

NOVEMBER 2021 VOL 64 NO. 5

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

“For all the saints...”

-TLH 463:1



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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, art direction & graphic design by 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, Joseph Lau, Delwyn Maas, Bruce Naumann, John Pfeiffer, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Peter Reim, Sam Rodebaugh, Michael Roehl, Robert Sauers, David Schierenbeck, Chad Seybt, Steven Sippert, Mark Weis, Michael Wilke.

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.

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The Problem of “Saints”

The celebration of All Saints’ Sunday has been largely abandoned by many Christian denominations. Because of a problem. A poll would quantify or establish the problem. Ask one hundred people to define the word “saint” and most would probably get it wrong. If asked to name a saint, most would list Mary. They would be both right and wrong. The mother of our Lord is indeed a saint, but not for the reasons many imagine.

In both the Old and New Testaments, saints are identified as “holy ones.” The prevalent misconception concerning saints centers on how individuals become “holy ones.” The one side believes it is through human effort (Law), the other by God’s gracious declaration (Gospel). In reality, the commemoration of All Saints’ Sunday should be a celebration of purest, sweetest Gospel. It is being needlessly abandoned because of “the problem.” How diabolically clever of the devil to paint over God’s amazing masterpiece of the Gospel with the gaudy strokes of work righteousness, and to thereby effectively hide God’s gift of sainthood in plain sight. The true genius of the devil’s evil is that he thereby caused sainthood to be displayed as the exact opposite of what it really is. A saint is not someone whose payment of good works equals or exceeds their debt of sin; it is a sinner who has been declared innocent by God’s grace—His undeserved love—through faith in Jesus Christ.

The problem goes even deeper. Those who are taught that a saint is one who performed more good works than necessary to pay for their own sins, are also taught that any extra works (referred to as works of supererogation) can be dispensed from heaven by that saint upon request—thus the encouragement to pray to those saints. What an affront to our Savior, Who alone is that “*one mediator between God and man!*” (1 Timothy 2:5) As one would expect, there is no supporting Biblical evidence for this false doctrine. God’s

Word does not teach that dead mortals can, in any way, lend aid to the living. There is, however, an abundance of Biblical proof to the contrary. “*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:12 ESV) “*Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice, that he should live on forever and never see the pit.*” (Psalm 49:7-9 ESV) Our Apostles’ Creed identifies one and the same group as both “the holy Christian Church” and “the communion of saints.”

God’s Word does not teach that dead mortals can, in any way, lend aid to the living.

Though necessary and helpful to identify the aberration or misconception concerning saints, we rob ourselves if we do not identify and rejoice in the truth. The truth is that every Christian is a saint, a “holy one.” Paul routinely addressed his letters to “all the saints”—in Lydda, Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossae. How silly to imagine that he intended to address only a few special souls, but not all. The very title was a summary of the Gospel in a single word, for holiness can be the possession of a sinner only by God’s declaration, never by man’s effort or works. There could be no saints at all had not God the Father placed on His Son Jesus “*the iniquity of us all.*” (Isaiah 53:6) Only because God made Jesus, “*who knew no sin, to be sin for us*” (2 Corinthians 5:21) can we now have confidence in the righteousness that God has declared. Our All-Saints’ celebrations are therefore, from first to last, celebrations of the grace and mercy of our God. We sing the glory of the One who rescued not the good and worthy but the sinful and undeserving. So also we sing: “*For all the saints, who from their labors rest... Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest. Alleluia!*” (TLH 463:1)



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

Jesus Is Directing Things for His Second Coming

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:7-8 ESV)

How many times has your life felt like a chaotic play in which the director doesn't seem to know what he's doing? Maybe a family member is suffering one financial or health setback after another. The sets seem to be falling apart, nobody knows his lines, and nobody is in the right place. Nothing seems to be going right, and we wonder, “Who's running this show?”

Jesus is. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega (these are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.) He is the First and Last of all world history. Jesus “is, was, and is to come.”

Jesus WAS. The Alpha, or beginning, of the “script,” if you will, for this world was Jesus. “All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John 1:2-3 ESV)

As the Alpha, He is also the “founder and perfecter of our faith.” (Hebrews 12:2 ESV) Our faith is founded on His perfect life and sacrificial death on the cross. Having risen from the dead, Jesus is the Alpha of the resurrection. Because He has risen, we too shall rise. The “script” for our salvation has Jesus' name all over it.

Jesus IS. Even though life may seem like a chaotic play to us right now, King Jesus is directing things from His throne. Jesus sits at the Father's right hand in a position of power and authority. The Father “put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.” (Ephesians 1:22 ESV) Evidence of Jesus' active direction is seen throughout the world as the Gospel continues to spread, despite the evil schemes of the devil and powers of this world.

During the chaotic “scene” of Good Friday, the Sanhedrin thought they were running the show as they demanded

that Pilate crucify Jesus. Pilate thought he was in control of the script for Jesus: “Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” (John 19:10 ESV) When Jesus breathed His last on the cross and was buried in that sealed tomb, His enemies thought that it was the closing scene for Jesus.

Jesus IS TO COME. Jesus, Who died and was buried and rose from the dead, ascended into heaven with the promise that He is coming again. “Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.” (Revelation 1:7 ESV)

Jesus is in control, and everything in all of world history is leading up to His second coming. Jesus will return to earth, just as He left it—with the clouds. Every eye will see Him as He raises the dead, “some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:2 ESV) Even those who rejected and condemned Him will see Him in all His glory on the Last Day. Jesus is the Omega, who will close the curtain on this world of sin and death at His second coming.

When the sets of life seem to be falling apart, no one knows his lines, and everyone seems to be in the wrong spot, remember that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega of your salvation. He is directing everything in all of creation for your eternal good, even if you may not understand how (Romans 8:28). The cross proves that Jesus is directing things for your eternal salvation. The empty tomb of Easter proves that not even the worst of this world (death) can hold us. And Jesus is coming again to take us from this chaotic world of sin and death to live with Him forever in heaven.

Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus. Amen.



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

TLH HYMN 72, WS 703, LSB 515

“Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers”

“It’s late.” As children, we didn’t like to hear those words. It meant that it was time for bed and whatever we still wanted to do would have to wait until the next day. As adults, we don’t always like to hear those words either. “It’s late. Your youth is past. Your strength is fading away.” We realize that at some point there won’t be a next day for us.

But as children of God, the lateness of the hour doesn’t need to bother us. The hymn writer and director of music at the cathedral church in Bremen, Germany, Laurentius Laurenti (1660-1722) penned these famous lines: *Rejoice, rejoice, believers, / And let your lights appear! / The evening is advancing, / And darker night is near.* For us Christians, the later the hour the better, because it means that our heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, is closer than ever to His reappearing! The apostle Paul wrote: *“it is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.”* (Romans 13:11 CSB).

The Bridegroom is arising, / And soon He draweth nigh; / Up, pray and watch and wrestle! / At midnight comes the cry. Like the ten virgins in the parable (see Matthew 25:1-13) who waited late into the night for the arrival of the bridegroom, we wait, pray, watch, and wrestle, and then our Savior returns in all His glory!

When He comes, your place at the heavenly banquet table will be ready and waiting for you. At the Judgment you will rise up to meet Him and as heirs of His salvation you will receive the full measure of your inheritance. *Go meet Him as He cometh, / With hallelujahs clear. / The marriage-feast is waiting, / The gates wide open stand; / Up, up, ye*

heirs of glory; / The Bridegroom is at hand!

Of course, it’s not as if we deserve a place at this heavenly feast. If you were to count up your misdeeds in the light of God’s holy commands, you would find so many that they could not even be numbered. Yet Christ was numbered with the transgressors in our place, and while we were still sinners He died for us. At the Judgment we can then rise to meet Him with confidence, knowing all has been made ready for us to enjoy eternal life.

As the days of this present world grind on in pain and sorrow, it seems like we might never make it to the end. This world, however, is passing away and will be replaced by something far better. The third verse of our hymn describes this waiting time and the assurance of glory at the last: *Ye saints, who here in patience /*

Your cross and sufferings bore, / Shall live and reign forever / When sorrow is no more. / Around the throne of glory / The Lamb ye shall behold; / In triumph cast before Him / Your diadems of gold! Away then with fear and sadness, our heavenly future awaits!

The hymn closes with a prayer for Jesus’ return. Bring on the Judgment! We stand confidently in the shadow of our Savior’s cross and in the morning glow of His empty tomb. Thus, *With hearts and hands uplifted, / We plead, O Lord, to see / The day of earth’s redemption, / That brings us unto Thee! / Amen.*



David Schaller is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Our Journey through the Wilderness

“Remember the whole journey on which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you and to test you, in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. So he humbled you and allowed you to be hungry. Then he fed you manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known before, in order to teach you that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” (Deuteronomy 8:2-3 EHV)

The word *wilderness* may inspire us to envision trees as far as the eye can see, free flowing streams, and abundant creatures great and small. That definitely was not the kind of wilderness through which the Lord led the children of Israel! Jeremiah described it as barren, a land of deserts, ravines, and drought where no one lives (2:6). The wildlife consisted of things like scorpions and serpents. Few would sign up to travel through a place like that, but God knew that such a wilderness was exactly what His children needed.

As his time as their leader drew to its close, Moses reminded them of how important their wilderness experience had been. That was where God chose to humble, test, and teach His children. Though they may not have realized it, their hearts needed renewal, their understanding growth, and their necks softening.

More than once, they pushed away from God in their pride. Yet, God loved them and wanted them close to Him in order to bless them. That is why He used the wilderness to humble them. Its geography as well as its austerity served to remind them that their survival depended entirely on God's good will. It was truly a lesson in humility!

In the wilderness His people saw nothing to encourage them. They were tested by the absence of nourishment and hydration. No place offering comfort or safety was evident.

Their only hope was to trust in God's promises.

In Egypt there had been an abundance of food, but there had also been an abundance of idols. In the scarcity of the wilderness, God reminded them that the covenant He had made with Abraham also bound Him to them and them to Him. Being counted righteous in God's sight was by faith alone. Their journey was an ongoing lesson designed for them to learn to place their trust only in the Lord their God.

No one else could deliver them from the dangers of the wilderness. Only the one, true God could do that, and that is precisely what He did because of the covenant He made—a covenant of mercy and grace.

Regardless of where our journey in life takes us, as long as we remain in this world we are living in a desert—a spiritual wilderness. Many promises are made offering prosperity and happiness by those who can deliver neither. The most opulent places on earth are often deserts drear when it comes to thriving spiritually and possessing never-ending joy.

The Lord knows that there are seasons when His children need to spend a while in the desert. Those are times for humbling, testing, teaching, or all three. God loves each of us so much that, when it's needed, He's willing to lead us through a wilderness (be it physically, emotionally, or spiritually). He wants us to have all the blessings that come from trusting in Him.

Lord, we trust You to know what's best for us!



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

Seeking Wealth, Gaining Misery

“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts for the day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.” (James 5:1-6)

As the confirmation class discussion began, a student commented on the lengthy list of Seventh Commandment sins: “Wow! There are sure a lot of ways to break the Seventh Commandment.” Indeed, there are—everything from laziness to cheating to stealing in its many forms, including today a multitude of digital scams. All have this in common: they involve taking from others and are sins of selfishness that bring divine judgment and misery on the perpetrators.

In his Spirit-inspired style and pointed language, James’ words may seem like a familiar social protest of the “have-nots” against the “haves.” In reality, they go much deeper, as reflected in the Seventh and Ninth Commandments. This is sin and there will come a day of reckoning, if not in this life, most certainly in the life to come (verse 1).

In the absence of devotion to the real God Who created and redeemed them, there exists a vacuum in the sinful human heart and life that cries out to be filled. And one of Satan’s many alluring suggestions for filling that void with happiness and fulfillment is through worldly treasures. *Fool’s gold*, to be sure. Not only do these treasures prove

empty, unsatisfying, and fading, they can easily lead to real misery. Selfishly indulging oneself at the expense of others really involves only fattening up one’s heart for the day of slaughter (verses 5-6).

While money is a valuable this-world necessity, its sinful pursuit and abuse are roundly condemned in Scripture. The problem is not really money,



but the sinful human heart. Once again, James’ words cut to and through our very own hearts. In all honesty, how different at times are our hearts from that of the powerful, ruthless tycoon whose insatiable quest for more

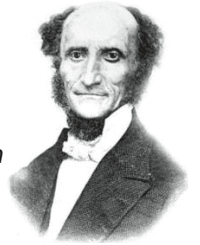
wealth tramples and destroys everyone in his path? Don’t we also feel a certain level of personal pride in what we have accomplished and accumulated? Do we honestly always see what we have as, first and foremost, gifts and blessings “from above”? (1:17) Has God given us what we have just for ourselves, or does He have something else in mind?

The mirror of God’s Law (1:23-24) never lies, nor, thank God, does His Gospel heart (2:13,23). For those who humble themselves before the mighty hand of God (4:6,10), who repent and look to the cross for mercy and forgiveness, life’s greatest treasure awaits—Christ and all the blessings of salvation. In loving praise, God’s grateful people then seek to use all His blessings, including his material ones, to invest in eternal treasures—for themselves and for all precious souls. And this is a can’t-miss formula for godly contentment and blessing (1 Timothy 6:6-8).



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.



Where Does Contrition Come From?

“Thesis XI-- In the seventh place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when there is a disposition to offer the comfort of the Gospel only to those who have been made contrite by the Law, not from fear of the wrath and punishment of God, but from love of God.”

A middle-aged man once came to our church asking to be baptized. He was a resident of the halfway house down the street. When asked, “Why do you want to be baptized?” the man, obviously anxious and agitated, replied, “Because I’m a sinner, and I don’t want to go to hell!” That’s a pretty good reason.

C.F.W. Walther says, “When we behold someone in terror of hell, we are to comfort him.” (page 241) The Gospel was proclaimed to this alarmed sinner and, a couple of witnesses having been enlisted, he was baptized forthwith.

That man’s contrition came from the Law—the knowledge of his own sin, and terror of the coming Judgment. In his Eleventh Thesis, Dr. Walther says that this is as it should be—contrition comes from the Law. Further, Walther calls out the false teachers (especially among the Roman Catholics) who say that true contrition must flow, not from the Law, but from a person’s *love of God*. They teach that an unbeliever, if he will only try hard enough, can produce contrition in himself, and that this contrition is a good work that merits God’s forgiveness! Dr. Walther answers, “We must not imagine that contrition is a good work which we do, but it is something that God works in us. God comes with the hammer of the Law and smites our soul.” Contrition is “produced not by man, but by God Himself. God has no regard for any miserable product of man.” (page 240) By the way, we should note that Walther’s focus

in this section is on contrition in unbelievers. Believers, too, experience contrition and repentance, of course, but Walther will deal with that subject in a later chapter.

Walther quotes the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* in support of his thesis: “The Law does nothing but accuse the conscience; it commands people what to do and terrifies them. In this connection the adversaries [Roman Catholic theologians] do not say a word concerning faith, hence they do not teach one word regarding the Gospel, or Christ, but their teaching is entirely from the Law. They tell people that with their pain, contrition, sorrow, and anguish they are meriting grace, provided their contrition is from love of God and provided they love God. Good Heavens, what kind of preaching is that to consciences that are in need of comfort!”

By contrast, Scripture—and the Lutheran church—teaches that an unbeliever has no power in himself to produce contrition, through love of God or anything else. Rather, that is accomplished by the Law.

However, once the sinner is conscious of and alarmed by his sins, only the sweet comfort of the Gospel is to be pronounced to him. Walther cites the example of the jailer at Philippi in Acts 16, “The jailer fell writhing and trembling at the apostles’ feet and asked: ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ Nothing but his fright and terror moved him to do that. Now Paul does not say to him: ‘First you must become contrite from love of God,’ but: ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved and thy house!’” (page 239)



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[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.

Catharism

Catharism was the inner core in a “nesting egg” of heresy. Catharism was nested into Manichean belief, nested into Dualism, nested into Gnosticism (*Lutheran Spokesman* July 2020). It is no wonder that it was named the “Great Heresy.”

What we know about the Cathars comes predominantly from what the Catholic church in medieval times wrote against them. *Cathar*, a name given by the church, is derived from the Greek word meaning “clean/pure” (*katharos*).

The Cathars believed in a “good god” and a “bad god” (dualism). The bad god was god of all material things. This included the human body, in which he imprisoned souls. Abstaining from all earthly temptations and leading a life of fasting and self-denial kept the bad god at bay.

The good god was the god of all immaterial things such as light and souls. Salvation was accomplished by shedding the material body and achieving perfection—a salvation that would ultimately include all human beings. The road to salvation might require several reincarnations.

The church first responded to the Cathar errors with preaching and public debates. However, when uneducated, common laborers defending Catharism won debates against leading theologians, the spread of Catharism was not slowed.

The church kept trying new ways to slow Catharism’s spread. Preaching hadn’t worked. Debates hadn’t worked. Propaganda didn’t work. What was next? A crusade.

In 1208, a papal representative to the Cathars was murdered, and that was the spark that started the crusading fire—an inferno that would rage for decades. The pope offered forgiveness of sins and a place in heaven to those who would battle the Cathars.

Crusaders sacked the city of Béziers in France in 1209. As they were storming the walls they asked how they could tell good Christians from the heretics. The papal representative responded, “Kill them all. God will know His own.”

As the church’s pressure increased, the Cathars went “underground” and became a secret society. The next step

in the church’s eradication plan was begun by Pope Gregory IX in 1227. Gregory sent inquisitors into the districts to find heretics. Cathars were threatened and intimidated to denounce Catharism and give information about other Cathars.

The Cathars’ last big stand was at the fortress of Montsegur in 1244. The crusaders constructed a massive pyre at the base of the rock. The Cathars who renounced their sin and accepted absolution would go free, but two hundred refused and sang hymns as they walked into the flames. The crusade and inquisition left southern France devastated, and more than 500,000 people dead. By 1325, Catharism had truly disappeared from Western Europe.

The history of Catharism is quite sad. It tells of a group of people who identified many things that were wrong in the external church and reacted against them, but they didn’t pursue the truth of God’s Word. So they railed against the church with the dull sword of heresy instead of the living, active, and sharp sword of the Spirit (Hebrews 4:12, Ephesians 6:17).

On the other hand, the church of the day reacted to the heresy, not with the sword of the Spirit, but with swords of steel.

The most significant echo from Catharism is rebounding from the past in words of warning and encouragement. The echoes warn against the wrong ways of combating Satan’s efforts. They encourage us to use the Gospel for winning souls who are lost in the maze of unbelief.

It is the still small voice (1 Kings 19:12) wielding the mighty sword of the Spirit that will prevail. “*Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*” (Ephesians 6:17)



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

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the church of the Lutheran Confession

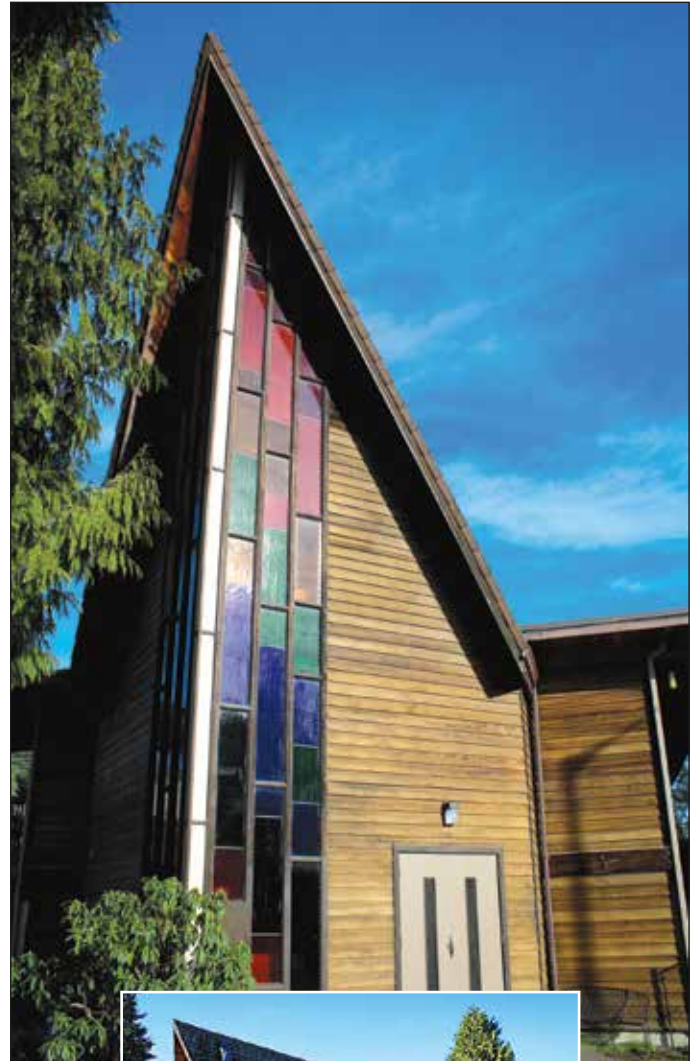
Redemption Lutheran Church Lynnwood, Washington

The challenges and opportunities that each congregation faces are often impacted by their specific circumstances. Congregations are in different settings and face unique factors that affect their ministry. However, there are also circumstances and events that are more global, which affect all churches regardless of location. Within the last year, Redemption Lutheran Church and School in Lynnwood, Washington has sought to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with balance between our unique setting and the position all Christians have been put in because of the global pandemic. In this way, perhaps our story in the last year is not unlike your congregation's.

During this time, the members of Redemption have spent a great deal of time and energy on embracing opportunities to minister through technology. Like many churches, we have focused on improving our online presence through live-streamed worship services and Bible studies and using digital platforms to maintain contact with one another. During the in-person worship restrictions, we also installed two sanctuary monitors. They allow us to display hymns, liturgy, and readings to improve our ability to communicate the Word to visitors and families with young children. Updates to our audio/visual setup now allow us to share the same worship slides with those worshipping at home.

Improvements in technology were also seen in our K-8 Christian day school ministry. The potential for distance learning and prolonged student absences led us to purchase a set of classroom tablets. These devices provide our students with extended study and learning tools in various subjects. During the 2020-2021 school year, Redemption's eleven students logged a total of 146 study hours and answered over 41,000 questions through these online programs.

The fourth grade students (our oldest level in the school during the 2020-21 school year) also completed Bible history presentations that were recorded and shared with parents and members of the congregation. This



project helped the students learn a variety of skills as they produced a PowerPoint presentation, written report, and presentation outline—all capped off by delivering their study findings in a recorded presentation.

Technology was also critical to the production of our



Above: Practicing social distancing, the children of Redemption Lutheran Church pre-recorded the Christmas Eve service so everyone could hear the message of Christ's birth.

Left: 4th grade students whose Bible history presentations were recorded so everyone could see them.

annual Christmas Eve service which, due to health restrictions on in-person worship, required a great deal of flexibility in approach. Despite not being able to worship in the sanctuary on Christmas Eve, families were able to hear the message of Christ's birth in their homes as proclaimed by our school children through a pre-recorded service. Many hours of memorization, practice, and editing went into creating this version of the timeless account of Christ's birth. All service videos can still be accessed today via our YouTube channel (search "Redemption Lutheran") if you would like to check them out.

One of the most difficult aspects of the last year was the lack of direct, face-to-face fellowship time, the absence of which was especially felt during the Lenten season when our customary preaching exchange with Ascension Lutheran Church in Tacoma was not possible. However, this unfortunate change created a unique opportunity as

both Redemption and Ascension members joined online for a Zoom Bible study series on the events during the last months of Christ's ministry. Pre-recorded midweek Lenten services were also shared among the two congregations. Although not a perfect replacement for in-person fellowship, these online offerings were a definite blessing during this difficult time.

The challenges and opportunities we navigate are similar to those of other congregations, as we seek to return to a more "normal" routine. We had a taste of that this summer when we were able to conduct an in-person vacation Bible school with a theme based on the book of Proverbs. The Lord blessed our efforts by allowing us to share the life-saving message of wisdom in Jesus with more than forty-five children.

Although the polarization and turmoil of the pandemic is not entirely behind us, we continue to work with encouragement and

gratitude that the Lord not only provides new means to communicate the Gospel, He also blesses every effort to proclaim His Word—a promise that never changes! Within the last year we have been gently reminded by our gracious God that as one path is blocked He opens new avenues to receive and share His mercy. Our continued task is to heed His will, pray for discernment in difficult times, and wait upon Him by faith to lead and guide us forward. With that hope steadfast in our hearts, we continue to work at discerning the many opportunities the Lord places before us to find new ways of sharing His unchanging grace.



Mark Tiefel is pastor of Redemption Lutheran Church in Lynnwood, Washington.

Turning Goats into Sheep

In my last *Spokesman* article (“Goats for God,” March 2021) I talked about how we have helped the Mission Évangélique Luthérienne de Confession du Togo (MELC) purchase land north of Lomé on which to raise crops and livestock to support the work here in Togo, West Africa. Since then, the two-room house for caretakers has been completed, a full-time caretaker has moved in, and a barn with adjoining pen has been built for the livestock. The number of hens has grown from an initial seven to around thirty, and there are three roosters. There are now four female goats and three males. Recently Pastor Kossi Blewu purchased two ewes. And there is now a new puppy on the land to serve as a guard dog. Pastor Blewu also wants to raise guinea fowl (a common food here), turkeys, rabbits, pigeons, ducks, and geese.

The real work of the church, however, is not to raise goats or sheep, but to train shepherds who will turn “goats” into

“sheep” (Matthew 25:31-45), and who will equip the church members to do the same. To that end, work began in May, with support from the Mission Development Fund (MDF), to construct a roof which will serve as the foundation (so to speak) of a church and seminary building. Also under construction is a two-room lodging for Pastor Blewu and me, as we will travel from Lomé each week to spend two or three nights on the land to teach the next group of seminary students, starting (Lord willing), this October. You can find videos of the progress online at bit.ly/petertogo.

We have not yet finalized the roster, but Pastor Blewu estimates we will have about ten new seminary students, including his younger brother. Most live in the area, but two have been working with Deborah Awudu (see the October issue of *The Branches* magazine) to establish a preaching station at her home in Lomé, and they will travel up to the land each week for



Caretaker's house.



Barn & adjoining pen.



Lodging.



Seminary roof.

classes.

Pastor Blewu is now hosting a radio program from 5:00-6:00 A.M. in a village about thirty minutes south of the land. Many people in the area have called in and there is a need to start an MELC church there. One man who heard Pastor Kossi now wishes to join our classes and study to become a pastor.

While Togo is a very “Christianized” country, there are

many open doors and a great need for faithful preachers of God’s Word. Mr. Agbayi, one of the current six seminary students, has commented more than once that other churches here do not distinguish properly between the Law and the Gospel. This is something we have focused on in our classes, as it is so important for a correct preaching of the Good News. The so-called “prosperity gospel” is also very common here and across Africa. That is why sermons that focus not on earthly blessings or on what one must do as a Christian, but rather on what God has done for us in Jesus, stand out. Our goal is to train pastors to clearly and gladly proclaim the Good News that our sins are all freely forgiven because of Jesus’ death and resurrection—a truth that is often not plainly preached in the many other churches here.

Pray that the current four pastors, the six students who are soon to finish their studies, and the future students will all be faithful preachers of God’s Word, and that God will convert many condemned “goats” into saved “sheep” through their work.



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



“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS NOVEMBER 2021

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Nov 1	WS 730	Psalm 40	The Lord puts a new song in our mouths, the song of the Gospel—and we sing this song to others!
Nov 2	TLH 284	Proverbs 2:1-22	Rich and tremendous blessings are ours when the Word of God is before us and we search it for wisdom.
Nov 3	WS 783	Proverbs 3:1-18	We forget many things, but let’s never forget the teachings of the Lord. In Him we trust all the days of our lives.
Nov 4	TLH 149 (LSB 435)	Luke 22:1-13	Everyone was preparing for something: some for the Passover; some to kill Jesus; One to suffer and die for the sins of the world. What are you preparing for?
Nov 5	TLH 313 (LSB 617)	Luke 22:14-23	Jesus showed His disciples the extent to which He was going to forgive their sins: He was giving His own body and life into death. Still today He shows us the same.
Nov 6	TLH 140 (LSB 440)	Luke 22:24-38	When it was time for Jesus to die His disciples were caught up in petty arguments and boasting. When we’re facing a critical hour, where are our thoughts? Lord, forgive us.
Nov 8	TLH 651 (LSB 752)	Psalm 52	All around us there is evil and unrighteousness. Won’t God do something? Yes, He will, but it is also good for us to “wait on His name,” and let Him bring down the wicked.
Nov 9	TLH 258 (LSB 659)	Psalm 53	We know that those who reject God and His Word are fools. May God protect us from their foolish thoughts and ways!
Nov 10	TLH 520 (LSB 754)	Psalm 55	Are you weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care? Cast your burden upon the Lord and He will sustain you.
Nov 11	TLH 526 (LSB 745)	Luke 22:39-53	Satan would get his way, but only for a little while. This “hour” of darkness is all he would be allowed before his defeat would be made obvious on Easter morning.
Nov 12	TLH 152	Luke 22:54-71	Peter denied the very Son of God. Could such a great sin ever be forgiven? Peter wept over this question and then learned that where our sin is great, God’s grace is greater.
Nov 13	TLH 516	Luke 23:1-25	The crowd’s insistence on doing evil to Jesus is striking, but not any less striking than our own insistence on sinning at times. Let us confess our sins and plead for His mercy!
Nov 15	TLH 168 (LSB 455)	Luke 23:26-38	Don’t pity Jesus when you see Him dying, rather repent of your sins and rejoice that your King is laying down His life for you!
Nov 16	TLH 260	Psalm 58	The language here may sound harsh to us, but recognize that this is a matter of life or death. If the wicked win, the result is death to all. Therefore may God win the victory over them!
Nov 17	TLH 43	Psalm 59	While the wicked go about growling like dogs, God’s people go about singing of His power and lovingkindness.
Nov 18	TLH 393 (LSB 713)	Psalm 60	David says to the Lord, “You have shown your people hard times.” Sometimes He does so that we can better learn to appreciate His deliverance when it comes.
Nov 19	TLH 159 (LSB 436)	Luke 23:39-49	In the repentant thief we can also see ourselves—dying and entering into life beside Christ who dies for us.
Nov 20	TLH 151 (LSB 420)	Luke 23:50-56	Give us rest, too, O Lord: rest from sin and sorrow. Finally give us everlasting rest in heaven. Amen.
Nov 22	WS 732 (LSB 465)	Luke 24:1-12	All evil defeated and sorrow away, Christ Jesus our Savior has risen this day!
Nov 23	TLH 197	Luke 24:13-35	The two men did not have to see Jesus in order to rejoice in Him. The Gospel Word Christ preached to them excited their hearts and put down their fears.
Nov 24	TLH 216 (LSB 492)	Luke 24:36-53	Jesus showed Himself to His disciples to assure them of His victory for them. He ascended into heaven to rule for their (and our) benefit forever.
Nov 25	TLH 36 (LSB 895)	Psalm 73	Jesus guides us with His counsel and then leads us into glory. Draw us to you, O Christ!
Nov 26	WS 792	Psalm 77	The Lord has led us faithfully in the past and will not fail to guide us faithfully in the future.
Nov 27	TLH 528 (LSB 724)	Psalm 84	The Lord our God is a sun and shield to us. Those who dwell with Him go from strength to strength.
Nov 29	TLH 123 (LSB 733)	Psalm 91	The Lord is our refuge and fortress, our protection against evil and trouble.
Nov 30	TLH 87 (LSB 387)	Psalm 96	O praise the Lord and His righteous judgment! He will judge fairly and correctly and will judge His believing children on the merits of Christ. So come, Lord Jesus!

The Limited Public Ministry Program

To the male readers of the *Lutheran Spokesman*, especially those who are past the traditional age of college, we pose this question: Have you had a desire to serve the Lord in the pastoral ministry, but for one reason or another found it difficult to fulfill all the college and seminary education? If so, please read on about the Limited Public Ministry (LPM) program.

The program began as a convention directive of the CLC in 1974. It was set up for “experienced laymen who have expressed the desire to be of greater assistance in the ministry of the church,” having “the opportunity for early retirement from their secular career and ... convinced that they have both zeal and energies to combine with their experience toward a fruitful service in the public ministry.” (Proceedings 1974) As a limited ministry, however, the individuals enrolled would only have limited training (about two years) and limited areas of responsibility. Their work would be “under the guidance of a supervising pastor.” The graduate would not be recognized as one trained for the pastoral ministry in the traditional sense but would be trained to carry out some of the functions of the pastoral ministry.

After it was formally set up with ILC involvement, a few early-retirement-age men were able to enroll in the program in the late 1970s. At the time, the required courses included specialized classes that were outside the traditional curriculum. For various reasons enrollment was quite low over the years since the program’s inception. In 2010 the coursework of the program was changed so that only existing ILC college and seminary courses were to be taken by Limited Public Ministry students in a required two-year program, with a possible third year recommended so that students would not miss any of the program’s courses that are part of the complete seminary cycle.

Prior to the June 2021 Convention, the Limited Public Ministry program went through another revision by which CLC men aged 35 or older can now enroll in a required three-year program that consists mainly of seminary courses in the traditional seminary curriculum. Applicants need not have previous college experience, nor prior knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. Required college-level courses include Church

History, Symbolics (Book of Concord and other orthodox confessions), Old Testament and New Testament religion survey courses, and beginning-level Greek. The required seminary courses include Bible interpretation (Hermeneutics), sermon writing and delivery (Homiletics), Christian Education, Pastoral Theology and Counseling, Evangelism, all the cycled Dogmatics (doctrine) courses, and all the cycled Gospels courses. It is also required that two of the three years be taken in residence, with an available option for the first year of instruction to be taken remotely, either online or in a distance-learning format of some kind that would involve the student’s pastor or some other qualified individual.

The original expectation that a graduate called into the Limited Public Ministry would carry out his work under the supervision of another pastor is still in place and is noted in the seminary catalog on page 25: “The type and extent of work to be done by the LPM graduate is determined by the call extended to him and should not be assumed as part-time only. The training given to LPM students is intended to prepare them for full-time work in the limited public ministry, with the understanding that his work is under the supervision of another CLC pastor.” Students also undergo an evaluation process before they can graduate.

More information about the Limited Public Ministry program and a full listing of its coursework can be found in the seminary catalog, accessible online at the ILC website by going to the “resources” page and clicking on College-Seminary Catalog AY 2022. Those interested in learning more about the LPM program at ILC may contact the dean of Immanuel Lutheran Seminary, Professor John Ude.

We encourage Spokesman readers to “*pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest*” (Matt. 9:38) and to bless the training of such laborers through the traditional and the Limited Public Ministry programs at Immanuel.



Steven Sippert is professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nominations for ILC President. The Board of Regents invites nominations for the office of President of Immanuel Lutheran College. The current term of Professor Daniel Schierenbeck concludes on June 30, 2022. All pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of the CLC are entitled to nominate a man from the faculty of Immanuel Lutheran College to serve a two-year term beginning July 1, 2022. Nominations are to be received by email or letter no later than midnight December 15, 2021 (letters postmarked December 1, 2021) to: Mr. James Burkhardt; 217 Windy Lane; Rockwall, TX 75087; email: jeb6217@yahoo.com.



Attendees at the joint Great Lakes / Southeast Pastoral Conference, held September 28-30 in Milford, Ohio.

Installation. In accord with our usage and order, **David Schaller**, who was called to Immanuel Lutheran College to be a professor, was installed on August 22, 2021, in conjunction with ILC's opening service. —Pastor John Hein, Chairman, CLC Board of Regents.



At the opening service of Immanuel Lutheran College, I-r, ILC President Dr. Daniel Schierenbeck, new professor David Schaller, and Board of Regents chairman Pastor John Hein.



Attendees at the Minnesota Pastoral Conference, held October 5-6 in Austin, Minnesota.



Pastors of the Pacific Coast Pastoral Conference take some time off for recreation. The conference was held October 5-7, 2021, at Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Arizona.

