



APRIL 2024 VOL 66 NO. 10

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

"Now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become
the first fruits of those that have fallen asleep."

—1 Corinthians 15:20



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

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

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

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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.

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Resurrection—REALLY?

“And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter.’” (Acts 17:32)

Paul was speaking to the Greek philosophers at the Areopagus in Athens. They gladly listened to him because those philosophers loved nothing more than “to tell or to hear some new thing.” (verse 21) They listened eagerly—until he mentioned the resurrection of the dead. When they heard that, the mocking began. That was too much to believe or even to listen to any longer. This guy is clearly off his rocker. Resurrection from the dead? Don’t be ridiculous! What kind of fools do you take us for?



is so great that the rest of the world considers it ridiculously impossible—but with God all things are possible. The physical bodies of all who have died, no matter if they have long ago decayed into dust, or been burned to ashes, or eaten by wild beasts; those bodies will be raised to life again. For Christians, that will be a resurrection to eternal life, made sure by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22)

Have you run into similar reactions today? In our world that worships science and believes only what can be explained in naturalistic ways, the idea of the resurrection from the dead is laughable. The world can hardly believe anyone could be so naive and foolish as to actually believe that there will be a mass resurrection of all the dead.

Even many so-called Christian churches have given up on the idea of a physical, bodily resurrection from the dead. They also understand, as Paul points out, that if there is no resurrection from the dead, then Christ is not raised. However, they don’t seem to pay attention to the rest of what Paul says, their faith is empty and futile. They are still in their sins. They “are of all men the most pitiable.” (1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-18)

However, for all of us who know that the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and that the Spirit has created a new spirit within us, we know that “since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.” (1 Corinthians 1:21) This we know for certain: “Now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:20)

For us this is the most joyful news. Our faith is not empty or futile. We are not still in our sins; they are forgiven! We are not the most pitiable of all men, as the world suggests. Rather we are the most blessed of all men and receive a promise that

Christ’s resurrection not only guarantees our own resurrection to eternal life, but it also gives us the power to live a whole new life here on earth—a life of joy and peace in serving God. For our old Adam was crucified with Christ and we have been “buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4) Yes, we can live the resurrection life: a life of peace in God’s presence with His forgiveness, a life of joyful service to Him, keeping His commandments which are always for our own blessing, a life of love lived together with one another.

The world may say, “Resurrection—really?” May we answer, “Absolutely!” and live with the joy and confidence of our new life in Christ.

We thank Thee, Christ; new life is ours,
New light, new hope, new strength, new powers:
May grace our every way attend
Until we reach our journey’s end! (TLH 369:6)



David Reim is pastor of Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Vernon, British Columbia.

“Say the Word”

When we were young, we believed the impossible. From a man in a red suit delivering our Christmas

toys to a fairy leaving a dollar under our pillows, whatever our parents told us was the “gospel truth,” if you will.

But then life happened. We grew older, and life experiences made us more skeptical of what we had been told. We went from believing the impossible to telling people, “I’ll believe it when I see it.”

Even though Thomas had seen many impossible things during his time with Jesus (Lazarus raised to life, Jesus walking on water and calming the storm, picking up baskets full of leftovers at the feeding of the 5,000), he didn’t believe the Easter message he was being told. “Jesus is risen!” the other disciples told him. “I’ll believe it when I . . . touch it,” Thomas said. With gruesome details, Thomas demands hands-on evidence of the bodily resurrection of Jesus before he would ever believe that a crucified Jesus was now alive. Thomas’ faith was based on what he could see and touch, not on what he had been told.

Compare that with the Roman centurion in Capernaum. No doubt this Roman soldier had seen many things in his day, things that would make this grizzled warrior skeptical.

Yet the centurion had a faith that made Jesus marvel. This man believed that Jesus was the Son of God. And accordingly, he believed that Jesus’ Word had power. He believed that the same powerful Word which called the heavens and earth into existence could heal his sick servant. “*Only say the word, and my servant will be healed.*” (Matthew 8:8 ESV) This man did not need to see or touch Jesus to be convinced that He had power to heal. He simply trusted the power of Jesus to heal by His Word.

Like Thomas, we may sometimes struggle with doubt and weaknesses. Sometimes we feel that if only we SAW Jesus, then we’d be stronger believers. If only we could see some of

His miracles, then our faith would increase. Yet, learn from Thomas that signs and wonders will not strengthen faith.

Instead, let us pray for a faith like that of the centurion—a faith that clings to the words and promises of Jesus. Let us go back to the Scriptures again and again, and base our faith on the promises of God. Rejoice that through His Word, God has performed

the greatest miracle: He made you a believer in Jesus Whom you have never seen! Rejoice in His Word that Jesus’ death on the cross truly does atone for your sins. Rejoice in His Word that Jesus’ resurrection truly does mean that you are right with God (reconciled and justified), and you too will rise glorified. Remember, faith does not come by “seeing the miracles,” but “*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” (Romans 10:17)

When we were young, we believed the impossible. No wonder Jesus calls on us to have a child-like faith, one that takes Jesus at His Word and joins the centurion in saying, “Say the Word,” and rejoices at Jesus’ promises! As Jesus tells Thomas, “*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*” (John 20:29) Even so, we pray with the hymn-writer: “Lord, give us a faith such as this!” Amen. (The Lutheran Hymnal 396)



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

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 Agnus Dei*

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace. Amen.

When John the Baptist identified Jesus as the promised Christ, he called Him “the Lamb of God,” (John 1:29) for this was how God had depicted the Christ in prophecy. He was to be sacrificed as the Passover lamb was sacrificed. His blood was to be an offering to save sinners from God’s wrath, as the blood of the Passover lamb saved the Israelites from the plague of death. The portrayal of the Christ as a sacrificial lamb appears also in Isaiah 53, where His passion and death are foretold as a lamb being led to the slaughter.

And it isn’t only in prophecy that Christ is called “the Lamb.” The apostle Peter—looking back at Christ’s completed work of atonement—says that we were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (1 Peter 1:19) And in the visions granted to John in the Book of Revelation, the victorious Christ appears as the Lamb that was slain but now lives and is praised for His work of redemption (Revelation 5:6).

The figure of Christ as a lamb is used extensively in Christian art and hymns, because it brings to mind the Savior and His sacrifice for us. It calls us to remember the great price our Lord paid for our redemption and stirs us up to respond with praise and devotion.

Also in our Communion liturgy we sing the *Agnus Dei* (Latin for “Lamb of God”) in which we address Christ, using the words of John the Baptist, as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of



the world. It is an ancient practice dating back to the beginning of the eighth century.

In the traditional form of the *Agnus Dei* that we have in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (page 28) we offer three prayers to the Lord Jesus, addressing Him as the living and reigning Christ Who is able to hear and grant our petitions. Twice we address Him as the merciful Savior, our brother Who took our human nature and lived as a man in this sinful world, Who knows our trials and sorrows. In the last of the three prayers, we ask Jesus for peace; and not just peace, but His peace. This is the peace that He promised His disciples on the night in which He was betrayed, saying, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)

In the Lord’s Supper Jesus gives us what we pray for in the *Agnus Dei*: He has mercy on us and grants us His peace by giving us His own body and blood together with the bread and wine, assuring us that the sacrifice He offered as the Lamb of God was for each of us individually and personally. Knowing that, we can lead lives that are characterized by inner peace, what Paul calls “the peace of God which surpasses all understanding.” (Philippians 4:7) Troubles still dog us in this world, but in the Lord’s Supper we are assured that all is right between us and God. And since that is so, we know that God will help us through our troubles and guide us safely to eternal life.



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

EMBRACING "STRANGE"

***"For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."* (1 Peter 4:3-6)**

Peer pressure is defined as "the strong influence of a group, especially of children, on members of that group to behave as everyone else does." (Cambridge Dictionary) Behave like everyone else, or you're ridiculed. While Peter doesn't specifically use the term "peer pressure," his words can be seen as speaking to that great pressure the unbelieving world puts on Christians to join them in their godless living or else.

We tend to think of peer pressure as something faced only in our youth, after which we are wiser and succumb less to the pressure. We do well to realize that Peter wasn't just writing to a group of pre-teens or high schoolers. He was writing to a whole group of Christians in different stages of life, and what he wrote applied to them all. And it applies to us all.

In truth, we are all vulnerable to the world's pressure to conform to their sinful desires and practices. Not only do we have a willing participant in our sinful flesh, but we also don't enjoy being thought of as strange or having evil spoken of us. This puts great pressure on us to go along with the "will of the Gentiles" and their works of darkness in order to avoid their ridicule. Notice the encouraging words Peter tells his readers, and us. It's as though Peter says, "Let them call you strange! For to them, that is exactly what you are!"

Why do unbelievers think Christians strange? Because "the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14) "The light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19) "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:19) Christians are

strange to unbelievers because we follow Christ and refuse to "run with them in the same flood of dissipation." (verse 4)

Through the Spirit's power in the Gospel, the Christian is a new creation; as such he's had enough of living for himself "in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries." (verse 3) In Christ Jesus, the Christian is set free from sin, not free to sin. With that freedom the Christian strives to give himself to Christ, Who gave Himself on the cross to redeem us.

We cannot embrace Christ without being estranged from this world.

We cannot embrace Christ without being estranged from this world. When we confess Christ, we are confessing right along with all the departed saints who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13) It is true that we may indeed be "judged according to men in the flesh," but in Christ Jesus we "live according to God in the spirit." (verse 6) Thanks be to Jesus that you are

strange to this world and that heaven is your true home.

The world with wanton pride
Exalts its sinful pleasures
And for them foolishly
Gives up the heavenly treasures.
Let others love the world
With all its vanity;
I love the Lord, my God –
What is the world to me! (TLH 430:6)



Chad Seybt is pastor of a quad parish that includes Morning Star Lutheran Church in Fairchild, Trinity Lutheran Church in Millston, St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Melrose, and Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran Church in Onalaska; all in Wisconsin.

The Day God Laughed

Does God have a sense of humor? As one who has told a joke or two, I'd like to know. Does He frown on conversation that goes beyond "yea and nay"? Or does He agree that "laughter is the best medicine"? If He has given us the ability to laugh at things that seem humorous to us, does He share our emotional releases?

Scripture doesn't say. But it clearly reveals one circumstance when God does laugh. "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision." (Psalm 2:4) Obviously, the Lord laughs and scoffs at those people who "plot a vain thing," at kings and rulers who set themselves against the Lord (Psalm 2:1-2). God will "dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel." (verse 9)

We recall the day when God's prophet Elijah contested with 450 prophets of Baal on mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). Who would send fire from heaven to consume their respective sacrifices: Jehovah or Baal? The priests of Baal went first, pleading with their god, but to no avail. Elijah mocked and laughed at their dancing, shouting, and blood-letting. Surely God in heaven also laughed in derision at their rebellious attempts to upset and replace Him. He sent fire and smashed His enemies like clay pots.

Then there was the day when God laughed at the Philistines, who had captured the ark of God and brought it into the temple of Dagon, their idol. The next morning the Dagon worshipers found their god face down in the dirt. They propped him back up, but on the morrow found him again fallen, with his head and hands broken off. One can easily imagine God chuckling as He toppled this powerless idol. And in derision God smote and terrified the people of Ashdod (the Philistine city where the temple of Dagon was located) with frightful tumors (1 Samuel 5:1-6).

In Moses' day God had multiple occasions to laugh. When Pharaoh repeatedly refused to release the children of Israel from their bondage, God sent a series of ten plagues to change his mind. You might remember them: water turned to blood, frogs, lice, flies, plague, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of all the

Egyptian firstborn.

We know that the Egyptians were polytheists, worshiping scores of national and local gods. And it seems that most of the plagues had a direct or indirect connection to one or more of their idols.

Heqet was a goddess of fertility and life. She was depicted as a woman with a frog's head. The second plague was like God saying, "You love a frog-god? Here's a limitless buffet of her legs. Stuff yourselves!"

Bat was a cattle goddess, depicted as a human female with horns of a cow. *Reshoph* was the god of plagues. *Kek* was a god of darkness and light. *Sobek* was associated with water and the Nile. And many were the gods and goddesses of healing, medicine, protection, and power. If these associations are valid, God was surely laughing as He held Pharaoh and his people in derision. He not only afflicted them physically, but put to shame their whole system of idol worship.



God laughs at His enemies, but smiles upon His beloved children. God delights when His believers do His will. Heaven rejoices when a single sinner repents. Can anyone imagine Jesus not smiling when He took the little children up in His arms and blessed them? No, God does not laugh at His own, but blesses and keeps them. He causes His face to shine upon them, which He did especially when His own Son redeemed them on the cross. He daily lifts up His merciful countenance and gives us peace.

Therefore, "kiss the Son" (Psalm 2:12), taking refuge in Him only. And so daily bask in the peace of God's forgiving and shining countenance.



David Fuerstenau is a retired pastor. He lives in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

The Pearl of Great Price

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (Matthew 13:45-46)

It is no wonder that in Jesus’ parable He used the example of a pearl to demonstrate value. Good pearls were considered more valuable than gold. Cleopatra used them to impress Marc Antony. Julius Caesar invaded the British Isles, in part, to acquire more of them. Natural pearls, which make up only one percent of the market today, are formed in oysters over many years and contain thousands of layers. Most pearls have defects, including yellowness, a dusky tinge, a lack of smoothness, or a shape not quite spherical. Perfect pearls, however, are extremely valuable, not only for their monetary worth, but also for their natural beauty. Even the gates of heaven themselves are described in Scripture as pearls (Revelation 21:21).

Some Bible commentators have interpreted this parable in the following way: Lost sinners are the pearls spoken of in this parable, and the merchant in search of them is God. Certainly, the Bible is full of passages that support the fact that God’s love for us undeserving sinners was so great that He was willing to give the ultimate sacrifice, His only Son, to secure our redemption and eternal life. This interpretation would parallel the parable of the Lost Sheep (Matthew 18:10-14), which highlights the desire of our God to seek and save all lost souls.

I believe, however, that the parable rightly means something else. As many of Christ’s parables do, this parable speaks of the “kingdom of heaven.” As we have previously learned, the kingdom of heaven is the rule of Christ in the hearts of believers. How is that like a “merchant seeking beautiful pearls”?

I remember as a child working a number of jobs, including corn detasseling and paper routes, in order to earn enough money to buy my own baseball glove. For months I had a singular focus: the Spalding outfielder’s glove in the shop window. Perhaps you have your own stories of when you had a singular focus. Picture a hound on the scent of its prey, or the animal grasping the bait in

the trap, unwilling to let go, even though letting go would free it. Or a surgeon tirelessly exhausting all possibilities in an attempt to save the life of the patient. Those seeking the kingdom of heaven are pictured as being single-focused as well.

By God’s grace alone, believers have found the perfect pearl—the Gospel of salvation in Christ. They recognize its value. They are willing to give up anything and everything to keep it. Their whole worldview changes. They see that nothing else compares to that treasure. All other “pearls” provide only temporal and fleeting value. As Mary understood as she sat and listened at Jesus’ feet, there is really only “one thing needful.” May we all be led

to recognize and keep in our hearts the pearl of great price.

Many spend their lives in fretting
Over trifles and in getting
Things that have no solid ground.
I shall strive to win the treasure
That will bring me lasting pleasure
And that now is seldom found.

If on earth my days He lengthen,
He my weary soul will strengthen;
All my trust in Him I place.
Earthly wealth is not abiding,
Like a stream away is gliding;
Safe I anchor in His grace. (TLH 425:3,6)



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

In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Rev. Ralph E. Schaller (1919-1989) was a leader in the formation of the CLC. He held pastorates in Mayville and Coloma, Michigan, and later served as a domestic missionary in New Mexico, Alaska and Virginia. This article is from the Lutheran Spokesman of June, 1960. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.



Rev. Ralph E. Schaller
(1919-1989)

Moment of Terror in the Bells

“**A**nd they made bells of pure gold and put the bells . . . on the hem of the robe.” (Exodus 39:25)

Some of the gems of Holy Scripture are phrases and verses easily overlooked by us in a reading of that wondrous book. To the Old Testament people this little verse portrayed one of the moments of deepest suspense ever known to them. It might well be called the MOMENT OF TERROR IN THE BELLS.

It was a moment of the most ominous silence. A silence that made the heart of every worshiper stop and hold short for a terrible minute. For the bells were silent! They could not be heard! Would they become audible again or would they die forever? Would they signal to them that their worship could continue—that their worship was acceptable—or would their worship and lives drift away from before the face of God in the hopeless silence of destruction?

It was the GREAT DAY OF ATONEMENT, when once a year the High Priest, dressed in the simple garb of linen, must enter into the Holy of Holies in God's Temple, behind that awesome double curtain, into the presence of the Triune God, before the mercy seat; where, having made atonement for his own sins, he must now sprinkle the blood of atonement for the people. Thus bowed low,

the worshipers waited in the temple of God.

All they could hear were those little gold bells on the hem of the priest's garment. When those became silent, they all visibly stiffened and waited . . . for now he was in the presence of God. They had no right to expect God to accept their sacrifice. They must depend wholly on the Almighty's mercy. What a wondrous relief of sins forgiven, when the little bells came into earshot again. The Priest, who had gone for them, had returned.

What a wondrous picture of the climax of the Passion story! It pictured how the Lord and Savior with His blood on the cross went as both High Priest and Sacrifice into the Holy of Holies . . . before the mercy seat of His Heavenly Father. He went not with a year's payment, but with the blood of payment for all times. The silence of that Saturday with all its hopeless fears we see only too clearly in the Easter gloom of the disciples, both male and female. But what music those eternal bells ring out for us since that first Easter Morn, as the hem of the garment of that everlasting and victorious High Priest brushes His disciples with the message of sins paid and forgiven for all times to come. Joy everlasting has replaced the moment of terror in the bells—they now ring out with life restored.

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the Church of the Lutheran Confession

Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church Coloma, Michigan



The last few years have seen many changes at Faith in Coloma. God's grace has been abundantly evident! We've experienced growth in the congregation, both from without and within. During COVID we were blessed to have an average of 200 people join us each Sunday for our internet worship service. Most were from out of town or other CLC congregations. However, through those services we were also blessed with new members.

By God's grace, we've also experienced growth with CLC members moving to the Coloma area. Two new member families have brought to us seven young children with one more on the way. Our Sunday School was all but empty and now it is filled with the little lambs of Jesus' flock. We try to plan as many outings and gatherings for the children as we can.

Fellowship opportunities are precious in our day. The world and its prince continually work to distract and divide like-minded believers. Faith congregation tries to take advantage of as many fellowship opportunities as possible. We've done so by having special fellowship meals once a month. The

first one was a pig roast! The meals have been well attended and members are encouraged to bring friends and family. We usually have the meals on a Friday or Saturday evening.

At Faith we're excited to see the Lord's will unfold in our



Sanctuary decorated for Thanksgiving



Some members of Faith

area. The people at Faith are committed to reaching out with the Gospel. We hope to re-vamp our parade float and get it back into action this spring. Small town celebrations are very popular in this area. We have opportunity to be in three parades within eight miles of our location.

We are in the process of planning organized “cruise-ins” and “motorcycle rallies/rides” this spring and summer. Surprisingly, they have proven to be an excellent way of meeting people in the community, acquainting them with our church, inviting them to our service, and providing an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel. A local company, Lane Automotive, is in the performance and racing industry and has donated large quantities of hats, shirts, and other car and racing paraphernalia to give away at our various events.

Through the years the people of Faith have been strengthened and preserved in the Christian faith through the means of grace. While there are always trials in life, our members have experienced firsthand the faithful care of the Lord. They are certain of the Lord’s continued presence and strength.

This year Faith will celebrate its sixty-fifth anniversary. Ponder what a miracle of God’s grace that truly is! Sixty-five years ago a few faithful Christians left the religious liberalism of their former fellowship and founded Faith Lutheran Church. In the ensuing years we have seen the leaven of false teaching take over whole church bodies. Praise God for His grace in preserving His Word in its truth and purity here at Faith and in our Synod!

What greater blessing could we ask for? *“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) At Faith we eagerly look forward to the future, rejoicing in our Lord’s continued presence and blessing, *“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:20)



Sunday school hayride



Fellowship picnic



Pig roast fellowship meal



Jay Hartmann is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Coloma, Michigan.

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

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

Pastoral Growth in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda

“They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

God’s blessings through His Word come powerfully to individuals who study and ponder the Scriptures. There is also a special benefit that comes through mutual sharing of that Word of God. Many such blessings were realized in Moshi, Tanzania on January 23-25, 2024 at the pastoral conference of the Tanzanian Church of the Lutheran Confession. There were thirty-five in attendance, including several laymen and students from Wittenberg Seminary. Studies included “Pastoral Responsibilities” by Pastor Robert Loskira, “Questions and Bible Answers about Baptizing Children” by Missionary Bruce Naumann, and “A Scriptural Study of the Lord’s Supper” by Pastor Paul Nolting of Valentine, Nebraska. We also had regular devotions, brief reports from the attending pastors, and a closing communion service. This was a very beneficial occasion for this small, conservative Lutheran fellowship, for which we thank God!

Following the conference, Mission Board Chairman Joel



Pastor Paul Nolting addresses the TCLC pastoral conference

Krafft and Missionary Bruce Naumann visited our sister churches in Kenya and Uganda. They visited two schools in Kenya where about 250 students receive Christian instruction, with support from CLC Project Kinship. In Uganda pastors gathered for a conference in the town of Iganga, where Daniel Mugeni serves as pastor. He also cares for twenty orphans who live at his home. With God’s blessings, the Church of the Lutheran Confession in Uganda (CLCU) will be received into fellowship with the CLC this summer. There were six Ugandan pastors in attendance at the conference, and all were edified by the Word of God which we shared. For more photos and video clips, see Missionary Naumann’s blog at www.clc-tz.blogspot.com.



Children of the Mugeni home orphanage



Bruce Naumann is a CLC Missionary to East Africa. His home is in Arusha, Tanzania.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS APRIL 2024

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
April 1	TLH 384 / LSB 559	1 Corinthians 9	Rather than claim the rights that he might rightfully claim, Paul forfeits his rights and makes himself a servant to all people for the sake of the Gospel.
April 2	TLH 291	1 Corinthians 10	Paul warns the Roman believers to learn from the example of Israel during the Exodus, to flee from idolatry, and to do everything to the glory of God.
April 3	TLH 315 / LSB 618	1 Corinthians 11	We are to imitate our leaders insofar as our leaders imitate Christ. Because the wearing of head coverings has become attached to the confession of the objective distinction between men and women, Paul commands the women of Corinth to cover their heads. Paul rebukes the Corinthian believers for their improper practices surrounding the Lord's Supper.
April 4	TLH 388 / LSB 570	1 John 1	John writes his epistle as an eyewitness of Christ and His works. By faith we live in the light of our Savior and we enjoy fellowship with God and with one another.
April 5	TLH 430 / LSB 730	1 John 2	Jesus is our Advocate with God the Father. Jesus has paid the price of His blood for the sins of all people. Believers in Christ love one another. Believers in Christ cannot love this corrupt world. John warns that false teachers, antichrists, will arise within the church to deceive the faithful.
April 6	TLH 208 / LSB 470	John 20	Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John witness the empty tomb of Jesus. Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene outside the tomb. Jesus appears to the disciples gathered in Jerusalem. One week later Jesus appears to the disciples, including Thomas. <i>“These are written so that you may believe.”</i>
April 8	TLH 395 / LSB 696	1 John 5	By faith in Jesus Christ we overcome the world. Our faith shows itself in obedience to every command of the Lord. Our faith prevents us from willfully continuing to live in sin.
April 9	TLH 206 / LSB 741	1 Corinthians 12	Paul encourages the Corinthians to apply their varied spiritual gifts faithfully. The Church of Christ is like the human body. Each member plays a unique role for the good of the body.
April 10	LSB 695	1 Corinthians 13	Paul describes love beautifully. Faith will give way to sight as we see and experience fully that which we now anticipate by faith. Hope will give way to possession as we receive that which we now expect in Christ. Love, however, never ends.
April 11	TLH 360 / LSB 528	1 Corinthians 14	Tongue-speaking has become a problem in Corinth. Paul teaches that without someone who is able to interpret, the tongue-speaking cannot edify the body of Christ. Instead of speaking in tongues, believers strive to prophesy, that is, to proclaim the Word of the Lord.
April 12	TLH 445	1 Corinthians 16	Paul instructs the faithful to set aside regular offerings for the work of the church, in proportion to their incomes. Paul intends to visit Corinth during his travels. Paul closes his letter with instructions and with greetings.
April 13	TLH 193 / LSB 469	Luke 24	The women find Jesus' tomb empty on Easter morning. Two angels tell them the good news, <i>“He is not here, but has risen.”</i> Peter also witnesses the empty tomb. Jesus appears to two disciples as they walk to Emmaus. Jesus appears to the disciples gathered in Jerusalem. Jesus ascends into heaven.
April 15	LSB 483	Genesis 10	Moses records the genealogy of the sons of Noah after the flood. From these family lines have come every nation of people on earth today.
April 16	LSB 837	Genesis 11	The prideful descendants of Noah plan to glorify themselves, banding together to construct a great city with a tower reaching into the heavens. The Lord confuses their language and scatters them over the face of the earth. Moses traces the descendants of Shem down to Abram.
April 17	TLH 207 / LSB 548	Genesis 12	The Lord calls Abram to leave from his country and to settle in the land of Canaan. The Lord makes the messianic promise to Abram for the first time. Abram, Sarai his wife, and Lot his nephew travel to Canaan. During a time of famine, Abram travels to Egypt, where he passes Sarai off as his sister.
April 18	TLH 205 / LSB 478	Genesis 13	Abram and Lot separate so that their great flocks and herds will have room to graze. Lot settles in Sodom, and Abram settles by the oaks of Mamre at Hebron.
April 19	TLH 383 / LSB 557	Acts 4	The priests and the Sadducees arrest Peter and John for their proclamation of the resurrection of Christ. On trial before the high-priestly family, Peter boldly proclaims Christ. Even though Peter and John refuse to cease proclaiming Christ, their captors release them because the crowds are praising God that Peter and John have healed a lame man. The believers pray to the Lord. The believers pool their possessions and have everything in common.
April 20	TLH 436 / LSB 710	John 10	Jesus proclaims Himself to be the Good Shepherd. Jesus teaches that He is one with God the Father. The Jews attempt to stone Jesus and to arrest Him, but Jesus escapes and crosses the Jordan. Many people believe in Him.
April 22	TLH 209	Genesis 14	After Lot has been captured during a battle, Abram uses his own personal army to restore Lot, the people of Lot's household, and his possessions. Melchizedek blesses Abram. (Refer to Hebrews 7 for more information regarding Melchizedek.)
April 23	TLH 444 / LSB 668	Acts 5	Ananias and Sapphira sell a piece of land and promise to give all of the proceeds to the church, but secretly keep some of the money for themselves. Both are struck dead as a result of their pretentious dishonesty. The apostles perform many signs and wonders. Out of jealousy, the high priest and the Sadducees imprison the apostles. Defiantly the apostles continue to proclaim Christ. At the advice of Gamaliel, the council has the apostles beaten and released.
April 24	TLH 507 / LSB 830	Acts 6	The church chooses seven men, including Stephen, to serve in the daily distribution of food. Enemies seize Stephen, bring him before the council, and accuse him falsely.
April 25	TLH 259	Acts 7	Before the high priest, Stephen preaches an impressive sermon on a series of Old Testament leaders, finally calling the Jewish leaders to account for their disobedience toward God and their murder of Christ. They stone Stephen to death.
April 26	TLH 411	Acts 8	Saul approves of the execution of Stephen. Persecution rages and spreads, scattering the faithful throughout Judea and Samaria. Simon the magician believes the preaching of Philip and is baptized. Simon offers Peter and John money in exchange for the power to convey the Holy Spirit. Peter calls Simon to repentance. Philip preaches to and baptizes an Ethiopian eunuch.
April 27	TLH 37 / LSB 573	John 15	Jesus is the vine and believers are the branches. We receive life from Him. He feeds us and makes us fruitful in lives of obedience and love. Since the world hated the vine, the world will hate the branches.
April 29	TLH 63 / LSB 344	Genesis 15	The Lord promises to provide for Abram a biological son, through whom Abram will become the father of a great nation.
April 30	TLH 210 / LSB 464	Genesis 16	Since Sarai is unable to bear children, she gives her servant, Hagar, to Abram to bear his children. Hagar gives birth to Ishmael. The arrangement results in significant family drama.

Fellowship Declared with LAMP

In late January/early February, Missionary Todd Ohlmann and Board of Doctrine member Pastor Andrew Schaller, traveled to the Philippines to visit the Lutheran Autonomous Mission to the Philippines (LAMP). The primary purpose of this visit was to review the colloquy questions that Pastor Jordan Palangyos had answered via email over the past several months and to determine whether there was doctrinal agreement between LAMP and the CLC.

This was the second in-person visit made by representatives of the CLC to LAMP. I had the opportunity to accompany Missionary Ohlmann on our initial visit in April 2023. After an encouraging visit, President Wilke appointed Pastor Schaller to coordinate with Missionary Ohlmann on a comprehensive study of the teachings of the CLC and LAMP.

Missionary Ohlmann and Pastor Schaller arrived in Manila on January 31 and traveled to Baguio City by bus where they spent two days with Pastor Palangyos discussing the colloquy questions. They especially focused on doctrinal differences between the CLC and the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LC-MS) as Pastor Palangyos was trained at a seminary affiliated with the LC-MS. They found him to have a humble and teachable spirit, and a solid Biblical knowledge.

On Saturday, February 2, Missionary Ohlmann and Pastor Schaller accompanied Pastor Palangyos to the Cordillera District where the two LAMP congregations are located.



Wallayan Lutheran Church

They conducted an outreach seminary for about thirty people. On Sunday, February 3, they traveled to the Wallayan congregation for Bible study and a worship service. On February 4, Missionary Ohlmann and Pastor Schaller headed back to Manila to prepare for their flight home.

The short but productive visit

concluded with Missionary Ohlmann and Pastor Schaller both recommending that President Wilke declare fellowship with LAMP. Pastor Schaller writes, “I believe that it would be God-pleasing to establish fellowship with Jordan Palangyos and LAMP because unity in doctrine was evident from our discussions.”

It is always a reason for rejoicing when fellowship is declared based on unity in doctrine. The Psalmist declares, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). LAMP consists of two congregations with about sixty souls. They are served by Pastor Palangyos and four lay assistants. With fellowship established, Missionary Ohlmann will now add LAMP to his annual visitation rotation. We will continue to support Pastor Palangyos with theological training, and the Philippines may even serve as a destination for a small group from the Mission Helper Program to do child evangelism. May the Lord bless us as we work together to carry out the Great Commission!



Robert Sauers is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida, and a member of the CLC Board of Missions

It's Okay! He is Risen!

(Please open your Bible and read John 20:1-18.)

A mother checks her phone for the tenth time. Previously she had received news that her soldier son had been wounded in battle, but she knows nothing more than that. After many long, agonizing hours, she finally gets a text that reads, "Just a scratch, Mom. Don't worry. *It's okay!*"

"It's okay" can be two of the most comforting words in the English language. But what about when things aren't so great? Isn't it true that the words "it's okay" can sound all too meaningless? Don't people often use them when they can't think of anything else to say?

For Mary Magdalene, "it's okay" certainly would have sounded hollow and empty early that first Easter morning. Not only was her Lord dead and buried, she soon discovered that His body was gone from the tomb. "It must have been stolen," she sorrowfully concludes. This is the last straw. Her whole world is crashing down upon her, and she just can't take any more!

Present day comparisons are easy to find. The faithful wife whose husband has deserted her. The parents whose newborn child has died. The conscience constantly plagued by the memory of some terrible sin. For these people, much more is needed than "it's okay."

Going back to the garden tomb, we see the rising sun showing Mary's tear-stained face. Glancing into the grave she sees two angels in white. "*Woman, why are you weeping?*" She said to them, "*Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.*" (John 20:13)

But someone else is there. Blinded by her tears, she doesn't recognize Him at first. But then He gently speaks her name. "*Mary.*" Yes, it's Jesus, in the flesh very much alive! In that unforgettable moment everything becomes way better than OKAY! The anguish of the past three days vanishes away and is replaced by unspeakable joy!

The two words "it's okay" are altogether meaningful when you add the three words *He is risen!* In fact, if Jesus is not risen, then nothing can ever really be okay! As the sin-corrupted descendants



of Adam, we could never in a million years rise above the sin, death, and hell which plague our lives and would have destroyed us forever if not for Easter morning.

But now Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Put yourself in Mary's place. Stand with Jesus beside His vacant tomb. Make Mary's unforgettable moment your life-long joy! He is risen! So now it's okay! It really is!

This doesn't mean that you won't have problems in this life. Jesus plainly says, "*In the world you will have tribulation.*" (John 16:33) But with the risen and living God at your side, you can face all your troubles with certain confidence and lasting joy!

It's okay! No matter how many times you've messed up, your sins have been buried in Jesus' tomb, removed from God's sight forever! "*As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.*" (Psalm 103:12)

It's okay! When Jesus rose, it was the ultimate demonstration that good had overcome evil. Now nothing can defeat those who belong to the God Who has triumphed over Satan and all his demonic host. "*In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*" (Romans 8:37)

It's okay! When Jesus left the tomb, death was forced to take a permanent vacation! Nothing can keep your body, dear Christian, from being raised and glorified on the last day—the day on which God will wipe away every last tear from your eyes (Revelation 21:4).

With Jesus as your Risen Lord and Savior it is most certainly OKAY!



Michael Wilke is pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Saginaw, Michigan, and president of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

The Pope Thinks Hell Is Empty. It's become fashionable in recent years—even among some nominal Christians—to question the existence of hell. Pope Francis, for his part, does believe in the existence of hell, as his past statements from the Vatican have shown. However, in January, when he was questioned again on this subject by an Italian talk show host, he shocked even Catholic theologians by saying, "I like to think of hell as empty; I hope it is." Provocative statements have become routine with the current Pope who, in December, declared it permissible for priests to bless same-sex marriages. Mares, Courtney. "Pope Francis: 'I like to think of hell as empty.'" *News.* CatholicNewsAgency.com, 15 Jan., 2024. Web. 21 Jan., 2024.

Americans' Opinion of Pastors Hits the Skids. According to a recent Gallup poll, fewer than one-third of Americans rate members of the clergy as "highly honest and ethical." In the widely-cited survey, people said that they trust nurses, police officers and chiropractors more than they do pastors. Cheer up, though, pastors – you still rank above politicians, lawyers and journalists. Shellnutt, Kate. "Above Reproach?

Fewer Americans See Pastors as Ethical." *News and Reporting.* ChristianityToday.com, 25 Jan., 2024. Web. 25 Jan., 2024.

Most Pastors See Gambling as a Sin, But Are Afraid to Say So. Online gambling has exploded in recent years, especially sports gambling. February's Superbowl game between the Kansas City Chiefs and San Francisco Forty-Niners set a new record for sports gambling – over fifty million Americans bet a total of sixteen *billion* dollars on the game. A recent Lifeway Research study revealed an interesting anomaly about the attitude of Protestant pastors toward gambling. A majority of pastors surveyed (55%) said that gambling is morally wrong, and over 86% of pastors were opposed to legalized gambling. But when it comes to speaking out against gambling, the pastors surveyed didn't seem to have the courage of their convictions. Over half of Protestant pastors say they "have not felt the need to address the issue." 2% of pastors admitted to gambling on sports themselves. Earls, Aaron. "Super Bowl Gambling Grows, But Pastors Are on the Sidelines." *Wire Story.* ChristianityToday.com, 8 Feb., 2024. Web. 20 Feb., 2024.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Retirement Gift: Professor Mark Kranz has announced his retirement effective at the end of the current academic year. His faithful service to our church and our school will be acknowledged during the ILC Class Day/Graduation festivities on May 17-18. Our custom is to present a monetary gift as a token of our appreciation. CLC members are invited to contribute to this gift which will be presented to him at Graduation (May 18). Please make your checks payable to Immanuel Lutheran College and indicate: "Prof. Kranz Retirement." Send your gift to: Immanuel Lutheran College, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, 54701.
—Pastor John Hein, Chairman, CLC Board of Regents



Immanuel Lutheran College pastor-track students at their weekly "Theologian Thursday" breakfast. L-r: Michael Manthe, Austin Lien, Noah Buck, Darion Buck, Sam Radermacher, Daniel Hein, Luke Strike, Ethan Sydow and Joel Bernthal.