

NOVEMBER 2023 VOL 66 NO.5

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



And I saw the dead,
great and small, standing
before the throne, and
books were opened.

—Revelation 20:12



Fall Colors at Immanuel Lutheran College

IN THIS ISSUE NOVEMBER 2023

COVER STORY - JUDGMENT DAY

Until the Number Is Completed..... 3

DEVOTION - HEAVEN

Miles of Heaven to Come 4

OUR LITURGICAL LEGACY

Service of the Sacrament: The Proper Preface 5

STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Preserving "The Good Life" in Our Churches..... 6

GEMS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

God Has Blessed Us, Is Blessing Us, and Will Bless Us .. 7

THE PARABLES OF OUR LORD

The Friend at Midnight 8

PILLARS OF FAITH

Eternal Life..... 9

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Pastoral Training in Togo..... 10-11

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Ascension Lutheran Church—Batavia, Illinois 12-13

BREAD OF LIFE READINGS, NOVEMBER 2023 14

ILC NEWSLETTER

Changing of the Guard..... 15

SEEN IN PASSING / ANNOUNCEMENTS..... 16

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

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

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

Editor: Paul Naumann, 3732 Claymore Lane, Eau Claire, WI, 54701, E-mail to paul.naumann@ilc.edu; Assistant Editor: Craig Owings; Art Director, art direction & graphic design by Pipestone Publishing Co.; Proofreaders: David Lau and Paula Naumann; Staff: James Albrecht, David Bernthal, Timothy Daub, Wayne Eichstadt, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, Richard Kanzenbach, John Klatt, Joseph Lau, Delwyn Maas, Karl Olmanson, John Pfeiffer, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Peter Reim, Sam Rodebaugh, Michael Roehl, Robert Sauers, David Schierenbeck, Chad Seybt, Steven Sippert, Mark Weis.

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

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

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

Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org

Printed in U.S.A.

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

Until the Number is Completed

“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.” (Revelation 6:9-11)

How long, O Lord? That is the question asked by the martyrs. They are pleading for the day of vengeance. Truly, when Jesus comes in glory, it will be to “judge and avenge”—to bring the final and eternal retribution upon those who hate Christ and His followers.

The thought of a day of judgment sends chills down the spines of the great multitude of unbelievers, for “they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things [sins] deserve to die.” (Romans 1:32 ESV) Why else would the wicked go to such extremes, including murder, to silence the voice of Christians? It isn’t just our words; our very existence is a proclamation of judgment. We are a living testimony to Jesus’ words: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)

For centuries, the blood of the martyrs has been crying out, “How long, O Lord?” It began with Abel, the first martyr. God said to Cain, “The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.” (Genesis 4:10) Our hymn puts it this way: “Abel’s blood for vengeance pleadeth to the skies” (*The Lutheran Hymnal* 158:4).

Should we be crying “loudly” for vengeance? Our Gospel outreach demonstrates that we don’t want anyone to go to hell. Neither does God. “The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) That’s why God went to the ultimate extreme to save us: He punished His own Son for what we have done. That’s why missionaries have put their lives on the line in order to bring this truth to the nations. There is

forgiveness for all, but not all know this. Thanks be to God for revealing it to us.

The condemnation of the unbelievers is the validation of the faith of the saints. It is the assurance to the martyrs, “You did not die for nothing.”

Judgment Day is the final affirmation of His words (Mark 16:16). The condemnation of the unbelievers is the validation of the faith of the saints. It is the assurance to the martyrs, “You did not die for nothing.” It is the assurance to us all, “As you have believed, so it shall be. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”

The cry for the day of retribution is a cry for the day of salvation, also. If the former does not happen, neither will the latter.

However, the End is not yet. Therefore, the martyrs and we are told to rest for a while, because “the number of their fellow servants and their brethren” had not yet been completed. So we all wait, clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Then, when the last of the elect enters the family of God, the End will come. When it happens, “look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” (Luke 21:28) In the meantime, may God give us the zeal and strength to do our part in filling up the number of the elect. By such holiness and godliness, we will be “hastening the coming of the day of God.” (2 Peter 3:12)



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

Miles of Heaven to Come

Heaven brings to mind warm and pleasant thoughts. Even for one who has a non-Biblical concept of “heaven,” heaven is not, “Ugh, I don’t want to go there.” The true heaven, the Scriptural heaven, is filled with peace, joy, love, holiness, and life—in Christ. No evil and sin are present. Jesus says to the wicked in His parable of Judgment, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matthew 25:41) All evil is out! “The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8) No evil in heaven!

What a joy for sinners! I remember as a child thinking, “I can’t wait until I’m grown; then I won’t get hollered at anymore.” That is ultimately true in heaven! No more will you be a disappointment to your Father, no more will you make “stupid” decisions, no more will your thinking be infested with the lies of Satan. Imagine the smiles from your Father, smiles forever. In Christ’s cross-for-you and His empty tomb, all sin is removed from your record. Then imagine the smiles on everyone else too!

The contrast between heavenly life and earthly life is striking. Perhaps we might compare an unmown, ragged lawn with the same lawn freshly cut and neatly trimmed; or a kitchen counter full of dirty dishes and the same counter neat and clean, with a fresh lemon scent; or the exterior of a house dirty and paint peeling with the same house freshly coated. In Jesus, all is first rate in heaven!

The Bible does not spell out the details of heavenly life and joy. We naturally think of it in earthly terms. When our son was young, he caught us by surprise saying he didn’t want to go to heaven. We asked, “Why?” He said, “Because there won’t be any toys there.” We had told him several weeks earlier that his toys on earth would not be in heaven, but he would have something better. We can only think of the joys of heaven



in earthly terms. From His parable of Judgment, Jesus describes heaven as a kingdom. “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matthew 25:24) A kingdom! A blessed kingdom that will never end. A blessed kingdom whose great Ruler will never depart nor any of its citizens, not even in death! Security and joy forever!

A pastor said, “When I was a school kid and school ended for the year, it seemed like there were miles of summer vacation ahead! Now summer seems to last about a week.” In heaven there will always be miles of heaven to come!

The Bible’s words about heaven are beautiful: “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Revelation 21:4 KJV) Not even death will interfere! In Christ, “the last enemy that will be destroyed is death.” (I Corinthians 15:26) Death will not be hiding on the horizon. Sin—and death, its wages—have been fully conquered in Jesus.

Where will heaven be? There is no exact answer in the Bible. The world as we know it will be destroyed and a new one will come. “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. . . . Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells!” (2 Peter 3:10-13)

Heaven awaits. It’s yours in Jesus. Let’s go there!



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

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 Lutheran worship service.

Service of the Sacrament: The Proper Preface

The Proper Preface for the liturgy of the Lord's Supper often used in our churches (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, page 24-31) begins with words that have been spoken by Christians in worship since the third century: "Lift up your hearts." "We lift them up unto the Lord." "Let us give thanks unto the Lord, our God." "It is meet and right so to do." "It is truly meet, right, and salutary [fitting, proper, and beneficial] that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God." This section is known as the *Common Preface* and in this way, thanksgiving is made a dominant theme of our Lord's Supper celebrations. We receive the body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and we give thanks for Christ's salvation. The Common Preface mirrors Jesus' own "preface" to the first Lord's Supper when He "took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them." (Luke 22:19 NIV)

With thanksgiving on our minds then, the service liturgy takes us directly to the reason for our thanksgiving. It does this through what are known as the *Proper Prefaces*. (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, page 25) The Proper Prefaces are extensions of the Common Preface that change according to the seasons of the church year. Each proper preface highlights a particular reason for giving thanks to the Lord, an aspect of Jesus' redemptive work for our special attention.

Several of these are striking in their poetry and in their unique imagery. Consider the one for the season of Lent: "Who on the tree of the Cross didst give salvation unto mankind that, whence death arose, thence Life also might rise again; and that he who by a tree once overcame, might likewise by a tree be overcome." There is a bit of English there to process, but the picture is that of death coming into the world first through a

tree in Eden (the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil) but later life coming through another "tree" (the tree of the Cross). Further, our enemy the devil, who once overcame

Adam and Eve by means of that tree in the garden, has now himself been overcome by another "tree" on Calvary. It's an unforgettable line of Lenten poetry and it is this preface which helped inspire the hymn *The Tree of Life*. (*Lutheran Service Book*, 561)

The preface for Easter leads us to the Passover Lamb Who was sacrificed for us: "But chiefly are we bound to praise Thee for the glorious resurrection of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord; for He is the very Paschal Lamb which was offered for us and hath taken away the sins of the world; who by His death hath destroyed death and by His rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life." Note again the dominant theme of thanksgiving

("chiefly are we bound to praise Thee").

During the month of November, it was customary for us in our daily devotions as a family to end them with each of us naming something we were thankful for. This is what the Proper Preface does for us in the liturgy. As we approach the Lord's Table, we are led to give thanks for the good news of Jesus and His salvation according to the days and seasons in which it is proclaimed to us throughout the year.

"(Christ) Who on the tree of the Cross didst give salvation unto mankind that, whence death arose, thence Life also might rise again; and that he who by a tree once overcame, might likewise by a tree be overcome."



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

Preserving “the Good Life” In Our Churches

“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For ‘Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him speak peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.’” (1 Peter 3:8-12 ESV)

Not surprisingly, surveys continually reflect a positive correlation between faith and one’s health and well-being. Those for whom religion is important generally experience greater peace of mind, better health, superior coping skills, and a more positive outlook on life than the non-religious do. And if that is true of religion in general with all its spiritually misguided and dangerous teachings, how much more is it true of the Biblical and Christian faith, which alone focuses confidently on the “more abundant” life blessings and promises won and secured for us by God’s grace in Christ Jesus? Those who truly “love life” and “see good days” (Psalm 34: 12-16 NIV) are those who have the forgiveness of sins, real peace with God, and a sure eternal hope for the future.

In recent chapters, Peter has focused on the Christian’s attitude in various relationships. Now attention turns toward our spiritual family relationships. Satan’s attack mode against faithful churches is two-pronged. If he cannot destroy their unity through false teaching, he will seek to disrupt it by discord. By exposing, exploiting, and magnifying weaknesses of congregation members, and by fueling them with fleshly selfishness, pride, and envy, his goals can easily be accomplished. Many a pastor, well-equipped to handle doctrinal matters that arise, has found himself struggling with member relationship issues that so easily disrupt the Spirit-intended joy and blessing of Christian fellowship.

It happens in our earthly families, and it happens in our spiritual families. Non-doctrinal “division” was problematic in the early Corinth church, and it remains so today. Personality conflicts, grudge-holding, failure to forgive and forget, judgmental

**How easily we forget
the miracle of grace by
which God brought us
together into this special
family of faith!**

attitudes, cliquishness, and demanding conformity in non-doctrinal areas are all used by Satan to fan the flames of discord and division in a church family. How easily we forget the miracle of grace by which God brought us together into this special family of faith! How often we fail to focus on the many blessings we have enjoyed in our church family! O wretched people that we sometimes are! Who can help us and heal our relationships?

Thankfully, the Spirit through Peter provides wise counsel for both pastor and member. Begin with an honest and repentant look inside our own hearts and then, in faith, gaze into the loving and forgiving heart of Christ, which we also seek to emulate. Five things are stressed: “unity of mind” (oneness of faith and confession of Christ and His Word), “sympathy” (caring about those struggling and suffering), “brotherly love” (as family in Christ), “a tender heart” (like unto Christ Himself), and “a humble mind” (that sees the sin-log in his own eye from which Christ has delivered him).

Pray for the Spirit’s help to assimilate these Christ-like attitudes into your own heart and into the hearts of your brothers and sisters in Christ. While Satan seeks to tear down, may we in Christian love seek to edify (build up) one another in faith. “For to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.” (v. 9)



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

God Has Blessed Us, Is Blessing Us, and Will Bless Us

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: 'The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.'"' (The Aaronic Benediction, Numbers 6:22-26)

We close many of our worship services with this benediction. God's people have used it for over 3,400 years. It encompasses all of God's blessings while also expressing the tenderness and steadfastness of the Triune God.

The Lord Himself prescribed it to be used, and He will follow through with what He said.

"The LORD bless you and keep you."

The word "bless" means to give a gift. It is neither earned nor deserved. His blessing encompasses life and salvation. His people desperately need to receive that as a gift, as it is far too expensive for them to afford.

The word "keep" indicates something very precious—a treasure to hold on to and keep safe. The Lord is saying that that He will keep us since we are precious to Him! In like manner Jesus prays for His Father to keep us (John 17:11).

"The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you."

It is distressing when someone we care about is so angry with us that he won't even look at us. More than once in the Psalms, His people express their dismay when they feel that the Lord has hidden His face from them.

What a joy it is to know that, according to His grace, God's face is shining upon us! We often define grace as undeserved love, and rightly so! But love us He does. His grace is an intentional, purposeful, committed, active love.

"The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

Here we are invited to behold the expression on His face. Look at His eyes. Behold the love and gentleness there. With a look He calms our hearts. Feel His peace.

"The LORD bless you and keep you" reveals the warmth of God the Father, who loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to rescue us. He desires for us to be His children and to remain in



Pastor Leland L. Grams (1919-1997) bestowing the Aaronic Benediction upon worshipers at First Lutheran Church in Faulkton, South Dakota

everlasting fellowship with Him.

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1)

"The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you" reminds us that God the Son has made peace between us and God. Because of His perfect life, atoning sacrifice, and victorious resurrection, the face of God shines upon us. What Jesus did for us is God's grace in action.

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13)

"The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace" directs our attention to God the Holy Spirit. He is the One Who changed our hearts of stone into living hearts that embrace the Lord with a faith that trusts in God and His promises.

Thanks to the Holy Spirit, we are God's children, and, since we are His children, God's face is soft and loving toward us. In the name of Jesus, the Spirit fills our heart with the peace of being in a close, everlasting fellowship with God.

When you hear the words of God's blessing at the close of a worship service, you are at that moment actively being blessed by God Himself. And it doesn't end there. . . .

Remember: everything in this blessing comes to you through the Lord—your loving God—Who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

That is precisely how long He will continue to heap His blessings upon you!



Delwyn Maas is pastor of Gift of God Lutheran Church in Mapleton, North Dakota, and St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Ponsford, Minnesota.

The Friend at Midnight

Life is a lesson in limitations. There are limits to how fast we can run, how high we can jump, and how long we will live. Money, patience, compassion, generosity, friendship, time—they all have limits. There is a limit to how late you should call or how early you should text. There is even a limit to what we feel comfortable asking.

It's a nice surprise, then, that when Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He followed The Lord's Prayer with the parable of the Friend at Midnight (Luke 11:5-8). Life has limits, prayer does not.

In the parable, a man gets company in the middle of the night. Hospitality is expected, but his food supply is gone. There is no Walmart down the road, not even an all-night convenience store. His only option lives next door.

"Sorry to bother you," he whispers, "but could you please lend me a few loaves of bread? We received unexpected company and don't have anything to serve them." The response is not, "We don't have any bread," it's, "I'd have to wake up the whole family in order to help you. I can't do that." And with all the tenacity of a telemarketer, he's not about to let him hang up. "I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs." (verse 8)

Their friendship had limits. God's friendship does not. "Greater love has no one than this," Jesus explained, "than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13) Jesus did even more. "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) We were His enemies. Jesus died to make us His friends.

Requests have limits, don't they? Asking for bread was one thing. Asking him to disrupt his entire household elevated matters to another level. When the response is "No" and

the reason is given, you'd have to be shameless to keep pounding on the door. That's the point, isn't it? There is no request that is too large, too shameless, or too difficult for Jesus. He invites us to pray for all things. "Thou art coming to a King," the hymn reminds us, "large petitions with thee bring. For His grace and power are such, none can ever ask too much." (TLH 459:2)

What about timing? It's midnight in the parable. Don't think of our midnight where the streets are still lighted and many are still awake. Their midnight was as dark as an Amish farm

house. Is there a middle of the night for God? Is there an inconvenient time when He prefers not to be bothered? That's impossible. "He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalm 121:4) His eyes are always on the righteous. His ears are always open to our prayers.

Is there a limit to how often we can come? Abraham kept coming (Genesis 18:16-33). Each time, he lowered the bar for the number of righteous in Sodom. The Lord was neither annoyed nor put out. In fact, the parable of the Friend at Midnight is followed by the words, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Literally, "keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking."

God invites you to be the Friend at Midnight, persisting in prayer, knowing that He hears and will answer you. There are no limits. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)



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

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

Eternal Life

David's description of eternal life is as good as any the Bible provides, if perhaps not as colorful as some: "You will show me the path of life, in your presence is fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16:11) No picture language about harps (Revelation 5:8), or pearly gates, or streets of gold (Revelation 12:21); for David, it is heaven simply to be in the undiminished presence of God. No pleasure can top that, and it lasts forever. This intimate knowledge of God is described by John in his first letter: "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (I John 3:2) To be in the presence of God, our Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—that is joy enough for the hungry soul.

But because we are currently camping our way through this material world (II Corinthians 5:1) and living in these bodies of flesh, pictures are helpful in getting us thinking about what is to come. What the Holy Spirit has to say about eternal life falls into two classes of ideas; I would call it a distinction between the instructive and the inspirational. The instructive would be those descriptions of heaven and eternal life that we can take at face value and think "that's what it will be like!" When John, in the Revelation, is told that the multitude in white robes who "come out of the great tribulation" (7:14) will no longer suffer hunger or thirst or feel the tears running down their cheeks, every believer can draw (and probably has drawn) immeasurable comfort from that promise. And when we wonder about our own resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 offers a study in contrasts between our present body and what is to come. The present body is perishable, dishonorable, weak, natural; but the promise is that your body and mine will be imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. We can take those assurances as

hard facts.

But Scripture also provides many figurative, but inspirational, descriptions: Revelation 21 describes the New Jerusalem coming down with streets paved with gold (yet crystal clear), having twelve foundations made of precious stones, and gates of pearl—and this assures us that this heavenly place as a home for our resurrected selves is far more magnificent than Rome, or Singapore, or New York. And such is the point—to be excited and thrilled at the prospect that the place reserved for us is so great. We would only detract from the vision if we quibble about how gold can be clear, or whether the harps will be concert-style or Celtic.

What Scripture teaches us about eternal life has but one purpose: that we should pursue it, embrace it, seize this promised inheritance.

What Scripture teaches us about eternal life has but one purpose: that we should pursue it, embrace it, seize this promised inheritance. One aspect of eternal life through faith in Christ is that this life is ours, now, even while we are in this world: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." (John 5:24) We are residents of heaven, and so ought to live that way: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:1-2) As for our activities while here on this earth, Peter says, "Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless." (II Peter 3:14)



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

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

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

Pastoral Training in Togo

Recently I concluded a Bible class series on the Ten Commandments at the main church here in Lomé, Togo. In the last class, we reviewed the Ten Commandments, the fact that none of us have perfectly obeyed them, and that failing to keep even one makes us guilty. (James 2:10) I asked what the solution was to our failure. What is your answer? The one answer I got from them was that we should keep the commandments! I hope you thought of Jesus' death and resurrection as the solution.

The members of the congregation know the Gospel and that Jesus died in their place to pay for their sins. But this answer shows how strong the innate idea is that one must do something to be saved. It also reflects the fact that our churches have only been here some fifteen years and that Lutheranism is relatively unknown in West Africa. It also shows the importance of our work here.

I am preaching or teaching Bible class each Sunday, but my main work is as a seminary professor here. I am in the process of translating the Online Theological Studies courses written by Professor Emeritus David Lau into French. I then use these translations to teach seminary



Lomé congregation praying after Bible class

classes each week here in Togo. Being here and teaching these courses in person has been invaluable.

I am not a native speaker of French, so I do not always know if a word I chose is a common one. My students are not native speakers either, as they have learned French as a second language. Seeing first-hand the words and phrases they struggle with helps me improve the translations.



Togo seminary classroom

Early on we were studying a lesson in my French translation of Pastor John Schierenbeck's *Shadows and Substance*, and the students reluctantly admitted not knowing a particular word. I couldn't remember what the word meant myself, even though I had used it in the translation. I told them I didn't know it either and had to look it up on my phone. That was a relief to them and from then on, they more freely admitted when they didn't understand something—if the missionary had admitted ignorance, they could too!

Living here has also helped me to learn some of the false ideas that are common in African Christianity, such as the notion that God speaks to us through dreams. While we have examples of this in Scripture, God nowhere

promises to do so. In fact, in Jeremiah 23:25-29 God condemns the prophets who speak of dreams, and instead points us to His Word. Seeing this tendency led me to add to our lessons a discussion of this passage and the dangers of focusing on dreams. This is something that probably would never come up in a class of seminary students who were life-long Lutherans.

Two of our students have been trained and have served as pastors before. Recently the head pastor here asked them how they saw our training compared to what they had received before. The elder said that we teach the Bible in much more depth. What he had received before was superficial and he sees now that the more he learns, the more there



Togo seminary student teaching catechism lesson



Togo seminary teacherage

is to learn. The other had already said that our training was much more in-depth (see his profile in the November 2022 *Lutheran Spokesman*). He said he has felt like a burden has been lifted from his shoulders. He now understands that the ceremonial laws in the Old Testament are just shadows of Jesus (Colossians 2:16-17). Previously he had felt burdened to fast, to get others to fast and tithe, and so forth. He has learned that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is liberating, and not a burden at all! (Matthew 11:28-30)

A friend who attends another church was shocked when I told him I never fast. He asked me why, then, the Old Testament commands people to fast. This shows how most churches here do not distinguish correctly between the Law and Gospel, nor do they understand that the ceremonial and civil laws were only given to the Israelites as shadows to point us to Jesus. Another friend told me his pastor was angry at

him because he had other commitments and couldn't join the church for a week of fasting and prayer.

Pastors here love to quote the Old Testament. While it is God's Word, they often take it out of context and misapply the Law. For example, most churches *require* a tithe (or more!). One of our pastors told me his sister sometimes asks to borrow money. He doesn't just give it to her but digs into what it is for. She admitted that the church she attends was demanding that she give more money. Here people often go into debt to give money when they are told that God demands it, rather than learning that "God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

The harvest work in Africa (and the rest of the world) is plentiful, but the workers are few. My presence, the resident work of Missionary Bruce Naumann as seminary professor in Tanzania, the travels of Missionary Todd Ohlmann, and the work of several part-time CLC missionary pastors is invaluable. There is no substitute for in-person instruction and encouragement for our fellow pastors overseas. Keep our work in your prayers and support it through your offerings to the CLC general fund (but only cheerfully and not as an obligation!)



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

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the Church of the Lutheran Confession

Ascension Lutheran Church Batavia, Illinois

“See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My Word, and have not denied My name.” (Revelation 3:8) Ascension Lutheran Church in Batavia, Illinois, is a small congregation. But we have a big God Whose Word does not return to Him empty, but accomplishes what He pleases (Isaiah 55:11).

“Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” (John 4:35) One field white for harvest in our country is retirement homes, nursing homes, and care centers. If your congregation has a ministry to these people, get involved! Many of the residents are hungry for God’s Word, and you can help feed them. Ascension conducts

weekly Bible studies in three different care centers. What a blessing from God to be able to give the people what they truly need in our Savior and His Word! Attendance at these Bible studies is voluntary, and they are well



Ascension sanctuary



Sunday school attendees

attended. The people constantly express their gratitude for the opportunity to hear God's Word, and to be blessed, comforted and strengthened by it. Five of our current members are residents of care centers who joined as a result of our Bible studies.

Last fall our congregation joined some of our area congregations in hosting a mental health seminar, open to the public. This December we will mail out Christmas cards



One of the care centers served by Ascension



Easter brunch

give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Our women very much enjoy gathering together for brunches, during which they each share a Bible passage with the group and tell why it is special to them. This strengthens their fellowship with each other while at the same time giving them practice in sharing their faith with others.

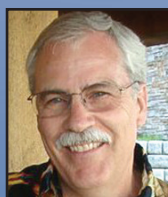
In October our congregation hosted the Great Lakes Pastoral Conference, which was a special

blessing for our little group.



Our church is located forty miles west of Chicago, far enough away that we do not have the big city traffic and congestion. We are in the semi-countryside on a pretty, five-acre setting with lots of trees. Sunday worship is at 10:00 A.M., followed by Sunday School and Bible study. Some of our members and regular attendees are students at colleges in our area. The majority of our members live at a distance from our church, including some who travel over an hour each way to attend worship. They come regularly to hear the truths of God's Word preached and taught, and to enjoy Christian friendship. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells." (Psalm 26:8) If you are in the Chicago area, we would love to have you worship with us.

with a letter explaining John 3:16 to people in our area, inviting them to come to our services. We also plan to have a one-afternoon Vacation Bible School, while the parents of the students do Christmas shopping. We plant the seed of God's Word and water it, looking to God to



Terrel Kesterson is pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Batavia, Illinois.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS NOVEMBER 2023

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
November 1	TLH 645 / LSB 359	Zechariah 3	Zechariah records a vision of Joshua the high priest being accused by Satan. The Lord provides Joshua with clean garments. The Lord promises to clothe His people in righteousness by sending Jesus Christ, “the Branch.”
November 2	TLH 414 / LSB 705	Zechariah 5	Zechariah records a vision of a flying scroll and a vision of a woman in a basket. The Lord judges wickedness and removes it from His presence.
November 3	TLH 442 / LSB 851	1 John 3	Believers in Christ desire to live lives of righteousness, not to continue living in sin. Since God in Christ has demonstrated perfect love toward us, we desire to love one another.
November 4	TLH 391	Matthew 5	Jesus teaches many things in His well-known Sermon on the Mount.
November 6	TLH 385	Matthew 23	Jesus denounces the scribes and the Pharisees publicly. Jesus weeps over rebellious Jerusalem.
November 7	TLH 606	Matthew 24	Jesus foretells both the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of this world. Just as the temple was a mere symbol of something greater to come (the redemptive work of Christ), this world is a frail imitation of the perfect and eternal world to which the Lord will call us.
November 8	TLH 523 / LSB 756	1 Thessalonians 3	Paul has received an encouraging report from Timothy regarding the faith of the Thessalonians.
November 9	TLH 616	1 Thessalonians 4	Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to live lives that are pleasing to God. Paul instructs the Thessalonians regarding the second coming of Christ.
November 10	TLH 550 / LSB 874	Amos 5	Through His prophet Amos, the Lord urges His people to seek Him and live. Rather than sacrifices and the observance of holy days, the Lord desires that His people serve Him with justice and righteousness.
November 11	TLH 609 / LSB 516	Matthew 25	Jesus tells the parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents. Jesus teaches that in the final judgment He will separate people as a shepherd separates sheep from goats.
November 13	TLH 62 / LSB 357	Zechariah 6	Zechariah records a vision of four chariots. The Lord instructs Zechariah to make a crown and to set it on the head of Joshua the high priest. The Messiah will build the temple of the Lord and will rule over His people as priest and as king.
November 14	TLH 34 / LSB 820	Zechariah 7	The Lord desires that His people serve Him in justice and in mercy.
November 15	TLH 1 / LSB 901	Zechariah 8	The Lord foretells peace and prosperity for His people.
November 16	TLH 465 / LSB 912	Zechariah 10	The Lord promises to restore Israel and Judah.
November 17	TLH 449	1 Thessalonians 5	Paul encourages the Thessalonians to be prepared for the coming of Christ. Paul closes his letter with final instructions, a last greeting, and a closing blessing.
November 18	TLH 607	Zephaniah 1	The Lord threatens judgment on the people of Judah because of their idolatry.
November 20	TLH 605 / LSB 513	Zephaniah 2	The Lord threatens judgment on the enemies of Judah.
November 21	TLH 535 / LSB 737	Zephaniah 3	After threatening judgment on Jerusalem and on all nations, the Lord promises to convert from among the nations people who will be faithful to Him. The Lord promises to restore His people Israel.
November 22	WS 793 / LSB 893	Deuteronomy 8	Like the people of Israel whom the Lord led through the wilderness and into the Promised Land, the believer in Christ remembers the grace and mercy that the Lord has shown him in the past. It is our privilege to obey the commands of the Lord out of faith and love.
November 23	LSB 846	Luke 17	Jesus teaches many things and heals the ten lepers.
November 24	LSB 336	Zechariah 11	The sheep of the Lord have rejected their Good Shepherd. Zechariah foretells that the Messiah will be sold for thirty pieces of silver.
November 25	TLH 206 / LSB 741	1 Corinthians 15	Paul lists the various eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Christ. If Christ has been raised from the dead, then also all who believe in Him will rise from death. In the resurrection we will enjoy perfect glorified bodies. Our God has defeated death and has given us life in Jesus Christ. God be praised!
November 27	TLH 32 / WS 779	Zechariah 12	The Lord will accomplish salvation in Judah. Zechariah records another crystal-clear Messianic prophecy: “They will look on Me whom they pierced.”
November 28	TLH 157	Zechariah 13	All believers have been cleansed in the fountain of the blood of Jesus. The Lord will put an end to the worship of idols. Zechariah foretells Jesus’ abandonment by His disciples on Maundy Thursday.
November 29	TLH 264 / LSB 658	Zechariah 14	The Lord will defend His people and punish His enemies. The last judgment will be a terrifying event for all unbelievers, but a joyful event for all who are “Holy to the Lord” by faith in Jesus Christ.
November 30	LSB 355	Isaiah 64	The coming of the Lord is terrifying when we consider our sins, but joyful when we consider the salvation that the Lord has accomplished for us in Jesus Christ. Christ came once to accomplish righteousness for us and He comes again to judge us righteous for His own sake. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

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

Changing of the Guard

On August 1, James (Jim) Sandeen retired from his position as CLC Treasurer and ILC Business Manager—a position in which he has served since 2016. If, however, you happened to visit the ILC business office late this summer, you may have seen Jim still around. You might therefore assume that Jim is not all that good at retiring. And you might be right. After all, Jim, a graduate of all three departments of ILC, took this position only after he had retired from the pastoral ministry. In that ministry, Jim served five congregations from 1966 to 2014, as well as serving as CLC Statistician (1980-1992) and Secretary of the Board of Trustees (1982-2014)—positions which surely prepared him well for his second career.

Jim's apparent inability to retire actually stems from his giving heart. He stayed around this summer and early fall to help Stephen (Steve) Lentz transition into the position he retired from (a position he originally took to help out our synod). That willingness to give of his time and talents characterized not only Jim's ministry, but also his time as treasurer and business manager. He was always available to answer any question or provide information, and he was continuously cheerful, friendly, and helpful in his responses. Not even his loquacity could surpass his sagacity.

Jim notes that among the things he enjoyed most in this position were the routine of getting to work early; the diversity of tasks; the camaraderie of like-minded Christians of the general business office, faculty, and staff; and the edification of the daily chapel devotions and fellowship with the student body. He was also

impressed with the generosity and diversity of Christian stewards' time, treasure, and talents that he observed in his capacity as treasurer and business manager. While he says that he and his wife, Carol, have already been blessed to the fullest in their travels, and may continue those, he will definitely enjoy more leisure time at home with his spouse and family.

Steve Lentz first moved to Eau Claire when his father, Roger, took the maintenance job at



Steve Lentz

ILC and his mother, Mary Lou, became assistant cook there. Steve graduated from ILHS, earned an AA degree at ILC, and then graduated from UWEC with a degree in comprehensive public accounting. Steve is married to Susan (Nolting) and has two adult children. He is a longtime member of Messiah in Eau Claire and served as its treasurer for twenty-six years. Before Steve became the new treasurer and business manager at Immanuel, he was peacefully enjoying his retirement from his forty-three years as a Certified Public Accountant.



James Sandeen

Steve's background certainly prepared him well for this new position, but it is truly his servant's heart, willing to dedicate his time and talents to this task, that led him, like Jim, to give up his retirement and return to work. Steve, however, doesn't think of this position as a job, but rather as an opportunity to do something for the Lord. So far, the part he enjoys the most about his new position is the people he works with—fellow Christians whose goal is to work together to bring the Gospel to our young people at ILC and to the church body at large.

In his free time Steve loves being outside, especially sitting on a quiet lake fishing, or hiking with his wife. He also enjoys working in the garden, mowing the lawn, splitting wood for the fireplace—really, doing anything outside that allows him to be surrounded by God's beautiful creation.

We, as a synod, are thankful for Jim's faithful and dedicated service to the Lord, and for Steve's devoting his time and talents to this work. We pray that the Lord continues to bless them both in their new vocations.



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

ANNOUNCEMENTS



L-R former Kindergarten teacher Eileen Tiefel, new teacher Haley Seffens, Pastor Paul Tiefel

Installation. In accordance with our usage and order, **Haley Seffens**, who was called by Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, to be its kindergarten teacher, was installed on Sunday, August 20, 2023.

—Pastor Paul Tiefel



Pastor Luke Bernthal, left, with new teacher Isaac Schmitt

Installation. In accordance with our usage and order, **Isaac Schmitt**, who was called by Saint Stephen Lutheran School of Mountain View, California, to be its lower-grade teacher, was installed on Sunday, August 20th, 2023. Also

participating in the worship service were the men of the Saint Stephen Board of Education.

—Pastor Luke Bernthal

Nominations for Immanuel Professor Call. The Board of Regents for Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary invites “all pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of member congregations of the Church of the Lutheran Confession” (CLC Constitution) to nominate an individual or individuals to fill the vacancy which will be created by the retirement of Professor Mark Kranz at the end of the 2023-24 academic year. The position would be best served by someone who is teacher trained and has the ability to teach high school (if nominee is male or female) and college classes (if nominee is male) primarily in social studies (history/geography), elementary education methods, and other potential disciplines commencing with the 2024-25 academic year. Those submitting nominations would need to include information regarding the nominee’s educational background and teaching and/or professional experience, also indicating how the person might help our school in technology expertise, extracurricular activities, or administrative positions. Nominations are to be received by email or letter no later than midnight November 20, 2023 (letters postmarked November 10, 2023) to: Mr. James Burkhardt; 217 Windy Lane; Rockwall, TX 75087; email: jeb6217@yahoo.com.

Nominations for ILC President: The Board of Regents invites nominations for the office of President of Immanuel Lutheran College. The current term of Professor Daniel Schierenbeck concludes on June 30, 2024. All pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of member congregations of the CLC are entitled to nominate a man from the faculty of Immanuel Lutheran College to serve a two-year term beginning July 1, 2024. Nominations are to be received by email or letter no later than midnight November 20, 2023 (letters postmarked November 10, 2023) to: Mr. James Burkhardt; 217 Windy Lane; Rockwall, TX 75087; email: jeb6217@yahoo.com.