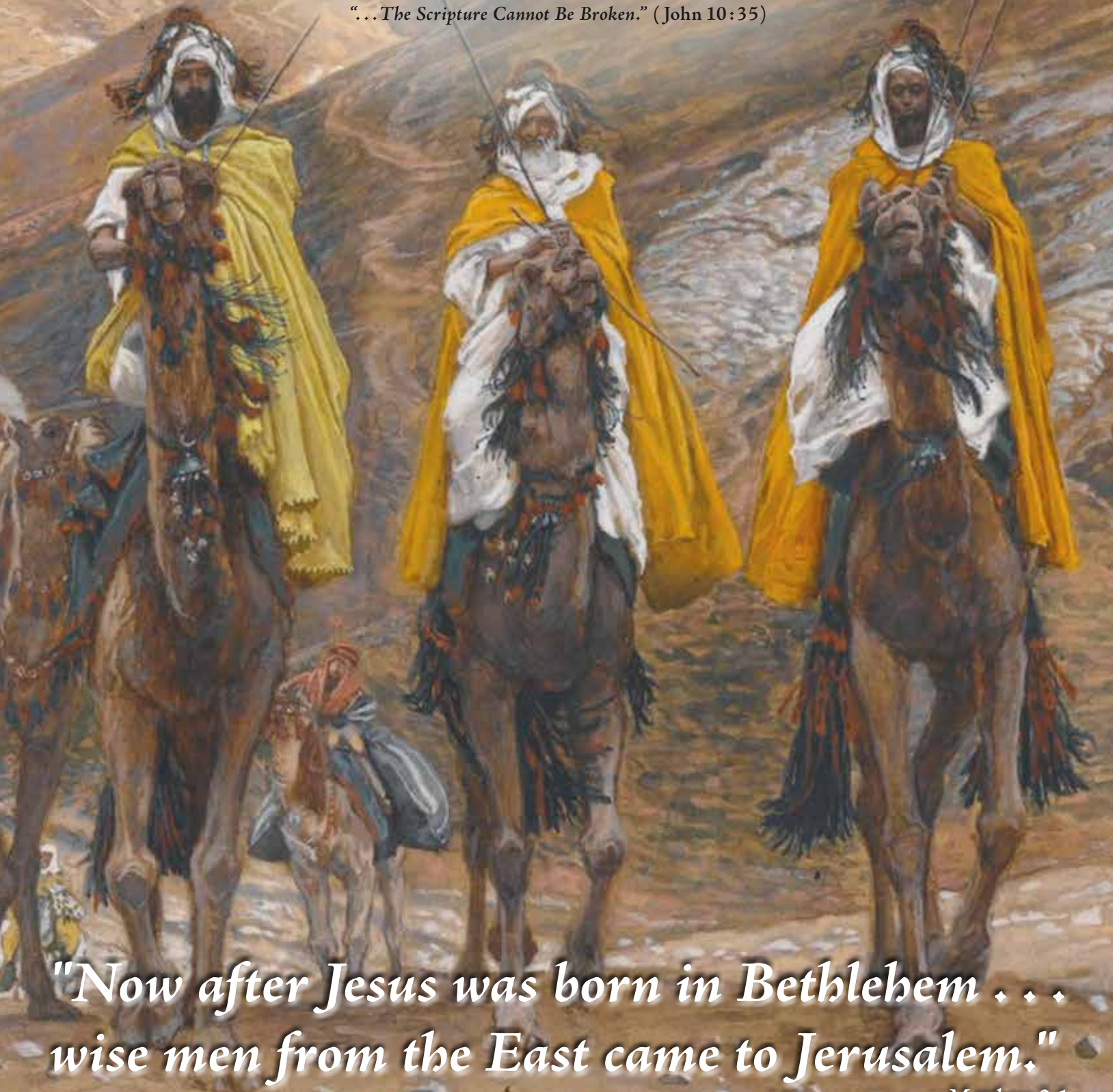


FEBRUARY 2022 VOL 64 NO. 8

# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



*"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem . . .  
wise men from the East came to Jerusalem."*

*--Matthew 2:1*





## IN THIS ISSUE FEBRUARY 2022

<b>Reconsidering Epiphany .....</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU</b>	
<b>Sacrificial Love.....</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church</b>	
		<b>Eagle Lake, Minnesota.....</b>	<b>10-11</b>
<b>PILLARS OF FAITH</b>		<b>NOTES FROM THE FIELD</b>	
<b>The Efficacy of Scripture .....</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>"The Number of the Disciples Multiplied</b>	
<b>The Lord Has Anointed Me to Preach.....</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Greatly!" .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Your Word Should Be Sufficient .....</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>MISSION NEWSLETTER .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>WALTHER'S LAW AND GOSPEL</b>		<b>Bread of Life Readings, FEBRUARY 2022 .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>What Do You Mean by Faith? .....</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>IN THE PIPELINE</b>	
<b>OUR LITURGICAL LEGACY</b>		<b>Kendra Rodebaugh .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Lutheran Liturgical Reform, Part 1.....</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>SEEN IN PASSING / ANNOUNCEMENTS.....</b>	<b>16</b>

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# Reconsidering Epiphany

It is hard to deny that our celebration of Epiphany has fallen on hard times. For most Christians, both the day itself (January 6th) and the season of the church year that follows pass largely unnoticed. A reevaluation is in order, if for no other reason than that this was not always so.

Church historians tell us that early Christians placed much more emphasis on Epiphany than we do today. Their celebration is believed to have overshadowed even their commemoration of Christmas. The passage of time has obscured the reasons, which is not surprising. Time obscures everything that is not carefully recorded and consciously preserved—which is what God’s Word provides. All else so easily gets clouded and confused. Our beloved manger scenes are a case in point. Most depict three kings worshipping the Baby Jesus as He lay in a manger in a wooden stable, the star overhead, and the angels, shepherds, and farm animals looking on. The reality is that the “Magi” were almost certainly not kings, their number is unknown (as are their names), and they visited long after the shepherds had returned to their flocks—up to two years after Jesus’ birth, by which time Jesus’ family was no longer living in a stable but a house. It is also unlikely that the stable where Jesus was born was made of wood rather than stone, and that it was detached from the owner’s house. Finally, there is no mention in God’s Word of angels, shepherds, or animals being present when the Magi visited.

What we do know is that the early Christians focused on Epiphany because it represented not only Jesus’ “manifestation” or “revelation” to the world (the root meaning of “epiphany”) but also his revelation *individually* to every Christian, both Jew and Gentile.

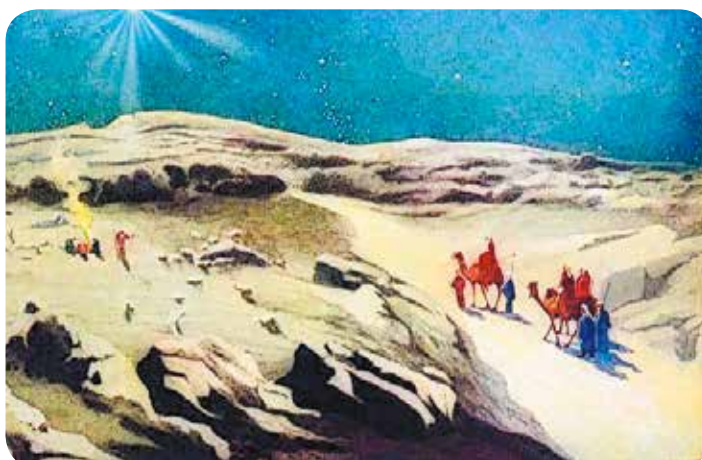
We today find it inconceivable that Jesus would come to

earth without revealing Himself. Early Christians did not seem to harbor that presumption. Their celebration of the Epiphany acknowledged not only their own unworthiness, it acknowledged the fact that their personal or individual recognition of Jesus as the Promised Messiah was itself a gift that had to be provided by God Himself. Theirs was, in fact, both a humble and Scriptural attitude. For mankind to benefit from Jesus’ incarnation, He had to be

revealed to us. This was not a given. Recall how Mary was unable at first to recognize the risen Savior outside of the tomb (John 20:15-16). The two disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognize Jesus as He walked and talked with them: “Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” (Luke 24:15-16 ESV) It was only after He broke bread with them

that “their eyes were opened.” (Luke 24:30-31) When Jesus appeared in the upper room, His own Apostles thought they were seeing a spirit (Luke 24:37), and they again initially failed to recognize Him standing beside the Sea of Galilee (John 21:4).

Epiphany is the humble recognition that not only was mankind utterly unworthy to have Jesus enter our world as our Savior, it is the acknowledgement of His grace in revealing Himself not only to the world, but to us, personally and individually, as the Son of God and the fulfillment of the ancient Messianic Gospel promise. Surely this provides more than enough evidence for a change in attitude toward this season of Epiphany, as well as a worthy target for our praise, worship, and thanksgiving.



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



# Sacrificial Love

When we consider St. Valentine—the early Christian martyr for whom Valentine's Day is named—his identity remains a mystery. There were numerous Christian martyrs named Valentine, and any number of them could have been the one whose name we remember every year. Regardless of his identity, I'm certain he would not recognize the current customs of Valentine's Day as being associated with him. In fact, he might not even recognize some of the stories about his life as belonging to him at all! Would he remember handing a heart-shaped note signed "your Valentine" to his jailer's daughter, much less remember healing that girl of her blindness? These and many other stories about saints and martyrs seem to spin out of control over time, much like the focus of today's Valentine's Day celebrations.

There is one thing we can be confident about concerning this mysterious Valentine figure: he was killed for confessing his faith in Christ. And while we might view martyrdom as a very sad outcome for any Christian, many of the early Christian martyrs do not seem to have shared that sentiment. For instance, the story written about the martyrdom of Polycarp, one of the prominent early Christian martyrs, contains this conclusion: "He was apprehended by Herodes, when Philip of Tralles was high priest, in the proconsulship of Statius Quadratus, but in the reign of the Eternal King Jesus Christ. To whom be the glory, honor, greatness, and eternal throne, from generation to generation. Amen." (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 21:1) We pray that the lives of all martyrs end with this confidence, that though the rulers of the day should bring about their death, the true Ruler of all has already guaranteed their life.

So, Valentine's Day was simply a day for Christians to

commemorate a man who, like many before him, died with his hope founded in Christ Jesus as his Savior. Clearly today's holiday, with its exclusive focus on romantic love and the sinful culture that is often conflated with romantic love, represents a drastic departure from the original intent. That's not to say, however, that we can't celebrate the gift of love that God has given us. After all, true love is that self-sacrificing devotion that we may have for one another, reflecting the very same love that God has for us.

But I think there's also value in contemplating martyrdom, of all things, on Valentine's Day. We live in an age of martyrdom. We still see persecution toward Christians unfolding all around us in the world. Valentine's Day



Saint Valentine is said to have ministered to the faithful amidst the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire

can remind us that this is not the unusual thing, rather it's the ordinary lot for Christians. After all, Jesus said, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." (John 15:20) But even if such persecution were to land on our doorsteps—if our government started rounding up Christians for public execution—even then we would bear in mind Who's

really in charge. We wouldn't need to be afraid, for the Gospel perseveres in all of these challenges. That self-sacrificing love of your Savior endures for you into eternity, and not even death will be able to separate you from it.

So, as distorted as our culture is on Valentine's Day and about love itself, love remains what God says it is. Love is ultimately the giving of oneself for another. Laying down one's life for the other. Submitting to one another—that is, putting the other one first. And my love falls far short, as does yours. The only one I know that truly loves is the One who has loved us by laying down His own life, Jesus Christ.



**Sam Rodebaugh** is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church of Manchester, Missouri.

*This series offers an overview of the chief teachings of the Christian church.*

# The Efficacy of Scripture

Teachers of writing often encourage students to strengthen their writing by moving key ideas away from the nouns to the verbs; in other words, to put the action where it belongs—with the action words. For instance, there is just a smidgin more vitality in saying “Don and Shirley farm the land,” than to say simply, “Don and Shirley are farmers.”

It is not surprising, then, that the Lutheran theologian Martin Franzmann (1907-1976) used that strategy when he penned the hymn “Thy Strong Word,” where he produced phrases like “Thy strong Word did cleave the darkness”; “Broke the light of thy salvation”; and “bespeaks us righteous.” The potency of such language, along with the drumbeat cadence of its melody, make it a thrilling hymn to sing.

But Franzmann deeply understood the Bible’s own testimony—that Holy Scripture is indeed strong because it carries the Holy Spirit’s own vitality. Lutheran teachers speak about the “efficacy” of Scripture, or, to apply that “strong verb” idea: “Scripture effects whatever it is supposed to do.” That is what the Lord Himself asserted through the prophet Isaiah; pointing out the power of the rains to make the earth spring forth in vitality, He says, “*So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*” (Isaiah 55:11) What Isaiah taught in the Old Testament, Paul also taught in the New, comparing God’s creative Word in the beginning to the effectiveness of the message of Jesus Christ: “*For it is God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 4.6)

Different aspects of Holy Scripture accomplish different

things. When Scripture addresses sinful humans with the holy will of God (His Law), it has the power to crush all fleshly defenses, as Paul explained to the Roman Christians: “*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. . . for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” (3:19-20) People are pretty good at covering up their dark impulses and shameful thoughts, but the right Scripture, applied at the right time, can break through human rationalizing, white lies, and denial, leaving the sinner in what the theologians call “terrors of conscience.”

Such Law-preaching is only part of the work of Scripture, though; it is a means to an end, working up the soil of the heart so that the sinner may be more ready to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ (His Gospel). Paul had profound confidence in this Word’s power to create faith: “*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.*” (Romans 1:16) This really is the central message of all Scripture; it is the testimony of God’s effective love for the world of sinners, carried out by His own Son’s life, death, and resurrection. The Holy Spirit works through that message to justify the guilty sinner, calm the anxious heart, comfort to the grieving soul, and settle the troubled spirit.

Holy Scripture—and only Holy Scripture—is able to bring sinners, you and me included, to repentance and saving faith. That’s a powerful thought.



**Peter Reim** is a former pastor who now teaches English at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. He makes his home in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

# The Lord Has Anointed Me to Preach

Several Old Testament prophecies declare that the Messiah would be a preacher. Jesus verified that, saying, *“I must preach the kingdom of God . . . because for this purpose I have been sent!”* (Luke 4:43)

Jesus spoke those words after entering the synagogue in Nazareth and preaching from Isaiah 61, which we quote here:

*“The Spirit of the LORD God is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”* (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Let us examine briefly those explanatory phrases.

Jesus would *“preach good tidings to the poor.”* These are the people of whom Jesus spoke in the Beatitudes: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”* (Matthew 5:3) They have nothing to offer God but their humble and penitent hearts. Those good tidings proclaim God’s love and forgiveness.

Preaching *“good tidings to the poor”* is directly connected to Jesus being sent to *“heal the brokenhearted.”* Our hearts are broken with the guilt we feel, sin’s consequences, and our struggle with our sinful nature. Though sin is a source of great pain and suffering, the good will of Jesus is stronger, and His love will preside over our lives always.

Jesus proclaimed *“liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”* Jesus did more than merely preach about it!

*“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, [Jesus] Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* (Hebrews 2:14-15)

Jesus also proclaimed *“the acceptable year of the LORD.”* That time of grace is right now!

***Though sin is a source of great pain and suffering, the good will of Jesus is stronger, and His love will preside over our lives always.***

*“Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.”* (Isaiah 55:6)

What was and continues to be the goal of Jesus’ preaching ministry?

*“To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”* (Isaiah 61:2-3)

He calls His people to be “trees of righteousness.” In Palestine there are relatively few trees. Where trees are found they provide needed shade from oppressive heat. God’s people are seedlings planted by God Himself to bear precious fruit to delight and bless everyone around them and so glorify God. This is the kind of fruit that comes from being covered with the righteousness of Christ and being renewed by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. His people are called to be a haven for others seeking relief from the intensity of guilt and the unsettledness of the world.

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Jesus leads us to true repentance that we may have abundant life and truly praise our heavenly Father! By His grace we become trees of righteousness. Through God’s grace our hearts have been changed, and so has our eternal destiny.

In Matthew 9:35 it says, *“Jesus went about all the cities and villages . . . preaching the gospel of the kingdom.”* He has given us ears to hear. Let us hear!



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



# Your Word Should Be Sufficient

*“But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes,’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment.” (James 5:12)*

The saying “truth is in short supply” is as true today as in the past. Children of the world who strive for success have been known to play fast and loose with the truth if it is to their advantage. And in order to convince others they are speaking the truth, they back it up with an oath by saying, “I swear by God I am telling the truth.” Those in the habit of using many oaths are viewed with suspicion, raising doubts as to whether they are being truthful. If they are true to their word, why the need to swear so much?

Christians, who are children of the God of all truth, highly value the truth, especially the precious Gospel truths that make us free through our Savior Jesus Christ. And seeking to glorify the Lord, we want to be known as truth-tellers. If we have a reputation of being untruthful, how can we expect unbelievers to give any credence to our Gospel witness?

Should we ever be tempted to think that we need to add an oath in order to verify our word, keep the divine counsel of James in mind when he writes, “*But let your ‘Yes,’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgment.*” In other words, in our daily conversations our word should be good enough without swearing by God. Swearing in such cases is totally unnecessary.

Neither should we think that some oaths are more binding than others. Whether people swear by heaven or by earth, they are all oaths sworn to God, because everything belongs to God and therefore all oaths are obligatory.

What James testifies to here in verse 12 concerning oaths echoes what Jesus preached about on swearing in His Sermon on the Mount. He proclaimed there, “*Again you*

*have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all . . . But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.” (Matthew 5:33-34,37)*



When Jesus and James instruct us to not swear, they are not telling us there is never a purposeful need or a godly reason to take an oath. Jesus allowed Himself to be put under oath at His trial before the Jews, in order to testify whether He was God. Besides swearing in a court of law to bear witness to the truth, other godly oaths include our confirmation promise, an oath of office, and marital vows.

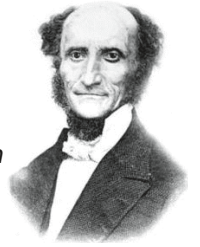
God the Father also swore by His name to Abraham that He would send an Offspring from his descendants Who would bless all the nations of the world (Genesis 22:16-18). We thank and praise God for making this oath and keeping this promise, for since we are not always true to our word nor in every case keep our promises, this special Offspring offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice to cover those sins. The apostle Paul comforts us when we prove to be unfaithful, saying to us, “*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*” (2 Timothy 2:13)

Just as our Lord is true to His Word, so we also want to be true to ours. And it is seldom necessary to back it up with an oath.



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

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.



## What Do You Mean by *Faith*?

**“*T*hesis XIV--In the fifth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when sinners who have been struck down and terrified by the Law are directed, not to the Word and the Sacraments, but to their own prayers and wrestlings with God in order that they may win their way into a state of grace; in other words, when they are told to keep on praying and struggling until they feel that God has received them into grace.”**

It's a rule of grammar that is easy to break. When referring to yourself, should you use “I” or “me?” The rule: if you are the subject, use “I”; if you are the object or recipient, use “me.”

This is more than good grammar; it's good theology. Jesus explained it in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Just follow the pronouns in the story: one man uses I and the other me. One made himself the subject of his salvation, while the other simply wanted to be the object of God's mercy. One was saved and the other lost.

This principle is also at the heart of Thesis XIV.

All Christian churches claim to teach salvation by faith, but what do they mean by “faith”? Is faith an effort or decision that man makes? Is it believing in Jesus with a list of rules to follow? Is it something that God starts and we must finish? Is faith an emotional feeling within us, so that a lack of feeling indicates a lack of faith? Is my faith or the fact that I would have faith the reason God chose me?

In 1817, the king of Prussia merged his wife's Lutheran Church with his own Reformed Church. On the surface, both appeared to be agreed on the cardinal doctrine of Scripture: justification by faith. But a royal decree wouldn't settle the differences for any who bothered to ask the

question, “What do you mean by faith?” The answer led many to emigrate to America and was the impetus for establishing confessional Lutheranism as we know it today.

The end of the 19th century brought another battle over “faith.” This time, the debate took place within Lutheranism. The Election Controversy tried to answer why some people were chosen by God to be saved, while others were not. Some argued that “by faith” means, “on account of faith,” while others suggested that God looked into the future and chose people “in view of the faith” that they would have. Both broke the rule. Both used “I” when the only correct pronoun is “me.”

Walther correctly explained that we are not justified on account of our faith. Faith is not a merit or work; it is merely the instrument God uses to make what Jesus did for all people our very own. “It is an awful perversion of the Gospel,” he wrote, “to treat the command to believe as a condition of man's justification and salvation.” The only thing I contribute to my salvation is my sin. Everything else is God's work for me. By the faith that He creates, I receive all of the benefits Jesus gives. God gives and sustains my faith through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. It depends entirely on Him, not me. To teach otherwise, says Walther, “subverts the entire Gospel.”

When people tell you that they believe in salvation by faith, be sure to ask what they mean by “faith.” If their spiritual grammar is wrong, they don't really understand the beauty of God's grace. And you can help them.



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

[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](http://www.ilc.edu/Walther)]



## OUR LITURGICAL LEGACY

*Ever wonder why we Lutherans use the form of worship we do?  
In this series we examine the depth and meaning of the various elements of  
our worship service, beginning with the history of Christian worship itself.*

# Lutheran Liturgical Reform, Part I

**B**ecause of the lead time for Lutheran Spokesman submissions, the writing of this February issue article is being started in the morning of Thanksgiving Day. Today, I am very much looking forward to a traditional Thanksgiving meal prepared by an excellent cook—my wife. However, what if the turkey were infused with plastic, the mashed potatoes covered with dirt from the garden, and the cranberries adulterated with epoxy glue?

That sort of mixing of excellent and nourishing (spiritual) food with inedible dreck was what medieval church goers had been subjected to in their worship services. Martin Luther recognized that some elements of the Roman Catholic Mass were unbiblical, and even anti-biblical. He therefore worked to reform church liturgy so that it would conform to biblical theology. In short, Luther wanted to remove the plastic, dirt, and glue; while keeping the turkey, mashed potatoes, and cranberries. That is, he wanted to retain the biblical elements of the Mass, while eliminating those that were not biblical.

Luther's first revision of the Roman Mass (in 1523) was called *Formula Missae et Communionis* (Formula of Mass and Communion). In it, Luther stated his purpose as being "to purify that which is in use." Unlike radical reformers such as Andreas Karlstadt and Thomas Müntzer, Luther sought reform, not revolution. He recognized that the Mass should be purified, not destroyed. As time went on and circumstances required, Luther made additional revisions to the Roman Mass which he had not included in his *Formula Missae et Communionis*.

So, then, what elements of the Roman Mass did Luther address as needing to be eliminated or revised in the worship service?

- ♦ **The Mass as a meritorious work** The Roman Catholic Church taught that attending Mass was a good work that Christians performed, which contributed to their earning of salvation. Luther emphasized that salvation is by God's grace alone, received through faith, and not something that can be earned by meritorious works on our part.
- ♦ **Transubstantiation** The Roman Catholic Church taught that in Holy Communion, the bread and the wine became

the body and blood of Christ, and that the elements of bread and wine were no longer present. This differs from the biblical truth that the communicant receives the true body and blood of Christ "in, with, and under" the bread and wine.

- ♦ **The Mass as a re-sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ** The Roman Catholic Church taught that in Holy Communion, the body and blood of Christ are being re-sacrificed for the remission of sins. This contradicts the biblical truth that when Jesus died on the cross, His perfect life and vicarious death paid once and for all for all sins. To claim that the priest is re-sacrificing the body and blood of Christ to remit sins is not only incorrect, it is blasphemous. In his liturgical reforms and also in his preaching and writing, Luther eliminated and refuted this false teaching.
- ♦ **Withholding the chalice from the laity** In the Lord's Supper of the Roman Catholic Mass, lay people were given the consecrated bread, but not the wine. Luther insisted that—in accordance with Jesus' words of institution—all communicants should receive both elements when they commune.
- ♦ **Conducting the Mass in Latin** Most of the laity did not understand Latin. In his German Mass of 1526, Luther emphasized the importance of actually "hearing the Word of God" rather than merely "hearing Mass." Except for the *kyrie*, every part of this service was in German.

Thanks to Martin Luther and the other orthodox Lutheran theologians who followed him, we now feast on the "turkey, mashed potatoes, and cranberries" of God's pure Word—our spiritual food—when we worship. Truly, every Sunday is now a spiritual Thanksgiving Day for us.



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

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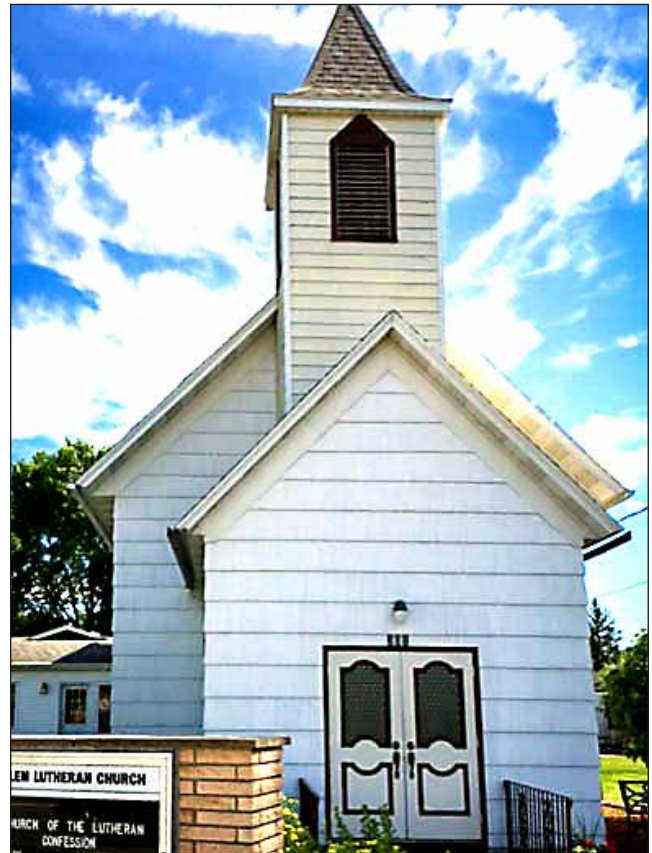
## Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church Eagle Lake, Minnesota

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In the fall of 2019, the members of Salem were blessed to have a special service commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the congregation. Though many things certainly change in that amount of time, the steadfast love and care of our Lord for His people does not! On a local level that steadfast love can be observed by simply noting the things the Lord continues to do in our congregation.

During the years since we last updated you, some of the faces have changed here at Salem. The same pastor is here, but he was blessed with a wife and, more recently, a daughter. Several longtime, faithful members have been called home to be with their Lord. These were individuals who were very involved in the life of the congregation, people who treasured His Word and His house. However, we are thankful to have new individuals with us. Not only do we find several more pre-school aged children in our services, but others have joined us as well. Some have been welcomed to our membership by transfer, and another joined after finding that the teachings of our church body are more in line with Scripture than those of his former fellowship. One new member became a voting member this fall after turning eighteen. In each of these cases, we are joyful to have these fellow believers joining with us to grow in the grace of our Savior Jesus and to raise our collective voices in singing His praises!

Yes, in all generations, the Lord continues to be our dwelling place (Psalm 90:1)! How vital for each succeeding generation not only to hold firmly to the truths which they have been taught by their parents and teachers, but also to do as the Lord says and teach those same truths diligently to their children (Deuteronomy 6:7). With all of the challenges to faith that believers face as they travel through this life to the life to come, it is imperative that they become ever more grounded in the saving knowledge of God's Word!



Our congregation here in the small town of Eagle Lake, Minnesota, is blessed to have a role to play in that all-important task of bringing the youth up in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4 KJV) Our Sunday School at present is smaller than it was just a few years ago, but continues to impart the teachings of Scripture to the hearts and minds of the youngest of the flock. While we do not have a grade school, some school-age members have through the years made use of the elementary and high school at nearby Immanuel of Mankato. Members of Salem are very grateful for Immanuel’s proximity to us and the opportunities provided through their congregation and school.





With the exception of 2020, Salem has continued to conduct a summer Bible school, usually doing some flyer distribution in town beforehand. Neighbors have joined us at times for these sessions.

For the past couple of years, Salem's pastor has conducted a Bible study at a Mankato apartment complex where both Salem and Immanuel have had members reside. Several non-members have also participated in that class.

Besides the regular church activities throughout the year, members annually join at an area lake in the summer for a church picnic. This past summer, members also came together on a Saturday to landscape and put in many new plants around the church building. Salem continues to have an active ladies' group of five to eight people who gather monthly (see inside cover). As Christmas

approaches, a good-sized contingent of members gathers and sings Christmas music at a variety of settings where other members reside.

Salem currently has a total of sixty-five souls listed as members, with six of them being school-aged and four between the ages of one and four. While we as individual believers, and as a congregation, continue to march with the Holy Christian Church inexorably forward through this world to eternity, we stand on the abiding and unchanging Word of God. We are comforted and at peace, for that same Lord Jesus Who has redeemed each of us has promised never to leave or forsake us! (Hebrews 13:5)

If you should be near the Eagle Lake area, you are encouraged to stop in and join us for a service. We'd love to meet some of our fellow believers from around our synod!



**George Dummann** is pastor of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church in Eagle Lake, Minnesota.

# “The Number of the Disciples Multiplied Greatly”

*[Editor’s note: in the following report the names of certain people and places have been withheld because of the risk of persecution.]*

## Growth

Three times in Acts there are indications as to the growth of the church as the Word went forth. There is the title of this article from Acts 6:7. It is the Word in hearts that grew and multiplied. (Acts 12:24, 19:20)

In the Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church (BELC) in India we have seen this as their fortieth anniversary is celebrated in December. Souls served with the Word who then profess their faith in Jesus is what has happened. The BELC began in 1981 when Pastor Bas withdrew from the IELC. We see God’s work over forty years as we contemplate the following statistics:

1986	300 souls served
1992	2000+
2003	3800+
2007	10,200+
2009	14,000+
2016	25,200+
2021	50,400+



Our joint work with the BELC began in 1983 and was reported in the CLC Convention of 1984. The work is divided into districts of the church. In 2007 there were fourteen districts, and now there are twenty-five. These are not dry statistics, but evidence of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. And when we look deeper into the numbers we see that our pastors in these districts are working to spread the Word in many villages where there is no other Christian witness. One district started in 2006 had eleven men serving, with seven of them working in villages with no Christian church. One district that was opened in 2013 had seventeen pastors, of whom eleven were preaching in villages where there was no other church. Another district started in 2007 had thirteen men serving in that many villages where they were the only church. Repeated down through the years, this is more than just people leaving another church to join the BELC;

rather, it is an extensive reaching out to those in unbelief. And the BELC leadership has made consistent efforts to expand. The Word of the Lord grows.

## Disaster?!

The devil was not pleased with the growth of numbers and faith in Jesus. The following was reported to the 2002 Convention:

*“Our overseas work in India was dealt a major blow with the revelation that Pastor Mohan Bas of the BELC had been dealing deceitfully with us, for a number of years. Pastor Bas has been the chairman of the BELC since its beginning. He has also served as the dean of the Martin Luther Bible School, as well as the administrator of the children’s home. Without our knowledge, Pastor Bas began to make contacts with another Lutheran church.”*

Despite the efforts of the devil, this “disaster” was turned into good by our Lord when nearly all the pastors and congregations of the BELC chose to remain in fellowship with us, professing that they knew nothing of this and that it was wrong to do this. Within the BELC, proper discipline has had to be exercised even to the point of excommunicating one of the seven district chairmen in the past.

## What God Hath Done

The Mission Board reports to us regularly on our sister churches and the joint work we carry out with them. Most recently it was reported that the BELC had 888 pastors, 999 congregations, 354 preaching stations, and 21 pastors in training at the Bible Institute. What a wonderful number of things to celebrate after forty years of God’s grace and guidance! The Hindu nationalists continue to persecute Christians in India. Some of the Indian states have passed anti-conversion laws. Yet the Gospel banners forward go.



**David Koenig** has served as a foreign missionary in Africa, India, and elsewhere. Though officially retired, he continues to be active in the synod’s mission endeavors.



# Domestic Mission Program

Our CLC domestic mission program assists in the spread of the Gospel by providing direction, encouragement, and financial support to preaching stations and congregations that are unable to support a full-time ministry on their own but demonstrate the potential to become a self-supporting congregation. In this way, the members of the CLC work together toward the goal of establishing self-supporting congregations in North America.

In the early days of the CLC, the main function of the Board of Missions was to distribute funds to support congregations that had formed during the split from the WELS/ELS and were not immediately able to support a full-time ministry. One might be surprised to know that in our sixty plus years, the CLC has supported over fifty mission congregations across the United States and Canada in places like Minneapolis, St. Paul, Seattle, Spokane, Phoenix, Eau Claire, Winter Haven, Cheyenne, Winner, Denver, San Francisco, Chicago, Houston, St. Louis, Corpus Christi, Madison, Sister Lakes, Rapid City, Loveland, Dallas, Fairfax, Bismarck, Sioux Falls, North Port, Detroit, Albuquerque, Fargo, Appleton, Weslaco, Tacoma, Vernon, and Atlanta. Over half of those congregations are now self-supporting, including Gift of God, Mapleton, which just became self-supporting last month.

Currently, the Board of Missions supports four domestic congregations: Living Hope, Appleton, WI; Zion, Loganville, GA; Ascension, Tacoma, WA; and Mt. Zion, Madison Heights, MI. The Committee on Domestic Fields has been active over the past few years producing bulletin inserts, Bible studies, and mission-themed worship services to assist all of our CLC congregations in carrying out the Great Commission (see [us.lutheranmissions.org](http://us.lutheranmissions.org)). The Board also maintains a list of preaching stations, which is published here for the benefit of CLC members living near these areas who wish to enjoy fellowship with like-minded believers.

May the Lord bless our efforts as we carry out His Great Commission at home and abroad.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Pastoral Contact</b>	<b>Lay Contact</b>
Alaska, Anchorage	Pastor Dave Naumann (920) 266-5384	Mr. Jay Schultz (907) 617-4970
Alaska, Fairbanks	Pastor Dave Naumann (920) 266-5384	Mr. Erich Hoffmann (907) 488-3017
Alaska, Ketchikan	Pastor Dave Naumann (920) 266-5384	Mr. Jacob Schultz (907) 254-9766
California, (L.A. Area)	Pastor Luke Bernthal (650) 282-5752	Mr. Kevin Fossum (951) 712-7752
California, Stockton	Pastor Luke Bernthal (650) 282-5752	Mr. Roy Cameron 209-988-0148
Florida, Orlando		Mr. Paul Kuehne (407) 595-5589
Michigan, Grand Rapids	Pastor Stefan Sonnenfeld (701) 566-0924	Mr. Richard Waldner (616) 457-9726
Missouri, Kansas City	Pastor Sam Rodebaugh (414) 534-7279	Mr. Justin Wenner (605) 484-5063
Lincoln, Nebraska	Pastor Tim Daub (605) 994-2145	Mr. Michael Wood (605) 216-3084
New Mexico, Albuquerque		Mr. Robin Vogsland (505) 892-6934
Ohio, Cleveland	Pastor Tom Naumann (920) 266-5387	Mrs. Laura Hughes (440) 865-2534
South Carolina, Greenville	Pastor David Pfeiffer (803) 796-0770	
South Dakota, Aberdeen	Pastor Tim Daub (605) 994-2145	Mr. Jeff Kippley (605) 380-9565
Tennessee area	Pastor Frank Gantt (470) 701-8669	Mr. Chuck Templeton (931) 979-0840
Virginia, Fairfax (Washington, DC area)	Pastor Glenn Oster (803) 361-2739	Mr. David Loop (703) 250-202
Washington, Withrow/Mansfield	Pastor Drew Naumann (253) 414-4740	Mr. Luke Lillquist (509) 279-8889
Wyoming, Gillette	Pastor Aaron Ude (605) 393- 1311	Mr. Jay Hollenbeck (307) 680- 3777
Alberta, Calgary (Canada)	Pastor David Reim (250) 549-5250	Michael Sandberg (403) 998-5641



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

# “BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS FEBRUARY 2022

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Feb 1	TLH 133	Luke 2:41-52	Jesus takes up work in His Father’s business. We see the boy Jesus keeping the Law for us, and thus already laboring to accomplish our salvation.
Feb 2	TLH 279	Luke 5:27-39	People sick with sin need Doctor Jesus, the only one Who can cure what ails us. Our hearts are filled with the joy of a wedding banquet as we cling in faith to our Doctor, Who is also the Bridegroom of His Church.
Feb 3	TLH 405	Luke 7:36-50	A better translation of v. 47 reads: <i>“Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that’s why she loved much.”</i> (CSB) Love for Jesus flows from the forgiving love He has shown to us.
Feb 4	TLH 370	Luke 9:28-45	When Jesus comes down from the mountain, He finds doubting hearts. Jesus’ disciples lack sufficient trust in Him to drive out a demon. A father isn’t sure Jesus can help. But all things are possible for him who believes.
Feb 5	TLH 323	Luke 11:37-54	For their legalistic and loveless practices, Jesus pronounces six woes on the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Let’s guard against the proud spirit of the Pharisees, and with humbled hearts daily seek God’s forgiveness.
Feb 7	TLH 289	Luke 12:1-3	Don’t think you can hide anything from God. He sees and hears every one of our many sins. Thank God He looks upon us as righteous for the sake of His Son.
Feb 8	WS 785	Luke 12:4-9	God places tremendous value even on little sparrows. How much more value does He place on you, dear child of God! Think of the cost He paid to make you His own!
Feb 9	TLH 366	Luke 12:13-21	Foolish people make it all about money and possessions. Lord, give repentance to our materialistic hearts. Keep us rich toward God through faith in Jesus!
Feb 10	WS 789	Luke 12:22-32	Worry, worry, worry! It does us no good whatsoever. Lord, help us seek Your kingdom first and foremost, trusting that You will provide whatever we need for this body and life.
Feb 11	TLH 416	Luke 12:35-48	Jesus calls for readiness and faithfulness as we await His Second Coming. We need our Savior’s constant mercy and strength if we are to remain His trustworthy servants.
Feb 12	TLH 278	Luke 13:1-9	When others are struck by tragedy, let’s not think of them as more sinful than we are. Rather, let us see our own need of repentance. In His great mercy, the Lord patiently waits for sinners to repent.
Feb 14	TLH 412	Luke 13:10-17	Jesus rebukes a legalistic synagogue ruler for his misapplied and loveless understanding of Sabbath Day laws. Legalism always gets in the way of true Christ-like love for others.
Feb 15	TLH 355	Luke 13:22-30	So many think that the door into heaven is wide, that any religion will get you there. Not so! Narrow is the door, and Jesus Christ alone is the Door.
Feb 16	TLH 403	Luke 14:1-15	Our sinful nature always wants to put ourselves before others. Jesus put others before Himself, especially when He went to the cross to save us. Give us grace, Jesus, to put others before ourselves.
Feb 17	TLH 423	Luke 14:25-35	Jesus paid the full cost of our salvation. Our cost as His disciples is to let go of our love for the things of the world. May the Savior’s love make us glad to pay that paltry price.
Feb 18	TLH 324	Luke 15:1-10	How fervently would you look for a lost coin or animal? What about your wallet or cell phone? Rejoice! Jesus is consumed with the desire to find lost sinners like you and me!
Feb 19	WS 777	Luke 15:11-32	One son lost in immoral living. The other lost in self-righteousness. It’s because of the sacrifice of another unmentioned Son that the Father shows unconditional love and compassion for both.
Feb 21	TLH 442	Luke 16:1-15	We can never buy our way into heaven. However, the Gospel moves us to use our money to bring the Gospel to others. In eternity we will be welcomed by the beneficiaries of our love offerings.
Feb 22	TLH 285	Luke 16:19-31	Just as one can’t buy his way into heaven, neither does material poverty assure one of a place in heaven. Rich or poor, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God!
Feb 23	TLH 400	Luke 17:1-10	A few things taught us by our Savior: 1) Don’t lead others into sin. 2) Rebuke those who sin. 3) Forgive penitent sinners. 4) Faith in Christ is able to deal with mountain-sized problems.
Feb 24	TLH 610	Luke 17:20-37	The Flood in Noah’s day, along with the destruction of Sodom in Lot’s day, are used to warn us to be ready for the sudden coming of the Son of Man. Lord keep us anchored to Your cross!
Feb 25	TLH 457	Luke 18:1-8	With this section Jesus invites us to believe that God is “our true Father . . . so that with all boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.”
Feb 26	TLH 371	Luke 18:9-17	Pharisaical work-righteousness wants nothing to do with God’s mercy and Jesus’ cross. Help us always, Lord, to see our sinfulness, and then to trust in Your forgiving mercy!
Feb 28	TLH 370	Luke 18:18-34	It’s impossible for sinners to enter the kingdom of God on their own. But God did the impossible through Christ, Who kept the Law in our place and died as our substitute.



## IN THE PIPELINE

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

# Kendra Rodebaugh

**Age:** 21

**Program:** Education

**Year in School:**  
**Senior**

**Where were you born?**

Eau Claire, Wisconsin

**Where did you grow up?**

Eau Claire

**Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family.**

My husband Nathan and I have been married since August 2021. We enjoy living in the same area as both of our parents and my younger sisters. We also like taking trips to visit family in other parts of the country when possible.

**What hobbies, sports or extracurriculars interest you?**

I value getting together with family and friends and I also enjoy going for long walks and kayaking with my husband. Quality time with loved ones is time well spent.

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

I am always up for a project, whether it be home improvement projects, crafting, or woodworking.

**Which academic subjects especially interest you?**

I love art and seeing how everyone's creativity comes through in different ways. I also enjoy life science and learning more about the amazing complexity of God's



creation.

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

I have always loved working with kids, and in my senior year of high school it just clicked that teaching was what I wanted to do. After working with children at camps, VBS, and Sunday school, I had a pretty good understanding of how I could apply the skills that God gave me to serve in His Kingdom.

**What have you appreciated most about your time at ILC?**

I really appreciated the community and the care. The students and the faculty have so much Christian love for each other and the closeness of the community allows for lifelong friendships and connections to form. God has

truly blessed me through my years at ILC.

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

More than anything, our leaders will need Christ's love shining through them to the people. It is so easy to let our hopes sag when we consider the state of the world today. Instead, we need to remember the joy we have in Christ and abide steadfast to His Word as we share that with others and bring up the next generation of His church.

## SEEN IN PASSING

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

**Argentinian Cities Ban Worship Around Election Day.** Several major cities in Argentina have banned worship and religious observances for a several day period before and after election days in an apparent attempt to stifle religious conservative candidates. Such candidates have proliferated in the wake of a contentious national debate about whether to legalize abortion, and some see the new legislation as an effort to keep them from marshalling support. A group called the Argentine Council for Religious Freedom has called for a review of the measure. Silliman, Daniel. "Cities Restrict Worship During Elections." *Gleanings*. Christianity Today, vol. 66, no. 1, January-February 2022, p. 22.

**Funerals Are More Expensive Than Ever.** In an article for *Wired* magazine, Eleanor Cummins documented the skyrocketing price of American funerals. Up until the Civil War, families usually handled funeral arrangements with little or no financial outlay; the women lovingly prepared the decedent's body for burial, and the men built a casket. During and after the Civil War, however, the practice of embalming bodies sprang up in order to allow soldiers killed on distant battlefields to be shipped home for burial. Since then the prices have only gone up. By 2019, the average price of a U.S. funeral was \$9,135—and that's without the cost of burial plot or monument. Even cremation, long considered an economical alternative to burial, now averages \$6,645. The stressful time surrounding the death of a loved one is often the worst time to make major financial decisions, and this frequently results in people financing expensive funerals with personal loans and credit card debt. During the COVID pandemic, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has fed the controversy by pledging to reimburse families of people killed in the pandemic up to \$9000 in funeral expenses. FEMA has already awarded over \$1 billion to more than 165,000 people. Cummins, Eleanor. "How 'Big Funeral' Made the Afterlife So Expensive." *Ideas*. *Wired.com*, 1 Oct. 2021. Web. 17 Dec. 2021.

**Apple Removes Bible App on Orders of Chinese Government.** "People with iPhones in China can no longer download the *Olive Tree* Bible app after Apple removed it from the Chinese app store at the request of authorities. The Bible software maker in the US was told it would have to file special permits to comply with rules regarding 'book or magazine content,' which seem to specifically target religious literature. A Qur'an app was also removed, as was Amazon's audiobook service Audible. Those who have already downloaded the programs can continue to use them but cannot get

updates. According to the human rights group Amnesty International, Apple has consistently consented to China's censorship demands." Silliman, Daniel. "Bible Removed from App Store." *Gleanings*. Christianity Today, vol. 65, no. 9, December 2021, p. 16.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Call for Nominations:** Nominations to fill synodical offices can be made by CLC pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of CLC congregations any time between January 1 through March 31, 2022. Nomination forms will be available on our [clclutheran.org](http://clclutheran.org) website.  
Pastor Paul D. Nolting, CLC Moderator

**Nomination for ILC President:** The Board of Regents announces the following nominee for the office of President of Immanuel Lutheran College: Daniel Schierenbeck. Dr. Schierenbeck was the only person nominated. The term of this call is for two years, extending to the end of Academic Year 2024. All comments from members of CLC congregations regarding this candidate are to be received by March 15, 2022 (postmarked by March 1), to: Mr. James Burkhardt; 217 Windy Lane; Rockwall, TX 75087; email: [jeb6217@yahoo.com](mailto:jeb6217@yahoo.com).  
Pastor John Hein, Chairman, CLC Board of Regents

