

Lutheran Spokesman

CHRIST BORN OF MARY

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

GLORY IN THE HIGHEST

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.



Happy Birthday!

You are cordially invited to celebrate the Birthday of Jesus Christ. The celebration will begin on Christmas Eve and will continue throughout the year.

Would you like to see the pictures of His birth? Turn to Luke chapter two. There you will see that "[Mary] brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." As you can see, the rustic setting did not dampen that Birthday celebration, for at the invitation of angels, some shepherds "came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds

returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them" (Lk. 2:16-20).

There will be no cake at this celebration. Cake is not needed, for Jesus supplies food for the celebration, as He said years after His birth, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live for-

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This Gift
is for you!



ever" (Jn. 6:54-58). Jesus is not speaking of the Lord's Supper in this particular text. He is speaking of faith. To eat His flesh and drink His blood in this instance is to believe in Him as your Savior from sin [cf. vv. 40 and 47]. Through the Word you hear at this Birthday celebration, God provides you with such a faith, for **"by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast"** (Eph. 2:8).

No candles are needed for this Birthday celebration either, for He says, **"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life"** (Jn. 8:12). This Light serves to light the way to eternal life; and He shines forth from God's own Word, calling all people to celebrate with Him in eternity.

You are not required to bring a gift to this Birthday celebration either, for Jesus Himself is the Gift: **"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"** (Jn. 3:16).

In fact, through the miracle of God's Word you will receive many more gifts on account of this one Gift! Not least among these are the forgiveness of sins, faith, and eternal life, for to celebrate the birth of Jesus is to celebrate His birth, His life, His death, and His resurrection from the dead. He accomplished all of these things in our place, for **"[Christ] was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification"** (Rom. 4:25). To justify means to declare someone to be not guilty of sin. God has declared all sinners to be "not guilty," because the Baby Jesus grew up innocent of sin, suffered and died on the cross to pay for our sin. As proof that the debt of sin has been paid, Jesus rose from the dead—so that His Birthday continues to be celebrated to this day, for He is not dead, but alive!

As a result of these gifts freely given to sinners, there will be singing at this Birthday celebration. Joyful congregations of forgiven sinners will be gathering to sing as the angel hosts did at that first Birthday celebration: **"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men!"** (Lk. 2:14)

No need to RSVP, for everyone is invited, for this invitation is **"... good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people"** (Lk. 2:10).

You are cordially invited to celebrate the Birthday of the Savior, who is Christ the Lord—the celebration to be held . . . for eternity!

—Pastor Joel Fleischer



"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15)

No Cinderella Christmas

'Cinderella Liberty' is a movie periodically offered to TV viewers. With reference to the fairy tale, the plot tracks the adventures of an American sailor whose records have been misplaced, causing him to be land-locked. While his orders are sorted out, he lives out his Cinderella Liberty before duty again calls.

The fourteenth century poet wrote:

At Christmas, play and make good cheer,

For Christmas comes but once a year.

Our modern society generally seems to endorse this attitude toward Christmas. Once a year, with almost total abandon, we can buy and decorate and make (and drink) good cheer. Once a year, encouragement is given to sing of love with joyous melody and to show kindness to others.

Christmas is the time to be big-hearted. But it doesn't last, for soon the clock strikes midnight, and then it's back to drudging duty, monotonous living, and even dog-eat-dog existence.

But the Christmas of God our Father and of His holy people is not a Cinderella Christmas. It is not over at the tick of the clock, nor is it a season of sentimental slush. We celebrate it specifically once a year, but the Father's love is not bound by time, circumstance, or society's attitude.

There is and remains a reason why Christmas was needed. Adam and Eve in the perfect garden did not celebrate and respond in love to their Creator, but rather—by their pride-hearted rebellion—plunged themselves and all their descendants into tragic separation

from God.

Hence, every person born on Earth is born a wanderer away from God and His loving presence.

God's Yearning, Aching Heart

For thousands of years God had made known the yearning of His aching heart, promising repeatedly that His own Son would be the proof of His love and the acceptable sacrifice for the sins of mankind. God's hour of grace came 'in the fullness of time,' in the foretold village of Bethlehem, in the surprising lowliness of the manger.

The song of the Christmas angels is a never-ending melody for every mood in every day. "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" is a message which resounds with blessed significance—in December or June; when the ground sprouts flowers or is covered with icy slush; when men sweat as well as when they shiver!

The Christian Christmas announces to all that "God is love"—eternally!

How can such a message be remembered and celebrated but once a year? God is with us always in Christ who is Immanuel; and the Savior comes daily in Word and Sacrament, with rest for the heavy heart, pardon for the penitent soul, joy for the sad of spirit, and strength for the weak.

The Father's Christmas is not—was not—ever intended to be a Cinderella Christmas. The good will of the Father in His Son was given with no expiration date attached; it does not become null and void at the midnight stroke of our physical passing. No, the Lord of Life was given as a daily blessing, for

every month of every year!

The Father's love embraces us at work and at play, in every circumstance of life. There is no time when His love through the wondrous birth at Bethlehem, the agonized Christ at Calvary, and the victorious Savior of Joseph's garden does not stand ever present to give His peace, while at the same time demanding our devotion

and loyalty.

'Christmas comes but once a year.' Maybe on the calendar, but not in Christian hearts. The Christmas blessings of love and salvation never tick down or run out.

No Cinderella Christmas! Only an abiding Christmas in the Christ Child. "Glory to God in the Highest . . . "

—Pastor David Fuerstenau



ADVENT EXPORT AND IMPORT

Just as Lent is a solemn anticipation of the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord, so Advent is a solemn anticipation of the Feast of His Nativity, although not quite as severe a penitential season. And just as in Lent we usually refrain from singing Easter hymns, so also in Advent we do not usually sing Christmas hymns.

But all this talk seems to put too much focus on what WE do. The true import of Advent is what Christ does—and here perhaps the word "export" is a good word. Because God exports His only-begotten Son to us—duty-free in the sense that we pay absolutely nothing for the gift or its delivery—this is a gift exported by grace alone and imported by faith alone.

We have such beautiful Advent

hymns—twenty-one of them in *The Lutheran Hymnal*—based on Psalms, Prophets, Evangelists, and the Revelation of St. John. All of them point to Christ, the Savior—imported into the world in the flesh; exported to us in Word and Sacrament; and who shall finally be exported to this world to judge the quick and the dead.

Advent is exciting and alarming at one and the same time. The very thought of Christ coming now, to us and for us, is delight beyond measure. And the realization that His final coming in the flesh is very near is jarring as well as comforting, unsettling as well as sobering.

Three of our traditional Advent Collects begin with "Stir up . . . !"* One of them is aimed right at our hearts. In Advent our sinful hearts are

Collect for the First Sunday in Advent:

Stir up, we beseech Thee, Thy power, O Lord, and come, that by Thy protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Thy mighty deliverance . . .

Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent:

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Thine only-begotten Son, so that by His coming we may be enabled to serve Thee with pure

Collect for the Third
Sunday in Advent:

*Lord, we beseech Thee, give ear to
our prayers and lighten the darkness
of our hearts by Thy gracious visita-*

heavily solemn—but this heaviness is tinged and gilded with heavenly joy and gladness, in Him who is still our main Export, through the Word written. We can't help but sing of Jesus.

—Pastor Em. Warren Fanning

Collect for the Fourth
Sunday in Advent:

*Stir up, O Lord, we beseech Thee,
Thy power, and come and help us with
Thy great might, that by Thy grace
whatsoever is hindered by our sins
may be speedily accomplished through
Thy mercy and satisfaction . . .*

*** In connection with this article
we print the Collects (prayers of the
Church) for the four Sundays in
Advent — Editor**



The stubborn little Galilean donkey began to slowly tap his way up the long sloping trail that led to a small cluster of white plaster houses on the narrow ridge above him.

On the gray limestone path below, the animal moved the soft shadow of a pregnant young woman

--her robes fluttering lightly in the cool Judean breeze.

At her side walked a dark-eyed Jew with the rough, callused hands of a carpenter.

His steady stride had covered 75 miles in the last four days.

It had been a long trip for Joseph's young wife, Mary.

They had come down the high ridge that Nazareth straddled--

... past leafless, wintering groves of tamarisk and wild olive,

... through long dry pastures dotted with heaps of white-washed stones,

They came through tiny towns of sun-baked bricks,
through orchards and vineyards,

down the Roman road that lay across the rocky hills of
southern Galilee like a long gray ribbon.

They slept in rude road-side shelters.

They ate their simple meals from a single copper pot.

And more than once Joseph had to urge the donkey to the side of the road,
covering his face as Rome's couriers came pounding by--

throwing up dust and stones in their wake.
 Joseph didn't need to be reminded that it was Caesar who had ordered him to
 register his properties in home-town Bethlehem.
 Down the new Roman road they had come,
 through freshly cut and plowed fields that lay like a vast quilt across
 northern Samaria, into Judea's narrow valleys
 and rough, rocky hills.
 Hard, wild-looking shepherds grazed their flocks on steep slopes
 above busy roads packed with pilgrims bound for Jerusalem.
 But, Joseph and Mary--within sight of the gleaming spires of the Temple--turned
 south.
 They passed through the fields where Boaz once found Ruth gleaning,
 They climbed the terraced slopes leading to the city gate of Bethlehem.
 They disappeared into her narrow, winding streets.

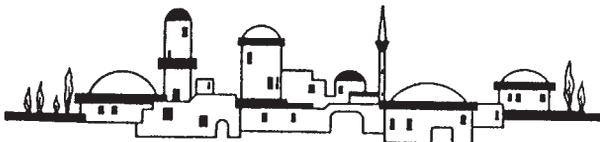
+ + +

Later, after darkness falls, we follow,
 walking Bethlehem's quiet cobblestone streets under a deep velvet sky,
 until at the outskirts we see a ray of lantern light coming from
 a crack in a hillside door.

It's a cave ... made over into a stable.
 There is the musty odor of cut grass,
 We hear the chuff-chuff of animals working their cud.
 But from one stall comes the soft, steady sound of regular breathing.
 There the young mother Mary lies sleeping on a bed of golden straw,
 blankets tucked about her quiet form,
 her head resting on the rolled cloak of her husband.
 In the back of the stall is a wide shelf of piled limestone slabs,
 the topmost having been chiseled out to make a shallow trough for hay
 and barley oats.
 Now--besides the pungent smell of many grasses--there comes from this
 manger the mingled odors of oil, and myrtle dust.
 In this feed-box sleeps a new-born child.

+ + + + + +

But for Joseph, sleep is impossible.
 He paces about the stable,
 regularly checking to see that mother and child are resting peacefully.
 With excitement he remembers how quickly it had happened.
 With frustration he recalls how little he could do.
 It was Mary that shook the new-born infant to start His breathing.



It was she who bathed and oiled and salted him--as was the Jewish custom.
It was she who powdered the child with sweet smelling myrtle dust and
wrapped him snugly in long bands of linen.
And now, she slept ... while Joseph kept watch, lest anything disturb her rest.

+ + +

That's why he jumped so at the low rumble of voices outside.
He opened the door ... to find a group of dirty, bearded faces staring in at him.
One of them breathed a greeting and asked:

"Has a child just been born here?"

"Yes," said another, "here in this stable!"

Joseph was perplexed, and not a little worried.

"Don't be afraid of us, sir," the hulking visitor replied,

"We are friends. We have heard wonderful things about a
certain new-born."



"Well, ... yes," Joseph answered. "A child was born here tonight."

"And has he been laid in a manger?" asked another of the men--unable to
conceal the excitement in his voice.

"Well, yes ... , " said Joseph. "But you see, there was no other place ...
so we had to ... "

"God be praised!" the shepherds exclaimed

--as though it was no disgrace to place a new-born in a feed-box for
cattle ... but rather the most wonderful thing in the world.

"Listen," said the shepherd nearest the door,

"we have seen the most unbelievable sight tonight."

"We were in the fields, minding our flocks.

All of a sudden there was this bright light ... brighter than anything you can
imagine.

We were scared--I'll tell you that--plenty scared!"

"But then we heard a voice--an angel.

"Don't ask how we knew it was an angel. When you see one, you
know."

In the dim light the shepherds didn't see Joseph nod in agreement.

"He told us not to be afraid, because he had good news for us."

"He said,

**'Unto you is born this day -- in the city of David -- a Savior
who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you. Ye
shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes ... lying in a
manger.'**

"And then ... it was as though the whole sky split open like the roof of a tent.

As far as we could see there was an army of angels--rank upon rank upon rank
of them--and every one of them was singing:

**'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will
toward men.'**"

Then the shepherds fell silent ... as though startled by the sound of their own story.

They wondered if --on any other night--they would have believed it themselves. But, for some reason, they were not surprised when Joseph assured them he believed their incredible account.

He opened the door and took them on tip-toe past the rows of stalls ... until they came and looked in where Mary lay on her bed of blankets and straw.

At the soft rustle of feet the young mother stirred, and in the make-shift limestone cradle, the little infant's eyes fluttered open.

The wide-eyed shepherds bowed their heads in worshipful silence.

In hushed tones, Joseph recounted to his startled wife the incredible story of the shepherds.

She listened carefully, weighing every word.

When he had finished, she looked up at the visitors and said,

"His Name ... is Jesus."



And then the shepherds returned ... they went back to their sheep, back to the daily tasks of their every-day lives.

They returned ... and so must we. Life goes on day by day.

But can we return as the shepherds did, glorifying and praising God?

That depends upon what we are doing here ... and what we see in that manger.

Is this all part of an annual ritual?

Do we stuff the Christ-child back into the manger each year

--so that we can imagine that we were there and be strangely warmed by the tender scene?

Have we gathered again simply to recall, re-read, and retell a historical event some 2000 years past?

I pray not. This day and what it means involves far more than memory and imagination.

Luther said, "We come to Christmas with open hearts.

We listen not to history, but to a gift."

There is only one such gift, one that we ought to rejoice over every day of the year.

The hymnwriter well describes the tag on this greatest of gifts when he says:

**Christ, from heaven to us descending
And in love our race befriending,
In our need His help extending.
Saved us from the wily foe.**

**From the bondage that oppressed us,
from sin's fetters that possessed us,
From the grief that sore distressed us,
We, the captives, now are free.**

Yes, like the shepherds, we can return to our daily lives rejoicing, for the Christ-child did not just come to Mary and Joseph or just to shepherds--or even just to a sin-stricken world in general. He came to us ... to you and me. He continues to come to us in His Word. He rules in our hearts and lives. GOD keeps His promises; and the words of the angel to the stunned shepherds ring out to from Christmas to Christmas.

"Fear not ... for unto YOU is born ... a Savior."

Fear not ... Fear not sin or guilt.

Fear not pain or sorrow.

Fear neither death nor life.

**Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth ...
the very peace of God. AMEN.**



From the Editor:

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST" is the writing of Pastor Walter Schaller, Mt. Zion Ev. Lutheran Church, Detroit (Royal Oak), Michigan. We had previously seen and read this writing; the pastor, at our request, is sharing it with our readers. Due to space considerations, we print a slightly abridged version.

As old as the Christmas "story" is and as frequently as we have heard it, can we not easily miss the wonder of it?

As this rendition suggests, we are wrong—in fact, miss much—if we ignore the details of the birth of Christ, an event which took place in space-time history among common, ordinary, everyday people—people used by God as His instruments and witnesses to the greatest miracle of the ages: the birth of the eternal God-Man Jesus Christ, sent into this world on His Messianic mission of redeeming the world of sinners.

Suggestion: gather the family around the table or the tree. Sing a Christmas carol or two before, and after, a family member reads the age-old, ever-new account of the Christmas miracle as herewith so thought-provokingly given.



A Christmas message from our CLC President—

THE MYSTERY OF CHRISTMAS

"And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness" (1 Timothy 3:16, NASB).

MAGNUM MYSTERIUM
(GREAT IS THE MYSTERY)

Take time this month to remember the wonder of the mystery of Christmas celebrations past.

The world thinks of the "mystery"

of Christmas in terms of the wonder reflected in a child's eyes when he sees the decorated tree or opens that special present. Even this wonder has been removed from Christmas by the com-

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Daily Bible Readings for 2004

By reading larger sections of Scripture or an entire book at a time, we may gain greater insight into the general purposes and thoughts of the book. John and Ephesians are read first, then alternating Old and New Testament books. Psalms are selected for Sundays; Luke's account is chosen for the Lenten and Christmas seasons. May the Lord bless us through His holy Word!

Date	Bible Reading	Hymn			
1/1	John 1:1-13	101	2/4	John 9:1-12	417
1/2	John 1:14-28	98	2/5	John 9:13-34	263
<u>1/3</u>	John 1:29-42	328	2/6	John 9:35-41	345
1/4	Psalm 8	93	<u>2/7</u>	John 10:1-10	527
1/5	John 1:43-51	281	2/8	Psalm 32	392
1/6	John 2:1-12	620	2/9	John 10:11-21	436
1/7	John 2:13-25	414	2/10	John 10:22-30	54
1/8	John 3:1-13	642	2/11	John 10:31-42	246
1/9	John 3:14-21	245	2/12	John 11:1-16	409
<u>1/10</u>	John 3:22-36	63	2/13	John 11:17-27	602
1/11	Psalm 100	13	<u>2/14</u>	John 11:28-44	603
1/12	John 4:1-15	277	2/15	Psalm 84	80
1/13	John 4:16-26	20	2/16	John 11:45-57	147
1/14	John 4:27-42	502	2/17	John 12:1-11	409
1/15	John 4:43-54	134	2/18	John 12:12-19	161
1/16	John 5:1-15	144	2/19	John 12:20-36	390
<u>1/17</u>	John 5:16-30	596	2/20	John 12:37-50	16
1/18	Psalm 15	18	<u>2/21</u>	John 13:1-17	429
1/19	John 5:31-47	279	2/22	Psalm 130	329
1/20	John 6:1-14	124	2/23	John 13:18-30	83
1/21	John 6:15-27	649	2/24	John 13:31-38	295
1/22	John 6:28-40	276	2/25	John 14:1-6	433
1/23	John 6:41-59	312	2/26	John 14:7-18	349
<u>1/24</u>	John 6:60-71	279	2/27	John 14:19-31	233
1/25	Psalm 118:1-14	548	<u>2/28</u>	John 15:1-8	594
1/26	John 7:1-9	278	2/29	Psalm 43	132
1/27	John 7:10-24	353	3/1	John 15:9-17	37
1/28	John 7:25-36	355	3/2	John 15:18-27	230
1/29	John 7:37-53	363	3/3	John 16:1-15	231
1/30	John 8:1-12	559	3/4	John 16:16-24	21
<u>1/31</u>	John 8:13-30	353	3/5	John 16:25-33	42
2/1	Psalm 65	11	<u>3/6</u>	John 17:1-11	464
2/2	John 8:31-47	261	3/7	Psalm 31:1-8	524
2/3	John 8:48-59	40	3/8	John 17:12-19	294
			3/9	John 17:20-26	473
			3/10	John 18:1-11	164
			3/11	John 18:12-27	16
			3/12	John 18:28-40	59
			<u>3/13</u>	John 19:1-11	172
			3/14	Psalm 91:1-16	547
			3/15	John 19:12-16	150
			3/16	John 19:17-24	174
			3/17	John 19:25-30	170
			3/18	John 19:31-42	165
			3/19	John 20:1-10	208:1-4
			<u>3/20</u>	John 20:11-18	88
			3/21	Psalm 25:1-11	532
			3/22	John 20:19-31	208:5-10
			3/23	John 21:1-14	204

3/24	John 21:15-19	648	5/12	Ruth 4:7-12	623
3/25	John 21:20-25	401	5/13	Ruth 4:13-22	625
3/26	Jude 1-11	473	5/14	Philippians. 1:1-1	460
<u>3/27</u>	Jude 12-25	264	<u>5/15</u>	Philippians. 1:12-18	521
3/28	Psalms 19	29	5/16	Psalms 23	436
3/29	Luke 22:39-46	159	5/17	Philippians 1:19-30	527
3/30	Luke 22:47-53	142	5/18	Philippians 2:1-11	222
3/31	Luke 22:54-62	516	5/19	Philippians 2:12-18	398
4/1	Luke 22:63-71	147	5/20	Philippians 2:19-30	489
4/2	Luke 23:1-12	154	5/21	Philippians.3:1-11	380
<u>4/3</u>	Luke 23:13-25	143	<u>5/22</u>	Philippians.3:12-21	413
4/4	Psalms 22	140	5/23	Psalms 136	570
4/5	Luke 23:26-43	148	5/24	Philippians 4:1-9	41
4/6	Luke 23:44-56	76	5/25	Philippians 4:10-23	408
4/7	Luke 24:1-12	203	5/26	Jonah 1:1-9	500
4/8	Luke 24:13-29	194	5/27	Jonah 1:10-17	534
4/9	Luke 24:30-43	196	5/28	Jonah 2:1-10	456
<u>4/10</u>	Luke 24:44-54	217	<u>5/29</u>	Jonah 3:1-10	325
4/11	Psalms 118	205	5/30	Psalms 54	519
4/12	Ephesians 1:1-14	461	5/31	Jonah 4:1-11	324
4/13	Ephesians 1:15-23	222	6/1	Matthew 1:1-17	468
4/14	Ephesians 2:1-10	389	6/2	Matthew 1:18-25	108
4/15	Ephesians 2:11-22	467	6/3	Matthew 2:1-12	127
4/16	Ephesians 3:1-13	394	6/4	Matthew 2:13-23	273
<u>4/17</u>	Ephesians 3:14-21	348	<u>6/5</u>	Matthew 3:1-12	63
4/18	Psalms 122	292	6/6	Psalms 27	18
4/19	Ephesians 4:1-6	464	6/7	Matthew 3:13-17	301
4/20	Ephesians 4:7-16	223	6/8	Matthew 4:1-11	144
4/21	Ephesians 4:17-24	398	6/9	Matthew 4:12-17	106
4/22	Ephesians 4:25-32	403	6/10	Matthew 4:18-25	270
4/23	Ephesians 5:1-7	401	6/11	Matthew 5:1-12	27
<u>4/24</u>	Ephesians 5:8-14	421	<u>6/12</u>	Matthew 5:13-20	391
4/25	Psalms 43	132	6/13	Psalms 68:1-10	26
4/26	Ephesians 5:15-21	25	6/14	Matth. 5:21-32	287:1,6-7
4/27	Ephesians 5:22-33	624	6/15	Matthew 5:33-48	289
4/28	Ephesians 6:1-9	630	6/16	Matthew 6:1-15	458
4/29	Ephesians 6:10-24	450	6/17	Matthew 6:16-24	383
4/30	Ruth 1:1-5	521	6/18	Matthew 6:25-34	561
<u>5/1</u>	Ruth 1:6-14	522	<u>6/19</u>	Matthew 7:1-12	456
5/2	Psalms 19	293	6/20	Psalms 8	57
5/3	Ruth 1:15-22	464	6/21	Matthew 7:13-20	260
5/4	Ruth 2:1-7	518	6/22	Matthew 7:21-29	467
5/5	Ruth 2:8-16	515	6/23	Matthew 8:1-13	415
5/6	Ruth 2:17-23	571	6/24	Matthew 8:14-22	409
5/7	Ruth 3:1-5	412	6/25	Matthew 8:23-24	649
<u>5/8</u>	Ruth 3:6-13	18	<u>6/26</u>	Matthew 9:1-8	345
5/9	Psalms 23	436	6/27	Psalms 13	555
5/10	Ruth 3:14-18	292	6/28	Matthew 9:9-17	324
5/11	Ruth 4:1-6	566	6/29	Matthew 9:18-26	587

6/30	Matthew 9:27-38	488	8/18	Matthew 22:34-46	429
7/1	Matthew 10:1-15	443	8/19	Matthew 23:1-12	366
7/2	Matthew 10:16-26	528	8/20	Matthew 23:13-26	416
<u>7/3</u>	Matthew 10:27-42	352	<u>8/21</u>	Matthew 23:27-39	421
7/4	Psalms 18:1-9	429	8/22	Psalms 8	39
7/5	Matthew 11:1-19	272	8/23	Matthew 24:1-14	279
7/6	Matthew 11:20-30	277	8/24	Matthew 24:15-31	278
7/7	Matthew 12:1-14	359	8/25	Matthew 24:32-51	606
7/8	Matthew 12:15-30	506	8/26	Matthew 25:1-13	609
7/9	Matthew 12:31-42	296	8/27	Matthew 25:14-30	441
<u>7/10</u>	Matthew 12:43-50	386	<u>8/28</u>	Matthew 25:31-46	440
7/11	Psalms 25	532	8/29	Psalms 88	539
7/12	Matthew 13:1-9	493	8/30	Matthew 26:1-16	233
7/13	Matthew 13:10-23	487	8/31	Matthew 26:17-35	163
7/14	Matthew 13:24-35	574	9/1	Matthew 26:36-56	446
7/15	Matthew 13:36-46	347	9/2	Matthew 26:57-75	151
7/16	Matthew 13:47-58	608	9/3	Matthew 27:1-14	142
<u>7/17</u>	Matthew 14:1-12	514	<u>9/4</u>	Matthew 27:15-31	158
7/18	Psalms 15	412	9/5	Psalms 27	18
7/19	Matthew 14:13-21	537	9/6	Matthew 27:32-56	179
7/20	Matthew 14:22-36	649	9/7	Matthew 27:57-66	178
7/21	Matthew 15:1-20	225	9/8	Matthew 28:1-10	190
7/22	Matthew 15:21-31	394	9/9	Matthew 28:11-20	497
7/23	Matthew 15:32-39	648	9/10	Esther 1:1-9	591
<u>7/24</u>	Matthew 16:1-12	165	<u>9/11</u>	Esther 1:10-22	624
7/25	Psalms 84	480	9/12	Psalms 70	522
7/26	Matthew 16:13-20	637	9/13	Esther 2:1-11	416
7/27	Matthew 16:21-28	421	9/14	Esther 2:12-23	521
7/28	Matthew 17:1-13	619	9/15	Esther 3:1-7	250
7/29	Matthew 17:14-21	454	9/16	Esther 3:8-15	262
7/30	Matthew 17:22-27	581	9/17	Esther 4:1-9	263
<u>7/31</u>	Matthew 18:1-9	627	<u>9/18</u>	Esther 4:10-17	400
8/1	Psalms 28	6	9/19	Psalms 15	295
8/2	Matthew 18:10-20	510	9/20	Esther 5:1-8	524
8/3	Matthew 18:21-35	321	9/21	Esther 5:9-14	340
8/4	Matthew 19:1-15	622	9/22	Esther 6:1-14	425
8/5	Matthew 19:16-30	279	9/23	Esther 7:1-10	529
8/6	Matthew 20:1-16	373	9/24	Esther 8:1-8	513
<u>8/7</u>	Matthew 20:17-28	421	<u>9/25</u>	Esther 8:9-17	514
8/8	Psalms 47	214	9/26	Psalms 30	429
8/9	Matthew 20:29-34	66	9/27	Esther 9:1-10	444
8/10	Matthew 21:1-11	58	9/28	Esther 9:11-19	447
8/11	Matthew 21:12-22	160	9/29	Esther 9:20-32	629
8/12	Matthew 21:23-32	366	9/30	Esther 10:1-3	518
8/13	Matthew 21:33-46	492	10/1	Romans 1:1-17	205
<u>8/14</u>	Matthew 22:1-14	67	<u>10/2</u>	Romans 1:18-32	608
8/15	Psalms 48	636	10/3	Psalms 118	460
8/16	Matthew 22:15-22	575	10/4	Romans 2:1-16	289
8/17	Matthew 22:23-33	40	10/5	Romans 2:17-29	295

10/6	Romans 3:1-20	369	11/24	Ecclesiastes 6:1-12	196
10/7	Romans 3:21-31	387	11/25	Ecclesiastes 7:1-14	517
10/8	Romans 4:1-12	377	11/26	Ecclesiastes 8:1-9	580
<u>10/9</u>	Romans 4:13-25	189	<u>11/27</u>	Ecclesiastes 8:11-17	576
10/10	Psalms 102:1-15	459	11/28	Psalms 116	600
10/11	Romans 5:1-11	432	11/29	Ecclesiastes 9:1-12	586
10/12	Romans 5:12-21	369	11/30	Ecclesiastes 9:13-18	411
10/13	Romans 6:1-14	301	12/1	Ecclesiastes 10:1-10	358
10/14	Romans 6:15-23	334	12/2	Ecclesiastes 10:11-20	577
10/15	Romans 7:1-12	295	12/3	Ecclesiastes 11:1-10	39
<u>10/16</u>	Romans 7:13-25	379	<u>12/4</u>	Ecclesiastes 12:1-14	81
10/17	Psalms 33	31	12/5	Psalms 85	326
10/18	Romans 8:1-17	236	12/6	James 1:1-11	411
10/19	Romans 8:18-30	529	12/7	James 1:12-27	412
10/20	Romans 8:31-39	372	12/8	James 2:1-13	289
10/21	Romans 9:1-13	373	12/9	James 2:14-26	393
10/22	Romans 9:14-33	37	12/10	James 3:1-12	395
<u>10/23</u>	Romans 10:1-13	19	<u>12/11</u>	James 3:13-18	424
10/24	Psalms 100	13	12/12	Psalms 1	414
10/25	Romans 10:14-21	507	12/13	James 4:1-6	347
10/26	Romans 11:1-10	374	12/14	James 4:7-17	349
10/27	Romans 11:11-24	544	12/15	James 5:1-12	430
10/28	Romans 11:25-36	519	12/16	James 5:13-20	459
10/29	Romans 12:1-8	405	12/17	Luke 1:1-10	60
<u>10/30</u>	Romans 12:9-21	398	<u>12/18</u>	Luke 1:11-25	64
10/31	Psalms 46	262	12/19	Psalms 103	34
11/1	Romans 13:1-7	578	12/20	Luke 1:26-38	114
11/2	Romans 13:8-14	60	12/21	Luke 1:39-56	275
11/3	Romans 14:1-13	453	12/22	Luke 1:57-66	68
11/4	Romans 14:14-23	412	12/23	Luke 1:67-80	88
11/5	Romans 15:1-13	64	12/24	Luke 2:1-7	82
<u>11/6</u>	Romans 15:14-21	494	<u>12/25</u>	Luke 2:8-20	94
11/7	Psalms 145	575	12/26	Psalms 2	87
11/8	Romans 15:22-33	422	12/27	Luke 2:21-24	117
11/9	Romans 16:1-16	468	12/28	Luke 2:25-35	137
11/10	Romans 16:17-27	266	12/29	Luke 2:36-40	139
11/11	Ecclesiastes 1:1-11	175	12/30	Luke 2:41-52	133
11/12	Ecclesiastes 1:12-18	348	12/31	Psalms 110	111
<u>11/13</u>	Ecclesiastes 2:1-11	141			
11/14	Psalms 119:1-8	416			
11/15	Ecclesiastes 2:12-26	640			
11/16	Ecclesiastes 3:1-8	509			
11/17	Ecclesiastes 3:9-15	547			
11/18	Ecclesiastes 3:16-22	459			
11/19	Ecclesiastes 4:1-8	527			
<u>11/20</u>	Ecclesiastes 4:9-16	464			
11/21	Psalms 36	340			
11/22	Ecclesiastes 5:1-7	395			
11/23	Ecclesiastes 5:8-20	441			

**Thanks for mercies past receive,
 Pardon of our sins renew;
 Teach us henceforth how to live
 With eternity in view.
 Bless Thy Word to young and
 old,
 Fill us with a Savior's love;
 And when life's short tale is
 told,
 May we dwell with Thee above.
 Amen! (TLH 113:3)**

mercialism and excess of the world's celebration of this holiday. Today's children see very little wonder or mystery in a secular Christmas which begins at the end of September and is marked by an orgy of self-centered spending. The mystery has been removed from Christmas for many.

God's children see the real wonder in the mystery of Christmas.

The New Testament uses the word "mystery" to describe that which had previously been hidden and now is revealed. This "mystery" is the unfathomable riches of Christ which now are revealed to the Gentiles through the ministry of reconciliation. Paul writes, "To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God" (Eph. 3:8-9).

Paul writes to a young pastor named Timothy and encourages him "to fight the good fight." This good fight encompasses the common confession of the great mystery that has been revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. The mystery of godliness (the Christian religion) is the mystery of Christmas—the birth of Jesus! The mystery of our salvation is contained in the miracle of His incarnation.

*"God was revealed in the flesh,
Was vindicated in the Spirit,
Beheld by angels,
Proclaimed among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory."
(1 Timothy 3:16)*

The angels witnessed this great mystery of our salvation from the birth of Jesus to His resurrection. Angels sang their hymn of glory the night Jesus was born. An angel from heaven



strengthened Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The angels proclaimed the good news of the resurrection to the women. This Christmas, God has revealed to us these "things into which angels long to look" (1 Peter 1:14). "Is not this a wonder?" (#97:3, TLH)

We celebrate the revelation of this great mystery in the miracle of the LOGOS (WORD) made flesh. The great mystery of our godliness is that "God was revealed in the flesh" in the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem. This helpless little Baby is the Creator of the world. This Jesus is God in human flesh. The early church was plagued by the error that the human body is evil in and of itself and that Jesus never had a truly human body. The mystery of our religion (faith) is that God's Son became true man in order to take our place under the law and suffer and die for the sins of the world.

The great mystery of our godliness is that in Jesus God came into our human situation in order to save us from the power of sin and the horror of eternal death. The meaning of the cross remains hidden from those who do not believe. Part of this mystery of our religion is that God has revealed these saving truths to us in the gospel. This Jesus of Nazareth was proclaimed among the nations and believed on in the world.

Great is this mystery of our godli-

ness. The greatness of this mystery was wrapped in those swaddling clothes and laid in the feedbox of a barn. The greatness of this mystery was revealed at the cross where God's beloved Son died for the sins of the world. The greatness of this mystery is found in the fact that the Holy Spirit has created faith in our hearts as we believe the Christmas gospel. The greatness of this mystery will fully be

revealed when Jesus returns in glory to take us to be with Him in joys forever.

May your Christmas celebration in its simplicity and Christ-centered emphasis reflect the great mystery of our salvation. May your children's eyes reflect the wonder of the mystery of Christmas—"God was revealed in the flesh."

Magnum Mysterium!

—Pastor John Schierenbeck



Ladies Guild,
Gethsemane
Lutheran Church,
Saginaw, Michigan
(top r., Pastor
Wilke)

Ordination/Installation of Pastor Luke Bernthal (2nd from r.) at Bethel Lutheran of Spring, Texas. Taking part were Pastors Tom Schuetze, Mr. Gene Rutz, and Pastor Mark Bernthal (see story, p. 22)



Pastor Matthew Hanel of Prince Peace, Hecla, S. Dak., with Pastor & Mrs. Walter Schaller (see story, p. 23)

Studies In Colossians

**"In (Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom
and knowledge" (2:3)**

Chapter 1:9-18

SIMPLY THE GREATEST

Do you want . . .

+ to be *filled* with the knowledge of God's will, becoming spiritually wise and understanding?

+ to be *living a life* that is worthy of the Lord [*pleasing Him* in every way; being *fruitful* in every good work; *increasing in the knowledge* of God]?

+ to be *made strong* with all might, according to His glorious power?

+ to be *joyfully patient* and *longsuffering*?

+ to be *thankful* to the Father for our part in the inheritance of the saints in the Light?

+ To be *delivered* from the power of darkness, carried over into the kingdom of the beloved Son?

YES, YES!

How could we not hunger for—*yearn* for—this kind of enriched living? This the Lord's apostle ceaselessly sought in prayer for the saints in Colosse. This, we may be sure, the Spirit wants for us as well. This *is* the Life!

This, let us note, is not a lifestyle that is attainable by human effort. No amount of positive thinking or self-realization can do it. No human potential program or guru counselor can move you into the domain of light. Unless such are themselves in the

Light, they are in darkness still so far as the values above are concerned.

IT'S POSSIBLE!

The good news is that such true living has become possible for the saints. God Himself enables it. He *qualified us* for our part in this light. He *has delivered us* from the power of darkness. He *has translated us* [carried us over] into the kingdom of Jesus, the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

It's all His doing, His most gracious doing.

Ours is the giving of thanks. Praise be to God!

ONLY THROUGH CHRIST

Determined to wean us away from any other religious pathways, Paul gives us a portrait of our Lord that has moved a poet to say, "Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus can my heartfelt longing still."

Consider:

* *He is the Image of the invisible God;*

* *He is the Firstborn over all creation;*

* *by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether*

thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him;

** He is before all things;*

** In Him all things consist (hold together);*

** He is the Head of the body, the Church;*

** He is in the Beginning, the First-born from the dead;*

** He has the preeminence in all things.*

Jesus is, in other terms, simply THE GREATEST. He can do—and perfectly does—what nothing else can.

HIS KINGDOM COMING

Some years ago a woman dropped in for a neighborly chat. Over a cup of tea she mentioned with some excitement that her searching for truth had led her to participate in study with

some Jehovah's Witnesses. Her hostess asked her if she would like to attend a group study at the very table where they were sitting.

Somewhat wary, the woman did come a week later to join in an informal study of this glorious book of Colossians. It opened her eyes and heart to the full glory of Jesus, the Savior.

After two years of this, she was moved to ask, "Do you guys have a church somewhere?"

Today this woman is the coordinator of the Sunday School in one of our CLC congregations, where her husband has served as president for numerous terms.

You can imagine what Bible book is a favorite in that household.

—Rollin A. Reim



SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

Fourth in a series

"Directions to Heaven: Turn Right Go Straight Follow God"

There is nothing ambiguous or obscure about the purpose of this church sign. It is an attempt to help people find the way to salvation, the way to eternal life in heaven.

The same cannot be said, however, about the three-part "directions." For anyone not at least vaguely familiar with the Scriptural concepts alluded to,

the "directions" may be meaningless. The attempt to inject a little humor into the church sign may have caused the message to be lost on all but those who already know the way to heaven. Perhaps the hope is that someone who is completely bewildered by the "directions" will inquire as to their real meaning.

The first direction, "Turn right," contains elements of two scriptural teachings: conversion and justification. Justification, of course, comes first in the scriptural scheme of things. "Right" is part of the words *righteous* and *righteousness*. One of the most familiar passages in the Bible says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). God has declared us righteous because Jesus lived a perfect life for us and suffered and died on the cross in full payment for our sins. This is true for every person on Earth. We call it objective justification.

But we know that not all people will ultimately end up in heaven, the abode of the righteous. It is also necessary that we "turn right," that we turn from the darkness of sin and damnation to the bright light of salvation through Jesus. This too is God's work. We cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus, but the Holy Spirit has called us by the gospel. Conversion, which means "turning," is the act by which God the Holy Spirit brings us to faith. "Regeneration" and being "born again" are other expressions for the same act.

The second direction, "Go straight," might remind us of phrases in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Mt. 7:13-14, KJV). We should be aware, however, that "strait" is not the word "straight," but means narrow or constricted. Strictly speaking, then,

the concept of "straight and narrow" includes an element not present in Jesus' words.

Jesus' words do set forth that there is only one way to salvation. On another occasion Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14:6). And Peter said of Jesus, "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). You cannot get to heaven by following the tenets of the Jewish or the Muslim faith, by clinging to the hopes of Buddhism or Hinduism, or by listening to the claims of a hundred-and-one other "isms." You can be saved only by faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior from sin, death, and the devil.

"Go straight" is a common expression that refers to one who was convicted of a crime, and who perhaps spent time in prison, but who now intends to live his life honestly, without breaking the law. He's going straight. If that is the meaning someone puts into this church sign, then he has sunk back into the error of work-righteousness. And indeed, many churches foster that belief. For many, faith in Jesus is only the first step in gaining salvation. To faith they add any number of requirements that the believer must fulfill before he can be absolutely sure of his salvation. All such teachings that we must work together with God toward our salvation overthrow the Biblical concept of the "monergism" of grace, that God is the "sole worker" of salvation.

All of the foregoing forces us to be very specific in considering the third direction, "Follow God." At first glance we might assume this means to

follow God's commandments, to obey God, to lead a life of good works. But if we put that interpretation under "Directions to Heaven," we are right back at work-righteousness. Thus we must understand this as a restating of the first two directions. As such it would mean: Follow God's way to heaven, follow the way God has revealed in His Word, the Way He has provided in Jesus.

We can see how important it is to be clear in our teaching and preaching, so that we do not stand in the way of the Holy Spirit, but rather so that our

speaking and writing become vehicles through which the Spirit will work faith in the hearts of people everywhere. This should not cause any of us to think, "I'm not going to tell anyone how to be saved. I might say it wrong and lead him or her astray." On the contrary, it should spur us on to learn more and more from the Bible, so that we may always be equipped to tell others of the hope that is in us.

—Gene Rutz

(Editor's note: These articles are revised versions of articles that previously appeared in another periodical.)



SMORGASBORD

• REPORTS

Prof. John Pfeiffer, President of our Immanuel Lutheran College, shared the following devotional thoughts with the Coordinating Council last September.

"When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it" (Ecclesiastes 8:16-17).

At times life seems like a picture puzzle. Before all the pieces are put together, one cannot comprehend what the picture is. Nevertheless, all the pieces are there. Only after he has put all the pieces together can he comprehend the whole.

Even so our lives as individuals and our life as a church body seem at times

like an incomprehensible puzzle. Some of the pieces bring joy; some bring sorrow; some pleasure; some pain. The joyful and pleasing pieces are always acceptable. We rarely ask, "Why did God give me this joy now?" or "What did I do to deserve such pleasure?" However, we do ask such questions about the sorrow and pain. "Why me? Why now?"

Indeed, why? Why are certain things happening and why now? Why are our soldiers still dying in Iraq? Why aren't we getting any rain? Why am I sick? Why am I out of work? Why did my loved one have to die now? Why is the CLC having such financial problems? Why aren't the people contributing more toward the new building? So many questions . . . so few answers.

When Solomon tried to find the answers with the application of his own wisdom, he said, "A man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun."

Is this still true? One would think that, if any generation was able to put the pieces together and see the big picture, it would be ours. Consider the vast network of information that is at our finger tips: television, radio, internet, newspapers, etc. Yet, this is probably the most confused generation ever. The more information we have—the more we learn about "the business that is done on earth" . . . about "the work that is done under the sun"—the more impossible it is to comprehend why things are happening the way they are.

Only if we listen to God can we hear the truth: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways . . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Is. 55:8).

To this we reply: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33). And we pray for the humility to recognize that "the secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever" (Deut. 29:29).

Therefore, we content ourselves to focus on the things that are revealed. There we find such love that we no longer need to ask, "Why us? Why now?"

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 Jn. 4:9). When we see this, then the pieces of the divine puzzle fall together as we begin to comprehend the big picture. Rarely will we see how the little, everyday pieces fit into the puzzle, but

God has revealed the truth that these pieces do indeed fit into the big picture.

And what is that picture? "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!'" (Rev. 5:11) It is the picture of us before the throne of glory, thanks to Him who took our sins upon Himself and gave us His righteousness.

God grant that at Immanuel Lutheran College and throughout the Church of the Lutheran Confession, we will proclaim the revelation of God and leave the secret things to Him. Then we will be content to know the big picture without having to worry about the little pieces.

Pastor Vance Fossum, ILC Board of Regents chairman, introduced his report to the Coordinating Council with the following devotion.

"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14b).

At Immanuel Lutheran College we really believe that the kingdom of God consists of children. The little children who come to Jesus have immortal souls. Therefore they are not animals. But neither are they angels. We all enter this world as the afflicted heirs of Adam, suffering the sickness and symptoms of inherited sin. Without the

spiritual heart surgery which Jesus performs every day on His little ones, there would be no "born again" children of God. Thanks be to God alone!

He has given to His Church the grace of Baptism, so that He might trump the natural production of children by the will of man with the supernatural creation of His very own spiritual family. In a few glorious moments a sinner is washed to sainthood, and Christian parents sigh in relief—God has saved their dear child from the yearning jaws of Satan!

But the Evil One hasn't given up the fight for the baptized soul—not yet. Through baptism God makes us sit together "in the heavenlies," but not in heaven—not yet! There's still time for him to bring that new child of the kingdom back down to earth by means of the world, the child's own sinful flesh, and even the weakness of the Lord's own disciples.

How wrong those men were who walked with Jesus so long ago! They didn't think the little children were worth the Lord's time and effort. How wrong they were to suggest that those Jewish mothers had better things to do with their children than send them after Jesus. How wrong we are if we lead our children to think that academics, athletics, socializing with friends, or even juggling the pots and

pans in the kitchen are more important than sitting at the feet of Jesus. By our own indifference to Christ's Word, our children may hear us saying: "Don't bother the Master; He hasn't the desire or the time for you!"

Sometimes the little children of the kingdom must remind their bigger brothers and sisters how it should remain also in their lives as older children of God's kingdom. A few years ago, when a grandfather asked his grandson whether he knew how to tie his shoes, the little boy looked up with a frown, and said, "Grandpa, I'm learning about Jesus. I don't have time to learn how to tie my shoes!" His parents and his Christian Day School experience made him excited to come to Jesus.

Oh, that this humble, child-like spirit might fill the hearts of our Immanuel students, faculty, and staff this new school year. May we all be so busy learning about Jesus and coming to Him for His spiritual and eternal blessings that we find ourselves saying, "I don't have time to tie my shoes!" May the Lord move every heart throughout our church body to joyfully take part in the glorious work of bringing the children to Jesus by our prayers, our teaching, our example, and our offerings. It's important to our Savior.



Meet Pastor Luke Bernthal

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, fellow *Spokesman* readers!

My name is Luke Bernthal, and I am one of this last year's two graduates

from Immanuel Lutheran Seminary in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. I have been serving my first call as pastor at Bethel in Spring, Texas, since my ordination/installation on June 29th.

A few biographical notes: I am 25 years old and unmarried. I was born in Millston, Wisconsin, but moved to Saginaw, Michigan, at age five, living there for almost twenty years (I am still a Michigander at heart, but am quickly growing into a Texan—haven't got the accent or the "y'all's" down yet, though!). My father is Mark Bernthal, pastor of Peace Thru Christ, Middleton, Wis., and my mother is Ruth (nee Gurgel), the daughter of former ILC professor Roland Gurgel.

I have several siblings in the teaching ministry: a brother, Neil, is principal at Immanuel in Winter Haven, Fla., and a younger sister, Valerie, has just begun her first year of teaching at St. John's of Okabena, Minn. My sister Vanessa is a former Christian Day School teacher, now married to Nathan Wales, principal of Holy Trinity of West Columbia, S. Car. Another brother, Dale, is a senior at Immanuel Lutheran High School in Eau Claire.

My experience as a pastor has been a blessed one. Sure, it has its ups and downs, but the ups far outweigh and overshadow the few rough times. One of my favorite experiences so far was

our VBS, which had a turnout of over 20 students! I have also enjoyed the one-on-one ministering with my members and other contacts that I've gotten to know.

The first few months have also been a very humbling experience, as I have learned many times that it is truly only God's grace and the power of Christ that allows me and the congregation to accomplish anything. Without Him all of us would truly be "of all men the most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15:19).

I have also found time for some recreational activities. I enjoy sports and physical fitness activities. I also enjoy the beach and have taken a liking to body surfing in the Gulf of Mexico—whenever there is not a tropical storm/hurricane blowing through!

The members of Bethel congregation would like to invite you all to come and visit us during our warm Houston winters (and even during our hot, humid summers). Lord's continued blessings to you all!

—*In Christ, Pastor Luke Bernthal*

Editor's note: Annually, the Spokesman requests our Seminary graduates to introduce themselves to our readers.

Meet Pastor Matthew Hanel

Do you remember what you were doing on July 13th, 2003? While it may have been just another day for you, it was a special day for Matthew Hanel. On July 13th he was ordained and installed as Pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Hecla, South Dakota.

This, however, was only the beginning of another chapter of God's grace for Matthew Hanel. As Paul Harvey would say, you're about to hear the rest

of the story.

Matthew Hanel was born on Good Friday, April 1st, 1977, to Gary and Carol Hanel in Mankato, Minnesota. Matthew is the second of five children—Seth, Elizabeth, Molly and Ty. He attended grade school and high school at Immanuel Lutheran in Mankato, graduating in 1995.

After being encouraged by Pastor Doug Libby to attend Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire,

Wisconsin, Professor Clifford Kuehne in turn led him to enroll in the pre-theological program. This suited Matthew, because he had a desire to learn the Greek language. While at Immanuel, he helped the staff by serving for three years as Resident Assistant in the boys' dorm. He also enjoyed being a part of various activities committees.

Matthew graduated from the college department of ILC in the spring of 2000, and from seminary in 2003.

Since moving to Hecla, Pastor Hanel has also been helping to serve Gift of God in Mapleton, North Dakota (Fargo area).

Pastor Hanel has a zeal for mission outreach and has been trying different ways to reach people with the gospel in the communities surrounding Hecla and Mapleton.

We certainly join to pray that God bless Matthew's efforts and ministry.

—The Spokesman thanks Pastor Andrew Schaller, who served as reporter for this article.



Announcements

Installations

In accord with our usage and order, Luke A. Bernthal, who was called by Bethel Lutheran Church, Spring, Tex. to be its pastor, was ordained and installed on June 29, 2003. Assisting were Mr. Gene Rutz and Pastor Thomas Schuetze.

—Pastor Mark Bernthal

In accord with our usage and order, Gloria L. Wilke, who was called by Gethemane Ev. Lutheran Church of Saginaw, Mich. to be its K-1 Day School teacher, was installed on August 17, 2003.

—Pastor Michael Wilke

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

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Grade School Basketball Tournament

The 19th annual CLC Grade School Basketball Tournament will be held on the campus of Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, March 19-21, 2004. Those interested in participating must notify the tournament directors by January 1, 2004. Ted Quade — 262-522-9824, tedquade@juno.com; Mark Kranz — 715-830-8453, mark.kranz@ilc.com.

To our readers . . .

We thank Pastor Paul D. Nolting, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota, who favored us with the day-by-day Bible readings/hymn stanzas for the coming year. We do this in behalf of you, our readers, who, we trust, are also regular Bible readers. Blessings are sure to follow those who use these readings, individually or with the family in the home.

We then also extend our wishes to all for a Christ-centered Christmas and New Year!

COVER: Matt Schaser