you will become aware that the Gospel is a rare guest in men's consciences, while the Law is their daily and familiar companion." Luther acknowledged himself to be nothing but a feeble novice

in applying Law and Gospel, and that without the Holy Spirit's intervention his efforts would be fruitless.

Walther warns his students (and us) that those possessing the greatest knowledge are more easily tempted to self-reliance in applying these doctrines. He targets Chrysostom and Osiander, two well-known theologians, whose arrogance led them to destructive false teachings that confused Law and Gospel. Conversely, those preachers who humbly dwell in the Holy Spirit's classroom, even if not as intellectually gifted, frequently become the best preachers. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Timothy 2:15) Rightly dividing the word of truth means giving people God's Word at the right time, in the right amount, using the right words. How can people possibly do that, either in the pulpit or in their personal ministries?

An experienced preacher will get to know his members and will share the Law and Gospel in a way that provokes them to say "I am convicted" and "I am forgiven" with every sermon. Walther credits Luther with mastering this. "Luther's sermons are full of thunder and lightning, but these are speedily followed by the soft blowing of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel." Walther also cautions his students to study carefully and prepare in such a way that every word from the pulpit is clear and not misleading. Pastors should explain difficult statements and flesh out the doctrines they present. In private counseling, these challenges may be even greater. Unlike God, humans cannot see into the heart and must rely on outward confessions and actions. Some are addicted to vices; others are self-righteous. They come with different personalities and dispositions, but are all in need of the appropriate Word and the Holy Spirit to bring success. Walther concludes Thesis III with this thought, "Not man, but God, makes theologians."



Joe Lau is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

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.

Nestorianism

Nestorius was born in the province of Syria around 381. He was educated in Antioch and became both a priest and a monk in the nearby monastery. There he gained his reputation as a skillful preacher and a learned and devoted theologian, zealous for orthodoxy and not afraid to enter into the controversies of his time. These skills caught the eye of the eastern Roman emperor, Theodosius II, who raised him to the position of patriarch of Constantinople. He had his detractors, as well—some described him as “hasty and imprudent,” and “naively self-conceited, storming and short-sighted.”

He held his high position for only a short time, for he soon found himself embroiled in disputes. A priest had questioned whether it was proper to speak of Mary as the Mother of God. This had already become a common title for her, but some thought this went too far and insisted that “Mother of Christ” was more accurate. Nestorius sided with these people. A general council was convened at Ephesus in 431 to decide this matter.

Mary could not be the Mother of God, said Nestorius, because only the human part of Jesus came from Mary and this did not share in the divine attributes. He spoke as though the divine person and the human person in Christ were so separate within Him that He was in effect two persons in one body! The council was opened somewhat prematurely, not waiting on the supporters of Nestorius, who were late to arrive. His opponents, headed by Cyril of Alexandria, rushed to judgment against Nestorius, and condemned him for heresy before the delegates from Antioch arrived.

Thus, after only three and a half years as Patriarch of Constantinople, he was deposed and retired to his old monastery. Later he was exiled to a remote monastery in upper Egypt and there lived out his life, insisting to the end that he was misunderstood and wrongly condemned.

Luther agreed that Nestorius was not guilty of the specific charges against him, but asserted that he was nevertheless guilty of heresy. He confessed that for a long time he also did not understand Nestorius’ real error. It was not that he made two persons of Christ, but that he did not admit that there was a sharing of divine properties with the human nature. Luther explained it this way: “If I said that Jesus is

taking some bread and water to His mother to have lunch with her and that this Jesus is God, Nestorius would agree. But if I said there goes God down the street with bread and water, he would not agree.”

Then he adds the important application: “If I say, ‘The carpenter Jesus was crucified by the Jews and the same Jesus is the true God,’ Nestorius would agree. But if I say, ‘God was crucified by the Jews’ he says, ‘No!’” Luther then added passages to prove this point: Gabriel announces that Mary would bear “*the Son of the Most High*” (Luke 1:32). Elizabeth calls Mary, “*the mother of my Lord*” (Luke 1:43), and “*God sent forth His Son, born of a woman*” (Galatians 4:4).

Followers of Nestorius fled from the Roman Empire to the east and survived as a church for centuries in Persia, India and even China. They called themselves the Assyrian Church and have never admitted that Nestorius was rightly condemned.

But the errors that Luther identified still echo through the ages. Perhaps the plainest example is the refusal by many to agree that the body and blood of Christ is truly present in the Lord’s Supper, since (they say) Christ is present in heaven and thus cannot be present on earth.

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



WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the Church of the Lutheran Confession

Mount Zion Lutheran Church Madison Heights, Michigan

*“Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever.”
(Psalm 125:1 ESV)*

The Bible mentions only a few things which will never come to an end. God's Word itself will stand forever even though grass withers and flowers fade (Isaiah 40:8). Love will never end even though prophecies, tongues, and knowledge will pass away (1 Corinthians 13:8). And the inspired psalmist instructs us that the Church (that is, Mount Zion) cannot be moved, but abides forever. Jesus went so far as to say, *“The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* (Matthew 16:18 ESV)

More than ever, the events of the last twelve months have required the members of Mount Zion to live up to our congregation's namesake by placing all trust in Him Who promises to forever preserve His Church. Between the COVID-19 pandemic, months of civil unrest, and the hotly contested presidential election, there seems to be much for a person to worry about these days. But not the members of Mount Zion Lutheran Church, and not those who belong to the Holy Christian Church—that eternal Mount Zion—either. For we trust in the Lord Who has redeemed us with the blood of His Son, justified us by faith through the Holy Spirit, and has promised to work all things for our good. What's left to worry about?

With these things in mind, it's easy to find the good hidden in the last twelve months, especially at our small congregation in Madison Heights, Michigan (a north-central suburb of Detroit). When in-person worship and



Top: Church members stain and seal the wheel chair ramp and planters during a fall workday.

Above: A socially distanced backyard Baptism service for two young adults who were also confirmed as church members a few months later.

Right: Backyard Baptism (Anna Titus, Pastor Naumann, Mike Boyce).



Bible class were suspended, the Lord provided the ability to live stream Sunday services and hold online Wednesday Bible class. When Vacation Bible School was called off, the Lord provided Mount Zion's Outreach Committee the opportunity and skill to produce a virtual VBS video series with help from congregational volunteers (view the series at mtzionlutheran.info/virtual-vbs). When the



Above: Socially distanced Christmas Eve worshippers briefly remove their face coverings for a group photo.

Inset: QR Code to Virtual Christmas Eve Mini-Program.

Left: Outdoor service and church picnic held in a pavilion at a nearby park.



to the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord, Mount Zion congregation has much to be thankful for. With long-term plans to end mission status, relocate to a new church building, and possibly even open a Christian day school one day, Mount Zion congregation also has much to pray for.

Yes, it is certainly true: *“Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved.”* The family of believers at Mount Zion congregation is firm proof of this gracious truth. No virus can move us from the Rock of our salvation, Jesus Christ our Savior. No worldly unrest can move us from the sure promise of eternal life. No earthly rule or government can move us from the steadfast love and mercy of God. Trust in the Lord, for Mount Zion abides forever.



Thomas Naumann is pastor of Mount Zion Lutheran Church of Madison Heights, Michigan.

annual evangelism workshop was in danger of cancelation, the Lord provided an alternate arrangement in the form of an online webinar so that His people might still be encouraged in their personal outreach. When an in-person children’s Christmas Eve program failed to materialize, the Lord again provided a virtual proclamation, this time it was a video “mini-program” hosted by Mount Zion congregation with footage included from CLC children around the country (view at youtu.be/X362Am_xEv4). When baptisms, adult instruction classes, and potlucks became impossible indoors, the Lord provided backyards, parks, and pavilions so that His sacraments might still be administered, His Word might still be learned, and His people might still enjoy the blessings of Christian fellowship.

Goats for God



Up until the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70, two goats were offered on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur): one as a sin offering to God and one as the “scapegoat” to carry the people’s iniquities away into the wilderness (see Leviticus 16). These two goats together pictured how the sacrificial death of Jesus has paid for and taken away our sins. While we no longer offer sacrifices of goats since Christ, the perfect, one-for-all Sacrifice has come, goats can still be useful for the kingdom of God.

The Mission Evangelique Luthérienne de Confession du Togo (MELCT) here in Togo, West Africa, has purchased twenty acres about fifty miles north of the capital of Lomé (where I live). The goal is to build a seminary and church on this land (the Mt. Horeb Lutheran Bible Institute currently meets at the main church in Lomé), and to use the land to raise crops and animals to generate income and become a self-supporting church body. The funds from crops and animals will be used to plant new churches, harvest souls for God’s kingdom, and to provide for the support of current pastors and the training of new pastors. The churches here, as is often the case in the churches outside the US, are not able to provide their pastor enough support to live on, so the hope is that this land can provide funds to make up the

difference and allow the pastors here to focus full-time on their work of planting God’s Word and harvesting in God’s kingdom.

Pastor Kossi Blewu, the head pastor in Togo, says it is not good to be constantly looking to the CLC-USA to provide funds, and to always be dependent on aid from the US. Pastor Blewu dreams of not only becoming financially independent, but of being able to fund work outside of Togo in other countries. It is with this goal and dream in mind that he purchased and is developing this land.

The initial focus was on planting crops, such as yams (a staple here, more like our regular potatoes than a sweet potato), beans, corn, cassava, peanuts, and rice. In 2019 they had a small crop of yams, peanuts, and beans. Much of the harvest was retained (rather than sold) to provide seed for this past year. Unfortunately, with 2020 being 2020, Togo has not received much rain, and so the land did not produce very much. This has motivated Pastor Blewu to shift the focus to raising animals, specifically goats, as animals don’t depend on rainfall. In addition to having built a small two-room building on the land as a place for caretakers to stay, he has overseen the construction of a roofed pen in which to begin raising goats. It may take a couple of years for the goats to become profitable, but by God’s grace, the goats



Top: Area for building construction. Martin Essien (L), Pastor Blewu (R)
 Left: Caretaker building in progress.
 Above Center: Onsite making of bricks for building.
 Above Right: Caretaker building.

will start to provide income to further fund the work here in Togo.

This year we hope also to construct a classroom and to begin having seminary classes on this land. There are seven to ten students from around the area who are eager to begin studying. The pandemic has delayed our plans somewhat, as classes with the current six students in Lomé have been on hold since March. Lord willing, we will be able to complete their training soon and begin teaching the next

group of students in the new building on the land.

As the goats sacrificed in the Old Testament pointed to Jesus, so may these goats allow the pastors and students here to point to Jesus as the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.



Peter Evensen is a full time foreign missionary for the CLC.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS MARCH 2021

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Mar 1	TLH 333	Nahum 1:1-11	Ninevah was the capital of the Assyrian kingdom. Assyria had brought an end to the northern kingdom of Israel. Judah was in trouble too, but Assyria's end was coming.
Mar 2	TLH 487	Nahum 1:12-15	God would bring about Assyria's destruction because of its wickedness, but also in order to preserve Judah for the eventual arrival of Jesus Christ.
Mar 3	TLH 659 (LSB 774)	John 6:1-15	By the sign of the loaves and fish, the people recognized Jesus as someone great, but they didn't catch on that He was there to feed their souls, not just their stomachs.
Mar 4	TLH 651 (LSB 752)	John 6:16-21	It was miraculous when Jesus suddenly walked on water in the middle of the lake. It was compassionate when He said, "Don't be afraid." O Jesus, "Come not in terrors . . . but kind and good."
Mar 5	TLH 360 (LSB 528)	John 6:22-59	The people wanted bread from heaven for their bodies, but that would only keep them alive for a little while. Faith in Jesus, the true Bread from Heaven, would give life forever.
Mar 6	TLH 376 (LSB 761)	John 6:60-71	It was difficult for the crowd to accept that Jesus was truly from heaven. However, if He were <i>not</i> from heaven, He could not give eternal life. May the Spirit keep us in the faith.
Mar 8	TLH 407	Nahum 2:1-13	The greatest things that humans can build (even cities like Ninevah) cannot stand when the Lord is against them. And no one would stop Him from bringing relief to Judah, either.
Mar 9	TLH 577 (LSB 965)	2 Kings 15:1-15	Along with human kings came human problems like disease, conspiracy, and death. Lord, preserve us from leaders who refuse to walk in your ways.
Mar 10	TLH 398 (LSB 704)	2 Kings 16:1-18	Unbelieving Ahaz turned to Assyria for help rather than to the Lord. Then he did what is popular in government today: pandered to every religion except Christianity.
Mar 11	TLH 140 (LSB 440)	Nahum 3:1-19	Assyria's wickedness against the Lord would mean their ultimate destruction. God does not stand for wickedness.
Mar 12	TLH 153 (LSB 451)	John 7:1-9	The unbelieving world does not hate the heathen; it hates those who expose its evil deeds. So if unbelievers hate you, you're probably doing something right.
Mar 13	TLH 132 (LSB 810)	John 7:10-36	Jesus taught with authority and power because He was from God, and His teaching was the Word of God.
Mar 15	TLH 412 (LSB 698)	2 Kings 17:6-20	After years of idolatry in Israel, the Lord chose to bring an end to the northern kingdom. They had had the Gospel and they rejected it. Only the tribe of Judah remained.
Mar 16	TLH 461	2 Kings 18:1-8	While the northern kingdom was in upheaval and falling, the Lord blessed Judah with the best king they ever had: Hezekiah. That was no coincidence, was it?
Mar 17	TLH 379	2 Kings 19:14-34	When Assyria threatened Judah, too, Hezekiah took it to the Lord in prayer. God answered that He would defend Judah. Why? Because of the promise He made to David—the promise of Jesus.
Mar 18	TLH 152	John 7:37-52	The Messiah had come, but people were working through who He was. Jesus' Word and His Spirit would bring some of them around as they still do today.
Mar 19	TLH 391	John 8:1-11	Jesus did not excuse her sin, He forgave it. There's a big difference!
Mar 20	TLH 457 (LSB 770)	2 Kings 20:1-11	God answered Hezekiah's prayer, but not just to save Hezekiah. He had all of Judah in mind, didn't He? All the world, even.
Mar 22	TLH 283 (LSB 582)	2 Kings 22:1-13	In our day of printed books and the internet, who can imagine the Bible ever being lost? In Josiah's day, though, it had been. Let's never forget the blessings of being close to God's Word!
Mar 23	TLH 265	2 Kings 23:1-30	Martin Luther wasn't the only one to lead a country in a return to God's Word. Josiah led the "Reformation" of the Old Testament. What gifts our gracious God gives to His Church!
Mar 24	WS 721 (LSB 428)	John 8:12-29	Jesus reveals the Father because He is from the Father and is with the Father.
Mar 25	WS 725 (LSB 444)	John 8:30-59	Unbelief is slavery because the unbeliever can do nothing but sin before God. Only the truth, the message of Christ's forgiveness, can break those chains.
Mar 26	TLH 268	Habakkuk 1:1-11	Though Josiah's reforms in Judah were good, the need for God's judgment on their sin remained. Habakkuk cried out for it and God promised it would come via Chaldea (Babylonia).
Mar 27	TLH 162 (LSB 441)	Habakkuk 1:12-2:1	But at God's answer, Habakkuk was concerned. Why would He bring justice this way? Why would a nation even worse than Judah take over the land?
Mar 29	TLH 371 (LSB 563)	Habakkuk 2:2-5	The Lord would not reverse the judgment planned for Judah, but there was a way of escape for the faithful: those who trusted in Him for forgiveness would have forgiveness and life.
Mar 30	TLH 160 (LSB 442)	2 Kings 24:1-17	Just as God said, the Babylonians conquered Judea, exiled the best and brightest of the people, and set up a puppet king. The Lord was their only hope for deliverance.
Mar 31	TLH 154 (LSB 437)	John 9:1-33	Nobody had ever heard of anyone miraculously healing the blind, but it was a distinguishing mark of the true Messiah (see Isaiah 61:1-2).

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.

Changing Technology at ILC

Depending on your age, technology can mean different things, from dialup phones to virtual reality headsets. Technology at Immanuel has changed over the years, and we can see God's hand in providing effective tools for our students to use as they prepare for their future.

From the Apple II computers in Reim Hall in the 80's to the coax network in Northwest Hall in the 90's, the quality of technology at Immanuel has continued to improve. A fiber optic network backbone and internet connection currently provide a reliable, state-of-the-art online connection. This came in handy during the fourth quarter of 2020, when the school was required to convert entirely to distance learning.

The move to the Academic Center in 2009 created an opportunity to make significant improvements to our technology offering. Two forty-station networked labs were created. The network now extends down Faculty Row, providing teachers with access to the internet from their homes. Classrooms are now equipped with instant-on lampless Casio projectors to go along with Dell i7 instructor desktop computers with 500gb solid state drives. Smartboards (which are like electronic chalkboards that can be used from the computer or with erasable markers) were gradually added to classrooms to reach our current number of five. Two document cameras are currently in use by teachers. Students have access to separate multimedia rooms housing high-end video editing machines for use in computer classes and for projects in other subjects.

In 2019, Immanuel began to purchase Chromebooks and portable charging carts for use by teachers, who wheel the carts into their classrooms when needed. The Chromebooks allowed teachers to make better use of the vast resources available online. The Chromebooks also gave us the ability to provide distance learning during the COVID outbreak in the spring of 2020. Despite a bit of a learning curve for all involved in the distance learning effort, the students were provided with a good learning experience—different, but

still effective. That online experience seemed to help the students better appreciate the face-to-face classes that we were able to resume last fall. Currently, we provide each student with a personal Chromebook. This allows students who are quarantined or absent for some other reason to join classes remotely. On several occasions, Chromebooks

enabled students to receive instruction from teachers who were required to teach from home due to quarantine.

The software we use has changed along with the hardware. Currently our students are provided with Microsoft Office 365, Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, InDesign, Illustrator and more), and Google's G-Suite for Education, which includes Google Classroom. We monitor student internet access with special

security software and a robust firewall. This past year we improved student, parent, and school communication with Gradelink Student Information System, allowing online registration for the first time

All this comes at a price, but the help we receive from alumni and other members of the CLC makes it possible. The list of help provided is extensive but bears some mention. We have received significant financial help for major upgrades. Off-lease computers, with years of use remaining, have been located and provided at no cost. Members have designed and continue to maintain websites and financial management software. High end phone systems and firewalls have been donated and maintained.

Staying current with technology is always a struggle. It's worth the effort, however, if it helps us to properly prepare our students for life after Immanuel. With the

Lord blessing our efforts, and with His love moving the hearts of the school's friends, we are confident in our continued success.

Ross Roehl 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.

Study Links Religious Practices in the Home to Successful Relationships. An October 2020 study published by the Wheatley Institution found that families who read the Bible, conduct devotions, and worship together in the home report far more favorable outcomes in relationships than do purely secular people, or people who restrict their religious practice to weekly worship. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, congregations in the United States and around the world temporarily closed their doors. Religious believers were left to practice faith largely within their own homes. Some wondered: Is home-centered religious worship worth it?" The study said YES. "There is a strong correlation between home-centered religious worship patterns and positive relationship outcomes. Couples and individuals who report the highest levels of religiosity - engaging in home-centered religious practices - are significantly more likely to report positive outcomes on various measures of life happiness and relationship quality. For example, women in relationships where both partners worship at home were twice as likely to report being emotionally close to their partner. Similar results were found with regard to . . . joint decision making, money problems, and partner virtues, among others." Carroll, Jason, et al. "RELIGION IN THE HOME: Do Individuals and Couples Benefit from Home-Based Religious Practices?" *News*. Wheatley.BYU.edu, 13 Oct. 2020. Web. 10 Jan. 2021.

Sign Language Bible Completed After 39 Years of Work. The first braille Bible for blind people was published over a hundred years ago, in 1919. But there has never been a Bible in American Sign Language (ASL) until now. In 1970, Duane King and his wife Peggy began the Deaf Missions Bible project in Council Bluffs, Iowa, translating books of the New Testament into ASL on VHS video tapes. Deaf people can read, of course, but King explained that "most hearing people don't understand how difficult it is to learn to read what you cannot hear. Deaf people rely so much on their eyesight that they want everything to be tangible—they want to be able to see everything. This sometimes makes it harder to grasp intangibles like salvation through faith." ASL is not spoken English turned into hand signs but is a full language developed by deaf people, with a distinct vocabulary and grammar. The translation was led by deaf people trained in the biblical languages, reviewed by one committee for accuracy and by another committee for clarity, and then recorded in a small TV studio. Developers estimate that it cost \$195 to translate a single verse. The last four years of work cost more than \$4 million. The Deaf Missions Bible was completed in 2020 and is now available for free online at DeafMissions.com. Silliman, Daniel. "Sign Language Bible Complete After 39 Years." *News*. ChristianityToday.com, 21 Sep, 2020. Web. 10 Jan. 2021.

Chinese Textbook Reverses the Gospel. The Chinese government's increasing opposition to Christianity has been well documented, but a recently published government textbook takes the antipathy a step further. The textbook, designed for high-schoolers studying world religions, "includes a revised version of John 8:3–11. In the Christian version, Jesus is presented with a woman caught in adultery and says, 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her' (v. 7). In the Communist revision, however, Jesus says the law has to be enforced and stones the woman to death himself." An estimated 60 million Christians live in China, half of whom worship in unregistered home churches. Silliman, Daniel. "Communist Christ casts the first stone." *Gleanings*. ChristianityToday.com, 23 Nov. 2020. Web. 10 Jan. 2021.

