


JULY 2023 VOL 66 NO.1

# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



God from the  
beginning chose  
you for salvation  
through  
sanctification by  
the Spirit.

—2 Thessalonians 2:13



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# The Wonder of Sanctification

**“B**ut we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

With the arrival of Pentecost, there comes the proclamation of a wonderful scriptural term: *sanctification*. *Sanctification* is one of those big, Bible words that we don’t use in daily conversation. For this reason, it is easy to forget what it means. In our confirmation instruction, we may have been given this definition for *sanctify*: “to make holy.” But now we need to remember what *holy* means. Let’s see; *holy* means “free from sin,” right? Yes, that is the meaning in many passages, but not all. That would not be a working definition for “the holy garments of Aaron,” nor for “the holy city,” nor “the holy temple,” nor “the Holy Scriptures.”

*Holy* means “separate,” “set apart.” The Holy Scriptures are scriptures or writings which are set apart from all other writings; they are unique—one of a kind. The holy city is set apart from all other cities. The holy temple is a building set apart from all other buildings. The holy garments are set apart from all other garments. In each instance, it is God Who set these things apart from all other things of the same kind. They were set apart for God’s own sacred use.

How does this apply to you and me? This is where it gets very interesting, very personal, and very exciting. THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS SANCTIFIED US! He has set us apart from all other human beings. Isn’t this amazing? After all, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) “There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.” (Ecclesiastes 7:20) “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8) From sea to shining sea, from this land to the ends of the earth, all (including us) have been lumped together in the congregation of the damned.

And yet, our condemned ears hear an unbelievable announcement: “God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit.” (2 Thessalonians 2:13) WHAT?! Can it be? God has chosen *us* for salvation? God has carried this out through sanctification by the Spirit? Truly, He set us apart—separated us from the congregation of the damned. The Holy Spirit has taken us out of that old, wretched body of lost human beings and placed us in the new, glorious family of God.

How can this be? How can God tolerate sinners within His family? He can because of Jesus. God sent His Son to achieve the glory of righteousness, which shines forth from those who possess it. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the one human being, the only one, Who achieved the glory of righteousness and He did it as our substitute. “He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification.” (Romans 4:25)

This is the glorious Gospel, by which the Holy Spirit called us to faith. Through this “*belief of the truth*,” we have “*become the righteousness of God in Him*.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) Jesus achieved the glory and the Spirit has bestowed it upon us.

So it is that we have been sanctified: we have been separated from our sins, unbelief, and condemnation; we have been separated unto righteousness, faith, and salvation. Behold, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ! Praise be to God that we sinners have obtained that glory through sanctification by the Spirit. Behold the wonder of sanctification!



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

# GIFTS

**H**ave you ever received a gift you didn't need? What can make such a gift a joy anyway? —If it comes from the heart. Remember the time your little granddaughter gave you a pair of colorful (!) Christmas socks? The love behind those socks made that gift worth more than a wad of ten-dollar bills.

What about the Lord? The Lord does not *need* any gifts. Not one! It's all His—cattle, grain, fine wood, gold, silver, money. He entrusts it to you. He lets you use it for yourself, your family, and your community. You are a “steward” managing His goods. Does He need a gift from you? No.

Well, then, what is the point of “giving” to the Lord if He doesn't *need* gifts? Answer: He is interested in the heart. A heart bringing no gift to the Lord is a heart dwindling in love for Him. And He loved you first! *“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”* (2 Corinthians 8:9) *“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”* (John 10:11) *“The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7)

Why would a heart begrudge a gift to Him Who has done everything for it, sinful as it is? Perhaps it's because “1) I don't have to. 2) I don't have enough. 3) I don't have anything left. 4) I've already done my duty. 5) Others can take care of it. 6) I forgot. 7) I don't care.” Hmm, are these good reasons? God looks at the heart. God is not interested in “amount.” Concerning the widow's two mites, Jesus said, *“This poor widow has put in more than all.”* (Luke 21:3) Her heart was with Jesus. The Lord loved her, and He loves you every day. Bring regular gifts to Him with hearts redeemed.

The devil sets traps even for faithful givers. Are gifts brought merely out of habit, like singing hymns with the mouth but not from the heart, which means nothing? Are



gifts brought to the Lord out of a sense of obligation—“I *have* to do this, but I don't want to”? Are gifts brought with fear for the future? Are gifts brought with a give-to-get motivation—“If the group puts up \$10,000, then I will put up \$10,000”? Is heartfelt love for the Savior front and center here?

In the Old Testament, tithes (tenths) were required—not in exchange for forgiveness or blessings, but as a gauge of devotion to the Lord. When tithes and offerings were omitted, God admonished those hearts-gone-astray, *“Bring all the tithes into the*

*storehouse. . . . Try Me now in this, . . . if I will not open for you the windows of heaven.”* (Malachi 3:10) When tithes and offerings were brought half-heartedly, the Lord rebuked: *“When you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you?”* (Malachi 1:8) When offerings were brought with hearts turned to idols, God warned, *“Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet to Me!”* (Jeremiah 6:20)

The devil always wants to infect your relationship with your Savior and God. The devil wants to remove love from your heart. The devil wants you to bring empty gifts or no gifts at all.

It's all about your faith in the Savior and your heart of love toward Him. God blesses. *“He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”* (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)



**Richard Kanzenbach** is pastor of Saint Luke's Lutheran Church in Lemmon, South Dakota.

*Ever wonder why we Lutherans use the form of worship we do?*

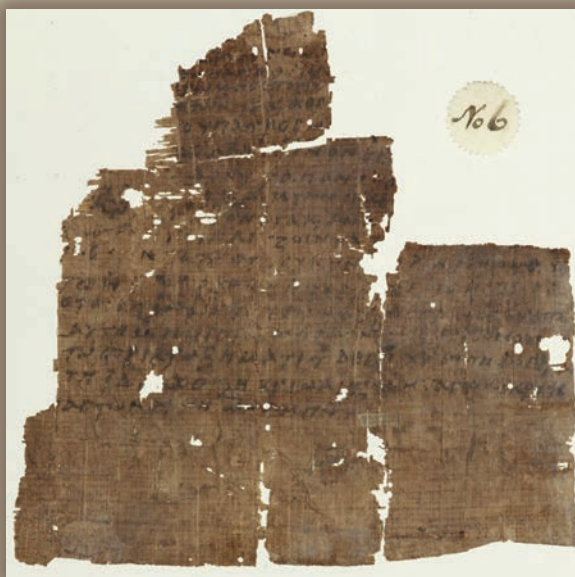
*In this series we examine the depth and meaning of the various elements of our Lutheran worship service.*

# The Creed

In sharp contrast to the “No creed but Christ” approach to the Christian faith, we affirm that God would have us believe and openly confess His whole counsel (Acts 20:27). That is why Lutherans published the *Book of Concord* of 1580: it was (and still is) a public proclamation of what Lutherans believe the Bible teaches. It is a *confessional* document. In the liturgical sense, a *confession* is a public declaration of doctrinal beliefs so that all people can examine whether or not those beliefs are biblical. That is why our synod was named the *Church of the Lutheran Confession*. That’s also why our liturgy includes an element we call the Creed, which is a confessional statement of essential Christian beliefs.

Has a non-Christian ever asked you, “What, exactly, do you believe?” I hope so. After all, God tells us to “*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*” (1 Peter 3:15 KJV), and the wording of that passage always suggests to me that there should be something about us that is winsome even to many unbelievers (although perhaps off-putting to some), something that they see in us which they recognize as good and which they then desire for themselves, something that prompts them to ask that question.

What, then, should you answer? The answer you give to the question, “What do you believe?” is a *confession*. Depending on the person who asked you and the circumstances, it might be appropriate to respond with little more than “I believe that Jesus Christ is both true God and true man, and that He lived a perfect life and died a sacrificial death to atone for the sins of all the world, including mine. I believe that solely by God’s grace and because of Jesus, my sins are forgiven and I have eternal life in heaven.” That answer is true, and it might well be the best initial response, even though it’s certainly not comprehensive.



Oldest existing copy of the Nicene Creed, 6th century.

That simple, short response above states “I believe” twice. In Latin, “I believe” is the verb *credo*, and it is from that verb that we get our word *creed*. In our liturgies, we always include a creed—a confessional statement of what we believe. Obviously, we cannot recite the entire *Book of Concord* (my copy is over six hundred pages in length!), so there are three different creeds we use. Typically, we use the *Apostles’ Creed* for non-communion Sunday worship services, the *Nicene Creed* for Sunday worship with communion, and—traditionally at least—the *Athanasian Creed* for

services on Trinity Sunday. However, one of the other creeds is now often substituted for the *Athanasian Creed*, which was written to counter the Arian heresy, because the *Athanasian Creed* is quite long and uses wording that may not easily be understood by the modern worshiper. Nonetheless, every service in our liturgy includes an element called the Creed: a succinct confession of what we believe.

For us, the Creed serves at least three functions. It is a reminder to us of central doctrines of Christianity, it is a renewal for us of our Baptismal vows and it is a public confession by us of what we, as Christians, believe.

*“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”* (1 Peter 3:15 KJV) *“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* (Romans 10:10)



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

# Real Enemy Loving in Action

*“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (1 Peter 2: 21-25)*

Previously in 1 Peter 2, God’s own people—chosen, redeemed, and special—live to show forth His praises (verses 9-10) not only in word but also in conduct, even as we seek to lead those who speak against us to glorify God (11-12). This is done by honoring those God has placed over us in the government (13-16) and all other Fourth Commandment relationships, even if it means suffering wrongly (17-20).

As Jesus shows in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38-48), loving those who love us is easy, something even the world can do. But loving our enemies, doing good to and praying for those who hate us and have hurt us—that represents a challenge, even for the child of God. Yet no area of life may set apart God’s people from the world more or leave a greater witness to others than how we respond to mistreatment or suffering.

And why? Because here is where man’s sinful and selfish nature often shows its true colors. Daily we see it in others and in ourselves. Things unfair or hurtful happen to us, and what is often our natural, knee-jerk response? Anger, frustration, vengeful thoughts, tongue-lashing, and mean-spirited retaliation. This, however, only fuels the vicious sin-cycle for the souls of all involved, and fails to provide a good and godly witness to the world.

What can we do? How can we restrain this self-produced vitriol? Well, some temporary, helpful, damage-control tools of “anger management” might be learning to take a deep breath, count to ten, “bite our tongues,” and more. However, these do not resolve the real problem. Here is where the inspired words of Peter offer a far better, heartfelt solution for God’s people.

Look to Jesus! Look to Jesus in repentance and faith. Confess your sin and seek Jesus as your loving and forgiving Savior Who bore your own sins on the tree and by Whose stripes you are healed (verse 24). Look to Jesus, Who, while we were

sinners (His enemies), loved us and died for us (Romans 5:8). Look to Jesus as the Shepherd Who alone empowers His sheep to follow Him and “live for righteousness,” Whose suffering has left us the ultimate faith-strengthening “example” (verse 21).

Have you, like me, simply marveled at Jesus’ response to the wave of accusers and abusers who lashed out at Him during His last days—cursing, blaspheming, mocking, taunting, beating, whipping, and finally crucifying Him? Is there a one of us that would not have responded with retaliatory and vengeful feelings, thoughts, words, and even actions?

**Doing good to and praying for those who hate us and have hurt us—that represents a challenge, even for the child of God.**

Yet, our Lamb in holiness and compassion did not revile or threaten. Rather, He responded both by remaining silent (Isaiah 53:7) when called for and by uttering those beyond-amazing words: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34) In “committing Himself to Him Who judges righteously” (verse 23), Jesus left Himself and all matters of eternal justice where they properly belong. As Jesus’ conduct also dramatically impacted the souls of at least two witnesses near the cross (one of the criminals and the centurion), so also who knows how our loving and patient witness to suffering may impact others, even our enemies?

Dear Savior, as Your struggling and straying-prone sheep, we give thanks that You have sought us and found us and brought us to repentance and faith. You are our Savior, our Redeemer, and our great “Role Model,” the very Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. Help us ever in faith to follow in Your steps.



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# Higher Education

*“For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” (Proverbs 2:6)*

**M**artin Luther wrote, “I am much afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures and engrave them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount.”

Luther’s fear was well-founded. Today, many public schools, especially universities, have become gateways to the most insidious philosophies, including

Darwinism, the woke movement, Critical Race Theory, gender transition, virtually anything non-Christian, and all under the cap-and-gown guise of academic freedom. And far too often, Christian students in these anti-Christian environments find themselves marginalized, intimidated, ridiculed, and in some cases, unsuspectingly indoctrinated.

Not that such indoctrination is inevitable or that universities have nothing of value to offer. They do. But they can also be places dangerous to faith. And to be forewarned is to be forearmed. In the words of C.S. Lewis: “Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil.”

King Solomon was one of the wisest, wealthiest, and most powerful men to ever live. Under his rule, Israel reached its zenith, enjoying forty years of unprecedented peace and prosperity. Yet what did Solomon want most for his children? Not fame or fortune or power; rather, wisdom; a wisdom which Solomon unequivocally associated with wisdom from God. And so he wrote, *“For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.”* (Proverbs 2:6)

At times, wisdom is equated with intelligence, age, experience, academic institutions, postgraduate degrees, or individuals like Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Einstein, and Hawking. However, virtually every Bible word for *wisdom*, from the Hebrew *hochma* to the Greek *sophia*, has the sense of prudence and discernment, that is, possessing the knowledge required to determine right from wrong. Is this type of wisdom taught in institutions of so-called higher learning, where truth is fluid, not absolute; where



Solomon Receives Wisdom, Luca Giordano, 1693

distinguished professors can no longer define the difference between males and females?

As Solomon taught, true wisdom, knowledge, and understanding come from the mouth of the Lord, that is, from His holy, infallible Word. Unlike the wisdom of the world’s best and brightest, God’s wisdom never changes. It is as absolute, infallible, and unchanging as He is. *“I the LORD do not change,”* He declares in Malachi 3:6 (NIV). Therefore, there is

no uncertainty in the Scriptures between right and wrong, male and female, marriage and divorce, heterosexuality and homosexuality; about who we are and where we came from; about the source of all ills and the source of all contentment; and especially about how God views sin and how God saves sinners. *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23 NIV)

Indeed, where worldly knowledge is horrifically dim—origins, ethics, salvation, that which lies beyond the grave—the Bible is brilliantly clear. From cover to cover, Genesis to Revelation, the Bible’s answer to all the nagging questions of human existence is unwaveringly the same: JESUS CHRIST *“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”* (Colossians 2:3)

Remember: At best, worldly wisdom is changeable; at worst, it is destructive. By contrast, God’s wisdom is unchanging and infallible. To which should we entrust our children?

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:15, *“From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”* (NIV)

This, dear reader, is the HIGHEST form of education.



Mark Weis is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

# The Talents

“Victim mentality” is an all-too-common method of avoiding personal accountability. It assumes that what others expect of you is unreasonable and blames their impossible demands for any lack of effort on your part.

The victim mindset causes members to stop attending services for a moving target of reasons or, if they do attend, to complain about fellow Christians the whole time. It drives the foolishness of parents who let their children “decide on their own,” because church was unduly forced upon them in their youth. Whenever life gets tough, it is tempting to blame God for being the unfair dispenser of the sad lot that has been given you.

In the Parable of the Talents, the third servant fancies himself the victim: “Lord, I knew You to be a hard man . . . and I was afraid, and went and hid Your talent in the ground.” (Matthew 25:24-25) His passive-aggressive solution—“Look, there You have what is Yours!”—essentially informs his Creator, “If you don’t like what I did, then You shouldn’t be the way You are!”

Our God does set a high standard: “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48) And His expectation of righteousness leaves no wiggle room: “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10) But playing the victim is simply to pronounce sentence upon oneself: “Cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness.” (Matthew 25:30)

What of the servants who received two and five talents each? The natural man assumes they were only industrious because the Lord had obviously given them so much more. But none of Jesus’ parables are to be calculated by worldly standards. Each servant received a lavish amount. One talent alone was nearly two years’ wages.

The perpetual victim can only see everything he has not received. But the repentant heart perceives everything he has and is as far exceeding anything he could possibly earn:

“For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.” (Matthew 13:12)

As with every parable, the cross is the key to the puzzle. God

sent His Son to be the victim in your place. Evil men buried Him in the ground lest they have to take a good look at themselves. But when Jesus rose from that grave to which your sins took Him, the Lord showered on you every spiritual treasure you did not deserve.

He entrusts us, His servants, with wide-ranging fruits of faith to be put to wholesome kingdom labor: “But each one has his own gift from God . . . for the profit of all.” (1 Corinthians 7:7, 12:7).



He knows both your abilities and limitations, and He expects too much from no one. All He asks is for you to invest what He gives, trusting His grace alone to multiply your efforts, for it is “God who gives the increase.” (1 Corinthians 3:7)

No longer constantly cornered, faith acknowledges whatever others ask of you to be the personal corner of creation given you to tend and keep: “You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.” (Matthew 25:23)

The parables of Jesus are too hard to understand only when you assume they are. In truth, they are explained all over the Bible. So, too, the Scriptures give meaning to every cross you bear in life. Shake the victim mindset, repent, and embrace the marvelous grace He’s showered on you: “Enter into the joy of your lord.” (Matthew 25:23)



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



## PILLARS OF FAITH

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

# Baptism

**Y**ou can carefully read every word of Scripture from “*In the beginning*” (Genesis 1) to “*Amen*” (Revelation 22) and never read the word *sacrament*. Found nowhere in the Bible, sacrament is a term used to identify sacred acts commanded by God through which He brings the Means of Grace to us, namely, the Gospel.

There are several criteria that determine a sacrament by our definition, and Baptism fulfills each one.

A Sacrament is a sacred act

**Instituted by Christ:** “Go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them . . .” (Matthew 28:19)

**Connected with God’s Word:** “. . . baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

**That has earthly element(s):** water

**That offers, gives, and seals to us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation:** “Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins.” (Acts 22:16) “You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27)

Baptism is literally “a washing.” Neither the word itself nor any command from God’s Word prescribes how the water of washing is to be applied. Whether pouring, sprinkling, or even immersing, the application of water upon a sinner used together with God’s Word makes Baptism a spiritual washing — “a gracious water of life and washing of rebirth through the Holy Spirit.” (Baptism, Part Three, Luther’s *Small Catechism*).

Scripture teaches us that everyone is conceived and born in sin (Psalm 51:5); therefore, everyone from the very beginning of life is in need of Baptism’s blessings. Jesus’ commission to “*make disciples . . . baptizing them*” comes with no age restriction.

If a young child is baptized, the Gospel is the power of God in Baptism to create faith in that young heart. If someone older was brought to faith first through the Word and then baptized, the blessing of Baptism is a strengthening of the already-existing faith,



thereby granting greater confidence and assurance.

An important question to consider concerning Baptism is, “In which direction does the purpose of Baptism flow?” Is it earth-to-heaven, namely something we do for God? Or is it heaven-to-earth, something which God graciously gives to sinners who desperately need what it offers?

As seen above, Scripture reveals that Baptism is a tremendous gift from God for our souls. However, consider if someone was taught that Baptism is an earth-to-heaven act. Then instead of a sacrament through which God graciously gives blessings, it becomes a church rite that Christians are to observe. If Baptism is something we do for God,

then it follows that infants are too young. It follows logically that Baptism would be delayed until the individual understands and personally confesses faith in Jesus. Such theology ignores clear words of Scripture, robs God of glory which is His through the gift of Baptism, can easily lead to indifference concerning Baptism, and keeps many from receiving the blessings of Baptism.

Baptism is not repeated throughout a Christian’s life; however, its blessings remain and continue. Each and every morning, we can wake up and declare to ourselves, mentally or out loud: “I am a baptized child of God!” This declaration is a reminder that informs our day—how we will approach its challenges and needs and obligations, how we will speak, how we will prioritize, and what we will do. It is also a declaration that enables us to go out into the world confidently knowing that we are in Christ, He is in us, and we are secure as children of God.



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

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

# Immanuel's Maintenance Staff

## *Ensuring that the Beauty of the Gospel is Taught in a Beautiful Environment*

One of the comments we frequently receive from visitors is how beautiful our campus is. Looking back to when the current home of Immanuel Lutheran College was purchased by the CLC, we can truly see the Lord's hand at work in providing a campus that meets all our needs and displays the glories of His creation. Our campus also has been well cared-for throughout the years by dedicated staff. Currently, Paul Heinze and Brett Lau carry out the work of maintaining our campus buildings and keeping our landscape beautifully manicured.



The Academic Center



Paul Heinze  
Facilities Manager

Paul Heinze has been an employee at ILC since 1999 and Facilities Manager since 2011. As the person in charge of an almost eighty-acre campus that comprises six buildings and thirteen residences (and a large maintenance facility), Paul definitely has his work cut out for him. Indeed, one of the greatest challenges he faces is determining how to prioritize projects and allocate funds appropriately. His work in this area is seen most visibly through the ILC Improvement Fund (IIF), to which CLC members can contribute to support large-expenditure items. Paul recommends a prioritized list of projects which, if necessary, is adjusted and then approved by the Board of Regents and publicized to the synod. Examples of IIF projects completed over the past few years include window and siding replacement on several professorages, a new water heater for the girls' dorm, an upper-lot drainage and erosion control project, bus and van purchases, and installation of security

cameras and secured door access upgrades.

Though Paul spends much time in planning and management, he can also be seen working on campus throughout the year. In fact, he says that people may be surprised that summer is the busiest time of the year for the maintenance staff, since this is their chance to catch up on projects while the students are away. Paul enjoys the variety involved in his work at ILC as well as the people, but says he most appreciates the spiritual edification he sees happening on campus, especially through the daily chapel services.



Brett Lau  
Maintenance

Brett Lau joined ILC as a building and grounds maintenance worker in the fall of 2020. His previous experience at a landscape company has been especially helpful for all the outdoor work he puts in both in the summer and winter. Brett says that one of the challenges and joys of the job is the variety of projects he is able to perform

on a daily basis. He has been able to learn a great deal over the last few years and continues to acquire new skills all the time. One of the aspects of the job that Brett found surprising is all the painting that needs to be done. It seems like it is never completed.

During the school year, Paul and Brett get some help with cleaning from student workers, whom Paul hires and manages. They also greatly appreciate the help they receive from volunteers. For example, every summer Mrs. Laila Fleischer heads up a group of volunteers who provide a deep cleaning of the dorms. Paul says they are happy to have volunteers of all different skills levels, so if you want to help our dynamic duo, please contact Paul (paul.heinze@ilc.edu).

We certainly appreciate the hard work and dedication that Paul and Brett demonstrate year-round in keeping our campus operating smoothly and looking great. One recent, first-time visitor to campus marveled about how beautiful everything looked and noted that you can



Birch Hall

definitely tell that our maintenance/grounds people love this campus. That's for sure. Even more, they love their Lord and have dedicated their abilities and talents to serving Him by maintaining a campus that allows students, faculty, and staff to have a wonderful environment in which to teach and learn. If you see either Paul or Brett on campus, despite how busy they are, they are also quick with a smile or a friendly wave. Please give them a wave and a smile in return as well as a pat on the back or quick thank-you for all they do.



Flowering cherry tree in spring



Ingram Hall in winter



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

## WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

*Updates from congregations around the Church of the Lutheran Confession*

# Word of God Evangelical Lutheran Church Pana, Illinois

**W**ord of God Evangelical Lutheran Church in Pana, Illinois, is marking its fortieth anniversary this year. It is celebrating with two additions to its physical property: a complete renovation of its parking lot, and a major overhaul of its audio/visual system.

With the purchase of a large-screen TV and enhanced computer/internet capability, the congregation is now equipped to screen sermons and Bible classes from all over the CLC via live-streaming and recording, and to play other recordings on disc and from its extensive library of recorded sermons. This is especially helpful when the pastor is on vacation.

Word of God congregation has always been an evangelistic congregation.

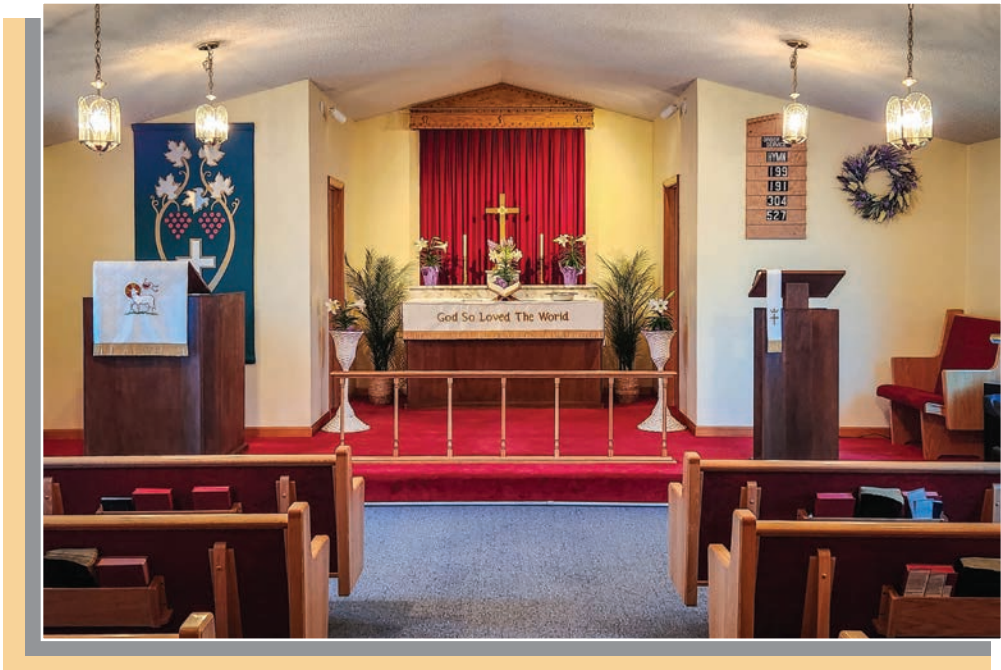


A video presentation featuring the late Dr. David Menton.

For twenty-five years it has broadcast its recorded sermons over several radio stations in central Illinois. It currently broadcasts every Sunday over stations WTIM, WMKR, WSVZ, and WTRH, reaching nine counties in central Illinois. Every program begins with the announcement, "Word of God Lutheran Church brings you this recording of its Sunday-morning worship service. Word of God church is an orthodox, conservative Lutheran church which holds the following to be true: all people are sinners, salvation from sin is available to all people through the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and

the Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God. Word of God Church is located at 406 W. Dewitt Street in Pana. We invite you to visit our worship services and Bible classes for all ages. Worship is at 10:15 and Sunday school and Adult Bible classes are at 9:00 A.M. every Sunday morning. Mid-week Bible study is at 2:00 P.M. Thursday." All of this is announced over a choir singing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." Similar information is announced again at the close of each broadcast.

All of our members are encouraged to spread the Word of God in their daily lives with family, friends, relatives, neighbors, and co-workers. To help them in this mission, the pastor has written a short Bible study pamphlet that members can give to those who will accept it. The pamphlet is entitled "Free for a Change." The title reflects the fact that eternal life with God is His free gift to all in Christ Jesus, but it involves a change in one's life through



Sanctuary and chancel of Word of God Lutheran Church.

repentance, faith, and sanctification. It contains six short self-teaching lessons consisting of up to nine questions each, with a Bible reference where the answer to each question may be found. Users are instructed to look up the passages (either in their own Bibles or an on-line translation) and write their answers on the lines provided. Of course, our members make themselves available to go over the answers with anyone who wishes. Hundreds of these little booklets have been handed out over the years.

Word of God also maintains a website ([www.wordofgodlutheran.com](http://www.wordofgodlutheran.com)) stating our basic teachings, phone number, and other information. Links to videos and audios of all sermons and Bible classes are included.

We trust God's promise that when His Word goes forth, it will never return void, but will always accomplish the purpose that pleases Him, and will prosper in the thing for which He sent it (Isaiah 55:11). Laboring for Him is never in vain (I Cor. 15:58).



**Dennis Rieken** is pastor of Word of God Evangelical Lutheran Church of Pana, Illinois. Members Darrell and Rebecca Haslett contributed to this article.

## “BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JULY 2023

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
July 1	TLH 429/LSB 708	1 John 4	The Lord is a God of truth and a God of love. One cannot truly uphold truth without love and one cannot truly uphold love without truth.
July 3	WS 772/LSB 835	Jeremiah 18	All people are clay in the hand of the Potter. He orders and directs all things according to His good and gracious will.
July 4	LSB 795	Zechariah 1	After their return from exile, the Judeans neglected the rebuilding of the temple of the Lord. The Lord commissioned Zechariah to call His people to faithfulness.
July 5	TLH 462/LSB 651	Zechariah 2	The Lord blesses His people with His glorious presence and with His gracious protection.
July 6	TLH 477/LSB 647	Zechariah 4	Zechariah sees a vision of a golden lampstand. The reconstruction of the temple will be completed to the glory of the Lord.
July 7	TLH 56/LSB 353	Zechariah 9	The Lord judges the enemies of His people. The Lord will come riding on a donkey to bring salvation to His people.
July 8	TLH 276/LSB 684	Matthew 11	Disciples of John ask Jesus whether or not He is the Messiah. Jesus points to His miracles as evidence of His identity. Jesus tenderly invites us to find our rest in Him.
July 10	TLH 651/LSB 752	Jeremiah 27	It is the will of the Lord that Babylon conquer Judah. The prophets who say that Babylon will not conquer Judah proclaim lies. As so often is the case, the pleasant lie is easier to believe than the difficult truth.
July 11	TLH 590/LSB 755	Jeremiah 13	The Lord uses a ruined loincloth and jars filled with wine as illustrations of what He will do in response to the unfaithfulness of His people. The people of Judah will be conquered and exiled.
July 12	TLH 343/LSB 395	Isaiah 48	The Lord redeems His people to the glory of His name.
July 13	TLH 277/LSB 699	Isaiah 55	The Lord offers full and free salvation. His powerful Word is like nourishing rain from the heavens.
July 14	TLH 372/LSB 746	Romans 8	The Spirit of God gives us life. Our desire is to live by the Spirit, not according to the sinful flesh. We will suffer tribulation in this world, but God is with us in His love and He will receive us into eternal glory for the sake of Christ.
July 15	TLH 347/LSB 743	Matthew 13	Jesus tells many parables. The people of Nazareth reject Jesus.
July 17	TLH 358	Hebrews 5	Unlike the Old Testament high priests, Jesus had no sin of His own for which to offer sacrifice. He is our perfect High Priest. We desire to grow and to mature in our faith, moving from milk to solid food as we study Scripture continually throughout our lives.
July 18	TLH 373/LSB 566	Hebrews 6	The writer warns against falling from the faith and grieving the Holy Spirit. The promises of God are sure and certain in Christ, our perfect High Priest.
July 19	LSB 564	Hebrews 7	The writer compares Jesus to Melchizedek, to whom Abraham gave a tithe. Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, not of Levi.
July 20	TLH 364/LSB 524	Hebrews 8	Not only is Jesus Christ a greater Priest than those of the Old Testament, but His covenant also is greater than theirs.
July 21	TLH 427/LSB 728	Isaiah 41	The Lord is a terror to His enemies, but a comforting refuge to those who trust in Him. False gods are worthless.
July 22	TLH 15/LSB 816	Isaiah 44	The Lord, the only true God, comforts His chosen people. The worship of manmade idols is utter foolishness. The Lord redeems His people.
July 24	TLH 24	Nahum 1	Through His prophet Nahum, the Lord pronounces judgment on Nineveh, the wicked capital city of the Assyrian Empire.
July 25	WS 763/LSB 512	Nahum 2	The Lord will bring destruction on Nineveh.
July 26	TLH 611/LSB 508	Nahum 3	Woe to Nineveh, for she will reap the fruit of her wickedness.
July 27	TLH 297/LSB 580	Galatians 1	Some in the churches of Galatia were teaching that the Levitical laws of the Old Testament, especially regarding circumcision, were binding on all who would follow Christ. Paul opposes this teaching sternly, proclaiming instead salvation by grace alone.
July 28	WS 775/LSB 578	Galatians 2	Paul establishes his credentials as an apostle of Christ: the other apostles have accepted him and his ministry. Paul recounts how he opposed Peter when Peter refused to eat with Gentiles. Believers are justified by faith, not by works of the Law.
July 29	TLH 580	Deuteronomy 7	The children of Israel are to avoid intermarriage with the people of the surrounding nations. Those nations are to be destroyed completely. The children of Israel are to keep the commands of the Lord. The Lord will give His people victory over their enemies, even as He delivered His people from Egypt.
July 31	TLH 377/LSB 555	Galatians 3	Is salvation by faith, or is salvation by works of the Law? Paul argues that already in Genesis, God made it clear through the words of Moses that Abraham was justified by faith. All who believe in Jesus Christ receive justification by faith and are children of Abraham.

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

*In this series, those involved with CLC foreign missions profile one aspect of our overseas endeavors.*

# Update from the HCLCN

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

We praise God for being faithful to us and blessing our work in this Hindu-predominant country of Nepal. The need of workers for the harvest is great. The spiritual harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Nepal is more than 80% Hindu and 13% Buddhist. The country has a lot of work of the power of darkness and evil that one can feel and experience. The people are made blind with the darkness of sin. They worship idols and creatures rather than the Creator. In 1811 one British emissary, describing the Kathmandu valley, wrote, "there are as many temples as houses and as many idols as inhabitants." To bring them to light and chase the darkness, we need the power of the Gospel preached to those who are in need.

As it says in Romans 10:14-15, "How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'" (ESV)

The need of good news is great. There is no good news outside the Holy Scriptures. There are villages that are not reached with the Gospel yet. To equip more people with the Gospel, the HCLCN started pastoral training in 2009. The pastors were very enthusiastic and excited to receive training and have been blessed since then. There are many leaders who have the passion of sharing good news but lack Biblical studies and knowledge. To meet the need, the HCLCN officially established the Himalayan Bible Institute in 2016 in Kathmandu. Since then, the pastors and leaders are being trained and equipped with the Word of God.

There are ups and downs working with the people, tribes, and communities. Sometimes we get very excited and encouraged to share the Gospel with the lost souls and the needy ones. They receive the Gospel well and grow in faith and serve as examples in the churches, communities, and families. At those times, what we



Himalayan Bible Institute

see is great.

But there are some times when we get disappointed, discouraged and sad when we hear that the very ones that we have prayed for and given our time and resources to have left our fellowship and associated themselves with some random false teaching churches or church bodies. That is an unbearable pain and it is a difficult situation to handle.

Sometimes they need financial assistance and we could not

support them as they expected, and they leave us with complaints. Some of them have sought help from other church bodies, and then they start fellowship with them without knowing and understanding their doctrines.

However, the training at the HBI is going well, and the classes are regularly conducted. The faithful servants of the Lord are doing well in their studies. We are working in order to serve more students with the Word of God so that they can do the work of the Kingdom for their people in their local areas.

There is a need of more training in several parts of the country. We are praying and planning to conduct more training at our HBI facility as well as at seminars in different locations around the country.

There are some challenges and problems in training the men for the work of the ministry. There are some people that speak falsely against us, saying that we are teaching the students wrong. And there are some students and potential students who are seeking some kind of financial or material gain after completing the training. When we tell them clearly that there will be no salaries or financial support or benefits, they are displeased and think of other alternatives that provide them training and salaries. There are these kinds of issues that we are facing at the Himalayan Bible Institute.

We pray that the Lord gives us faithful students that have hearts for the people and are willing to share the Good News to the people that are perishing. Please pray for Nepal and our work for the expansion of the Kingdom in this country and its people. We would appreciate your prayers, support, and encouragement.

## SEEN IN PASSING

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

**A Win For First Amendment Protection of Religious Speech.** In April the city of Chicago was forced to concede that religious speech, like other speech, is protected under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Four students from Wheaton College had been gathering in Chicago's Millennium Park to evangelize and pass out Christian literature. In 2018, the park foundation prohibited their activities, and passed rules banning religious speech in the park. A Christian law firm filed a federal suit in 2019 alleging infringements on the students' free speech and free exercise of religion. Scott Stewart, executive director of the Millennium Park Foundation, testified that the park was different from other public parks because it was designed as a series of artistic "rooms," and claimed that the park was not a "public forum" where the First Amendment would apply. When asked, Stewart conceded that it would be allowable for someone to pass out the novel *Moby Dick* but not religious literature. Judge Robert Blakey remarked, "If a 'curated design' were enough to transform the nature of the forum, any park with a statue could lose its First Amendment protections. The law precludes this absurd result." The students were awarded \$5000 each, plus four years'-worth of legal fees. Belz, Emily. "Chicago Settles \$205K Case to Allow Evangelism in Millennium Park." *News & Reporting*. ChristianityToday.com, 19 Apr. 2023. Web. 21 Apr. 2023.

**Best Selling Bible Translations in the U.S.** The publishing group *ECPA BestSellers* maintains statistics about the highest-selling translations of the Holy Bible in the United States. As of April 2023, the list was as follows, in order of popularity:

1. New International Version
2. New Living Translation
3. Christian Standard Bible
4. English Standard Version
5. King James Version
6. New King James Version
7. Reina Valera (Spanish)
8. New American Standard Bible
9. New Revised Standard Version
10. New International Reader's Version

### **Administration Refusing to Grant Asylum to Chinese Christians.**

Congressmen and human rights advocates in Washington are urging the Biden administration to take immediate action to ensure the safety of a group of Chinese Christian dissidents detained by Thai authorities in March. The group of refugees, including 35 children and 28 adults, fled China in 2019 to escape persecution. They initially sought refuge in South Korea and then Thailand while seeking emergency asylum in the United States. But the U.S. State Department and Department of Homeland Security have declined to grant the church members emergency asylum, as it has done for many others, including tens of thousands of Ukrainians fleeing their war-ravaged country, and a group of Afghans airlifted into the United States amid the chaotic U.S. evacuation in August 2021. For months, human rights and religious freedom advocates warned the State Department that Thai authorities have a history of working with the Chinese government to draw Chinese nationals out of hiding, arrest them, and send them back to their homeland, where they face imprisonment, torture, or worse. Then the very scenario they warned about happened: on April 20 Thai police raided the residence where the 63 refugees were staying and two Americans were visiting, arrested the group, fingerprinted them, and detained them in a holding facility. The Chinese nationals face a deportation hearing and could be sent back to China soon thereafter. Crabtree, Susan. "63 Christians Face Deportation Back to China." *Religious Liberty Around the World*. RealClearPolitics.com, 31 Mar. 2023. Web. 21 Apr. 2023.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**ANNIVERSARY.** Praise be unto our gracious God for 100 years of His grace! You are invited to a special worship service observing the 100th anniversary of Zion Lutheran Church, Ipswich, South Dakota, on Sunday, July 16th, 2023, at 4:00 P.M. The message of God's grace preached for the occasion will be provided by Pastor Mark Tiefel, grandson of Zion Lutheran's long time former pastor, Leland Grams, who served Zion for 31 years. The service will be held at Schriver's Funeral home (720 6th St. Ipswich), which is the regular place of worship for Zion Lutheran Church. A catered meal will be served at the Edmunds County 4-H building, which is located near the worship venue. Please RSVP to Pastor Zachary Sippert at 715-523-0826 or [pastorzippert@gmail.com](mailto:pastorzippert@gmail.com)