

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

*The heavens declare
the glory of God;
And the firmament shows
His handiwork.*

Psalm 19:1



“ People who had been there—people who knew—told me that my trip to India would change my life. I thought that was hyperbole. It wasn’t. ”

Theological students listen to a lecture at Immanuel Bible College in Nidubrolu. Read how one pastor’s journey to a place far away—and far outside his comfort zone—led him to experience faith and fellowship in India. *Story on page 10.*

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Postmaster: Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN 55113 and additional offices (825-580). ISSN#0024-7537. Send address corrections (Form 3579) to Lutheran Spokesman, 2750 Oxford Street North, Roseville MN 55113

The Lutheran Spokesman is published monthly by the Church of the Lutheran Confession, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113, and is an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Website address: www.clclutheran.org. Editor: Paul Naumann, 3315 46th St E, Tacoma, WA 98443, E-Mail to pgnaum@aol.com; Assistant Editor: Craig Owings; Art Director/Designer: Matthew Schaser, Staff: James Albrecht, Theodore Barthels, David Bernthal, Wayne Eichstadt, Daniel Fleischer, David Fuerstenau, Frank Gantt, Mark Gullerud, Jay Hartmann, Richard Kanzenbach, John Klatt, Paul Krause, David Lau, Joseph Lau, Delwyn Maas, James Naumann, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Andrew Schaller, Caleb Schaller, Thomas Schuetze, Mark Weis. Material submitted for publication should be sent to Editor Paul Naumann eight weeks before date of publication. Announcements and other short notices should also be sent to Editor Naumann. Business Manager: Benno Sydow, 2750 Oxford St. N., Roseville, MN 55113. E-Mail to Bennosydow@yahoo.com. Individual subscriptions {foreign-U.S. currency only}: \$18.00 {\$22.00} for one year; \$34.00 {\$42.00} for two years; \$50.00 {\$62.00} for three years; sent in bulk to congregations: \$15.00. • Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org Printed in U.S.A.



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A Glorious Sight

“This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him” (John 2:11)

“Now that was a glorious sight!”

That’s what we might say after viewing a magnificent natural landscape or the star-filled sky on a clear night. Nature can be glorious because it is the handiwork of God (Psalm 19:1). Something of His divine glory shines in it, even if many who gaze in awe at the Grand Canyon do not acknowledge it.

The glory of God that we see in His creation is that of His power and wisdom, and even His goodness to mankind (Acts 14:15-17). But His glory is also seen in His other attributes: that He is holy, just, all-knowing, present everywhere, and eternal. Furthermore, His glory is especially seen in His grace and love, which are revealed on the pages of Scripture.



In the season of the church year called Epiphany, we learn of the glory of God as it was revealed in Jesus. In His miracles, the almighty power of God was revealed in Him. By these acts of power it could be seen that Jesus was the Son of the living God. The first of these took place at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11), where Jesus turned water into wine. With this work Jesus “*manifested His glory*” by doing something that only God could have done. His disciples saw it and believed in Him.

But Jesus did not perform this work of power merely to impress. It was the “*beginning of signs*,” the first of many miracles that identified Jesus as the Christ, the promised Savior. It was not just in divine power that the glory of Christ was manifested at the wedding in Cana; it was in divine love. The miracle of transforming water into wine showed that here was God’s Son, who had come to suffer and die to rescue us all from our sins, from death and eternal damnation.

The glory of God shines especially bright in the cross of Christ. There we see how great His love is for us. It is a love that far surpasses all human love. Jesus directs our attention to this in His answer to His mother, Mary, when she tells Him that there was no more wine for the wedding guests. Before performing His first great sign, Jesus reminded Mary, “*My hour has not yet come.*” His hour was the time of His sacrifice on the cross (John 12:23, 27; 13:1). With this reference to His hour, Jesus tells us that He had not come to dazzle the world with works of power so that people would worship Him as God. He had come to demonstrate the glory of God’s grace and love so that people would believe in Him and love Him as Savior.

In the “Gloria in Excelsis” in the order of worship in *The Lutheran Hymnal*, we sing to God, “We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory.” We not only praise, bless, worship, and glorify God for His great glory; we also give thanks to Him for it, for His glory is not just in His power, but also in His grace. It is not just in His holiness, but also in His love for us in Jesus Christ.



John Klatt is pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Loveland, Colorado.

God's Will for Your New Year

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil” (James 4:13-16).

It seems natural for us to look forward to the new year with plans and ambitions. We all want to accomplish more than we did last year. We want to reach new goals and fulfill aspirations that we may have been harboring for years. We resolve, “It is finally going to happen this year in 2015!” Whether it is a professional goal as represented in our devotion’s text, or a more personal one involving our relationships or our health or well-being, we all try to use this new beginning on the calendar to motivate a new effort toward personal accomplishment. As children of God, we will also include some spiritual goals. Our faith is most important to us all, isn’t it? And isn’t this often an area of personal disappointment as we look back over the past year? So shouldn’t we also make a resolution to increase our faith and our knowledge of God?

How do we proceed to do better in the future, the immediate future of this new year? The typical New Year’s resolution depends on our own human determination and will. However, the Apostle James, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, directs us to submit our plans, our futures, our entire lives to the will of God. Human nature is reluctant to do this. So then let us consider God’s will for us. While we cannot know the finer details and must submit to God’s will with trust, we do know the big picture, and God’s ultimate will for us. We submit to this as a matter of faith. God’s will for you is your eternal salvation. To make this a reality, *“God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him”* (1 John 4:9). God’s will for your salvation includes that He knew you and chose you to be His own from before the world began. The Apostle Paul writes, *“Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among*

While we cannot know the finer details and must submit to God’s will with trust, we do know the big picture, and God’s ultimate will for us.

many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Romans 8:29-30). **How wondrously God’s will plays out for our eternal salvation! This will is neither capricious nor fickle; it is holy and gracious toward us.**

It is this same will of God that we trust with our future plans and endeavors when in faith we say, *“If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that”* (v.15). He who has blessed me with **“body and life, eyes, ears, and all my bodily members, my mind and all my senses”** (Luther’s Small Catechism, Sydow edition, explanation to the second article of the Apostle’s Creed) also blesses the labors of my hands as I live to the glory of His name. Such a resolution does not lessen our hope of success in this new year, but rather enhances and enriches our goals and aspirations. It lifts all that we do from the temporal and mundane to be blessed by the Lord for our good and to His glory. His Spirit will direct our will according to His will, and He will guide and direct us on life’s path. We are spiritually strengthened and brought closer to our Lord even as we are enriched in all things by the use of our God-given gifts and abilities.

May God grant you such a blessed and successful 2015.



Theodore Barthels is pastor of St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church in Austin, Minnesota.

God is Pro-Life

Perhaps you have seen the bumper sticker or heard the expression, “God is Pro-Life.” Exactly what does that mean? Because there are so many life-and-death discussions permeating our society, especially around election time, it may be helpful to review what God says about being Pro-Life.



Physical Life

Our God is the “I Am” God – Jehovah (YHWH in Hebrew). He is eternal, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Any talk of “life” must begin with the Giver of life, our Triune God. “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being*” (Genesis 2:7). The life in humans comes from God; there is no life apart from God. Even the laws of science disprove the idea that something living can come from something non-living. The evolutionary ideas of the Big Bang Theory require one to accept spontaneous generation as a possibility. God’s Word does not. Humans are “. . . *fearfully and wonderfully made*” (Psalm 139:14). God is Pro-Life.

Eternal Life

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, fell into sin in the Garden of Eden. Death became a part of life for the first time; and not just temporal death on this earth, but spiritual and eternal death in hell. However, God is Pro-Life. He rescued lost mankind by promising and sending a substitute, His Son, to suffer and die on behalf of all humans ever born. “*And [Christ] Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). In this way, God redeemed us from eternal death. “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die*” (John 11:25-26). God is Pro-Life.

Babies

When does the life that God created begin? Those who believe that abortion is an appropriate response to an unwanted pregnancy would have us believe that life does

From the time we are conceived until the time God stops our beating heart, He has a purpose for our lives.

not begin until the birth of the child, or at the earliest when a child can live outside the womb. The Bible does not teach that. “*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me*” (Psalm 51:5). Life begins at conception. Anyone who would purposely take the life of a child who has been conceived is guilty of murder. Job responded to his friends, “*Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?*” (Job 31:15). God gave life to us in the womb. A baby’s time of grace should not be cut short. God is Pro-Life.

Terminally Ill

Just as we hear much about a woman’s right to end a pregnancy, we have also heard much about an individual’s right to die. Some feel that if the quality of one’s life is no longer sufficient, he should have the right to end his life on his own terms. This opinion is often voiced in connection with those who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness. God clearly states in Deuteronomy 32:39, “*Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive.*” It is God who determines the time of grace for each soul. May we confess with the psalmist David, “*My times are in Your hand*” (Psalm 31:15). From the time we are conceived until the time God stops our beating heart, He has a purpose for our lives. “*He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again*” (2 Corinthians 5:15). We have been

called according to His purpose. May we redeem the time in His service. Be Pro-Life just as He is.



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“Consider Christ Jesus”

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end” (Hebrews 3:1-6).

The Epistle to the Hebrews was first sent to Jewish Christians who, after coming to faith in Jesus, experienced hardship and persecution, especially from their own countrymen. The more opposition they faced, the less confidence they had. They wondered if following Christ was a mistake; if the Old Covenant was better than the New. Increasingly anchorless, they began to drift from substance toward shadow; from the “Done!” of the Gospel toward the “Do!” of the Law.

Understanding this, the inspired writer of Hebrews sent a letter solemn in its warnings, but also rich in its encouragements. “Don’t give up! Hold on! Keep moving forward!” The letter hums with these exhortations until it reaches a loud crescendo in the “*by faith*” of Hebrews 11 and the cheering “*cloud of witnesses*” of Hebrews 12.

And throughout Hebrews the means to “keep on keeping on” is always the same: *focusing on Jesus Christ, His Person and Work, His Deity and Humanity*. The “*consider Christ Jesus*” of Hebrews 3:1 is the essence and invitation of the entire epistle. The Greek verb translated as “consider” in this verse is in the imperative mode—think capital letters, underlining, and exclamation points—because it is imperative that we consider Christ Jesus, if we are not to “*become weary and discouraged*” (12:3).

Yet, what does it mean to consider Jesus? Significantly, Jesus Himself used this same word in His Sermon on the Mount, saying, “*Consider the lilies, how they grow*” (Luke 12:27). You can’t consider how lilies grow by racing past the lily patch, thinking, “Nice flowers, but I’m late for supper.” Instead, you must stop, study, touch the petals, note the color and texture, smell the fragrance,

take a picture, make an album. In other words, to “*consider Jesus*” means to meditate on Jesus, to reflect deeply on WHO Jesus is and WHAT Jesus has done. And in Hebrews 3:1-6 the inspired writer offers four descriptions of Jesus meant to lift us up and spur us on in “*the race that is set before us*” (12:1).

Jesus is the “*Apostle and High Priest of our confession*” (Hebrews 3:1). With stunning brevity, using only two titles, the writer of Hebrews summarizes the entire mission of Christ, from incarnation to crucifixion, from being sent to being sacrificed. Aren’t these realities alone—“Jesus was sent to seek me, save me, and die for me”—enough to keep us moving onward and upward when tempted to give up?

In Hebrews 3:2 Jesus is also called “*Faithful*.” Faithful to God the Father, yes; but equally faithful to us. Faithful in word and deed. Faithful to the point of enduring the cross and scorning its shame (Hebrews 12:2). “*God is faithful*,” as Paul stated in I Corinthians 10:13. THEREFORE—a frequent word in Hebrews; drawing an inevitable conclusion from divine fact—what God starts, God finishes. When God calls, God gets you there. So, don’t give up.

Next, the inspired writer refers to Jesus as a “*Builder*.” “*For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God*” (Hebrews 3:4). How many times have you driven through a subdivision, thinking, “That house built itself”? Nonsense. And it is also nonsensical to think that we can build our faith, families, marriages, ministries, congregations, and Christian lives apart from Almighty God. GOD BUILDS EVERYTHING. If we remembered that message and blueprint, would we ever give up?

Finally, in Hebrews 3:6, Jesus is called “*Son*.” The Son of Man was also the Son of God. And that, in a single sentence, is the message of Epiphany. “*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son*” (Hebrews 1:1-2). When God wanted to say “I love you” in the loudest, fullest way possible, he didn’t send a Hallmark card. He sent his Son. Consider that fact carefully, and you’ll never give up on problems, relationships, life, or God. “*He who did not spare His own*

Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).



Mark Weis is pastor of the Church of the Lutheran Confession in Northport, Florida.

A Baby Can Change A Life

We know that babies are a gift of God and that “*children are a heritage from the Lord*” (Psalm 127:3). Certainly babies can change the way people live. Their gurgles can bring smiles and delight to the crusty and aged. Their cries bring parents running. Their needs affect schedules, spending habits, and sleeping patterns.

The change can go deeper. We might all know of some whose lives were changed religiously, if not spiritually, by a child. Gone were the party days and living unto self. Suddenly responsibility becomes like a reality show—personal and not easily avoided. Concerns deeper than food and drink arise. “What do I teach my child? How do I raise him? I’ve been AWOL from the church; perhaps it’s time to get serious.” Thus lives are changed. We’ve seen it happen.

So it also happened very early in the history of mankind. We are told (Genesis 5:21-22) that Enoch was sixty-five years old when Methuselah was born, and that after that birth, Enoch walked with God for three hundred years. So it would seem that Enoch’s walking with God may have been connected to the birth of his first child.

This is not hard to imagine, for we have witnessed young and somewhat immature parents suddenly grow up. If Enoch at 65 had been spiritually carefree, that was in the past. God had given him a joyful gift, and that heritage changed his life. Whatever his former lifestyle, Enoch now not only believed in the promise of a Savior, but his faith was seen and that faith resulted in holy conduct. A baby did change a life!

And what a baby Methuselah was! It has been suggested that his name means “when he dies, it shall be sent.” We do know from Scripture that Methuselah

We might all know of some whose lives were changed religiously, if not spiritually, by a child.

lived longer on earth than any other person in history (969 years), and that shortly after he died, then came the Great Flood. Jude recorded that Enoch was a prophet who foresaw and warned of a mighty judgment to come. Whenever Enoch saw his son, he was reminded of God’s revelation. He then warned the sinful world of judgment, and calmly and righteously walked with God all the way to Paradise, for Enoch did not experience temporal death. God simply took him to his eternal home and “*he was not*” (Genesis 5:24). A baby can change a life!

Traditionally, Epiphany is known as the Gentile Christmas. We celebrate the birth of Christ Jesus and His revelation to us as Savior. What a game-changer, what a life-changer He was and is! For Mary, for the Jewish shepherds, for many of His people, Jesus changed lives. His words and works amazed people. Many believed on Him and were saved.

But Christ was also God’s gift to all mankind, for God so loved the world. His name means Savior, which He is. As a baby eight days old, His blood was shed as He was already beginning to fulfill God’s Law for us. As a man, He died and suffered hell’s anguish to pay for our sins. Has He changed your life? He redeemed you and for His sake God justified you. And His Spirit would so sanctify you that your walk also is with God—all the way into eternity.

First Jesus came as Savior, and so He is until He comes again as earth’s Judge. No angels singing His glory, no swaddling clothes for Him this second time. Angels in heaven, yes; a trumpet’s mighty sound, yes. A Judge’s scale in His hand, most certainly. So celebrate that divine-human Gift who has so changed your life by His Spirit. Praise Him for His gracious forgiveness and righteousness. Praise Him as the One who will one day change the mortal into immortality. Indeed, He who was once a Baby has changed and is changing lives and will one day change His whole creation.



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Close Communion

Few Lutheran practices seem as controversial as the practice of close communion. In today's inclusive culture, visitors find it surprising that we limit access to the communion table. Our practice may seem cold, judgmental, even unkind. If this is how it is viewed by others, then why *do* we practice close communion?

Our purpose is not to offend, nor to pass judgment on the faith or integrity of our visitors. Our goal is to remain faithful to Scripture. Perhaps a better question would be, *Is the practice of close communion scriptural?*

Many passages speak to the issue. One, especially, describes the special closeness in communion: "*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread*" (I Corinthians 10:16-17).

Note the "closeness" between the bread and Jesus' body, between the wine and Jesus' blood. A few words in particular make this clear. One is the Greek word, "*koinonia*," which means: "*communion, fellowship, sharing, partnership . . .*" Another is "*tou*," translated as "*the*" in English, but perhaps better rendered as, "*THE*" or "*the very*." Is the wine the *communion of the very* blood of Christ, and the bread the *communion of the very* body of Christ? The answer is unmistakably *Yes!* In the Sacrament, as we eat the bread and drink the wine, by God's decree we receive the very body and blood of Jesus. Though God has not told us HOW this happens, He expressly tells us that it does.

Because it does, there is an amazing closeness between God and the communicant. Imagine not just hearing of the Lord's love, but actually tasting His forgiveness firsthand. In manmade religions, people make pilgrimages to worship false gods. In communion, the true God comes to us to provide tangible evidence of His mercy and forgiveness. This is one of the reasons the Bible tells us to examine ourselves, lest we misuse the Sacrament and eat and drink judgment upon ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:27ff).



Our goal is to remain faithful to Scripture.

The closeness of communion is also reflected in the closeness of those who commune. "*For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.*" We come from different backgrounds, have different talents and interests, and yet, as we kneel side-by-side at the Lord's table, we are one. We are children of the same family, and though we may disagree on earthly things, we completely agree on the important things, the things of our faith. When we commune together, we publicly express our oneness in faith.

Sadly, not everyone believes in the closeness that this passage teaches. Some view the bread and wine as mere symbols of Jesus' body and blood. Not all realize that this Sacrament brings one into the very presence of God, and therefore, not all are prepared to receive it. Some may be spiritually asleep in impenitence, or simply unable to examine themselves. Any of these circumstances can lead to judgment and harm, instead of forgiveness and blessing. To distribute the Sacrament indiscriminately would be careless and unkind.

How can we look into communicants' hearts to know if they understand the Sacrament and are prepared to receive it? We can't. And we don't. We can only accept a person's public profession of faith.

Please see your pastor if you'd like more information or a deeper scriptural study of our church's practice of close communion.



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

The Second Martin

The Lutheran Church is so named as a consequence of the enemies of Martin Luther, who mockingly called those “Lutherans” who confessed the doctrines of Scripture taught by the confessor who was God’s tool in reestablishing the Word alone as the foundation of the Church. We fondly celebrate the Reformation of 1517. What we may not remember, and many perhaps do not know, is that there was a second Martin—Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586).

Chemnitz studied astrology initially. Eventually he gave it up and became a theologian of such note that it is said, “If the second Martin had not come, the first Martin would not have stood.” Chemnitz came to the University of Wittenberg in 1545 (Martin Luther died in 1546), where he heard Luther preach, but where by his own admission he did not pay close attention to Luther’s lectures. At Wittenberg, Chemnitz, who later taught at the university, was mentored chiefly by Philip Melanchthon, a scholar, theologian, and close friend of Luther. Melanchthon helped Chemnitz in understanding the distinction between Law and Gospel. When it came to theology, Chemnitz was largely self-taught. Together with his personal study of Scripture, Chemnitz’s studies also included intense study of Luther’s works. After the death of Luther, turmoil, to which Melanchthon contributed, arose among the Lutherans.

Melanchthon tended to compromise frequently in an effort to keep peace. He was inclined toward Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, who both denied the real presence of the body and blood of the Lord in the Sacrament. Other issues arose that moved followers of Luther’s doctrinal position to brand Melanchthon and his followers (known as the Philippists) as teaching contrary to Scripture and sound Lutheran doctrine. Meetings between the factions could not bring peace and unity, in part because during this time others who stood for what Luther taught became extreme in their defense of Luther’s doctrine. It was a difficult time for the children of the Reformation, one that made them a laughingstock to Rome and threatened to undermine Reformation Lutheranism.

Martin Chemnitz, a man of calm demeanor, stood firmly on God’s Word and in defense of Lutheran doctrine. Foremost among the reasons evangelical and



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orthodox Lutherans appreciate Martin Chemnitz is that he was one of the chief contributors to and one of the original signers of the *Formula of Concord* (1577), a signature Lutheran confession which appears with others in the *Book of Concord* of 1580.

His contributions to the *Formula of Concord* were by no means his only contribution to the cause of Lutheranism. Chemnitz also wrote *Examination of the Council of Trent* (4 volumes), *The Two Natures of Christ*, and *The Lord’s Supper*. The latter was a response to Melanchthon’s compromising position on the Lord’s Supper.

Unlike Melanchthon, Chemnitz stood firm against every attack of those who undermined orthodox Lutheranism. These included the Crypto-Calvinists—Lutherans who secretly held to Calvinism with respect to the Lord’s Supper.

Martin Chemnitz was a man of many talents. He attained a master’s degree as well as a doctorate. He was a professional librarian as well as a pastor and teacher. He was offered positions in government, but by the grace of God remained a theologian and educator through whom the Lord blessed the Church.

Scripture is the foundation of our faith and hope. But it also says, “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow. . .” (Hebrews 13:7). In his own words we say of Chemnitz, “. . . We love and praise the testimonies of the fathers which agree with the Scriptures.”



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



A beggar working taxis at a stoplight
— poverty is never far away in India



One of the children cared for at
the Nidubrolu compound

Nidubrolu, India

People who had been there—people who knew—told me that my trip to India would change my life. I thought that was hyperbole. It wasn't.

In October of 2014, I was privileged to travel to southeast India on behalf of the Project KINSHIP Committee of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). For more than 30 years, Project KINSHIP has supported orphans, seminary students and widows in Africa and India, and more recently in Nepal and Myanmar. The generous contributions of stateside CLC sponsors, impelled by hearts of faith and zeal for the Lord's work, have seen Project KINSHIP grow and thrive over the years.

My assignment took me first to the annual Joint Asia Pastoral Conference in Nellore. Here, leaders of churches affiliated with the CLC in India, Nepal, and Myanmar met to study God's Word and report on progress in their respective mission fields. It was informative—and edifying—to meet these leaders and learn about their work.

From there we traveled to the headquarters of one of our affiliated church bodies, the Church of the Lutheran Confession in India (CLCI), located in the east-central province of Andhra Pradesh. Here, in the village of Nidubrolu, stands the compound where the Benjamin family care for thirty orphaned and abandoned children, as well as providing theological training for the 38 students of Immanuel Bible College. Work here began long ago, when CLC people came into contact with Pastor V.S. Benjamin. Though he is now advanced in years, the elder Pastor Benjamin still watches over the Lord's work. His sons Jyothi and Nireekshana, trained pastors themselves, oversee the administration of the orphanage and Bible college.

Missionary Ed Starkey, his wife Janice, and I arrived at the compound in Nidubrolu on a Saturday afternoon. As we entered, we were greeted by a line of smiling children who welcomed us with a song and showered us with flower petals. A special service had been arranged, featuring hymns, songs by the children, and a formal greeting by the elder Pastor Benjamin. The students of the Bible college attended as well, some of them traveling quite a distance, though it was a Saturday and the Bible college was not in session. A feast followed, with savory fried rice and the usual multitude of spicy curries and chutneys.

Over the next few days, Missionary Starkey and I were honored to be the guest speakers at worship services in several area CLCI



A canal near the compound in Nidubrolu is
handy for washing clothes - and babies!



“ We were greeted as we entered the compound in Nidubrolu by a line of smiling children... ”

A young attendee at worship services. The bindi, or mark on the forehead, is sometimes religious but sometimes merely cultural. It is discouraged by Christian pastors but not forbidden.

churches. Those services, and the Christians we met there, will remain etched in my memory. Though the sermons needed to be translated from English into Telugu, the worshipers seemed to hang on every word. All the adults carried Bibles, and the Bibles were well thumbed. Whenever the preacher mentioned a Scripture passage, the reference would hardly be out of his mouth before one of the worshipers began reading it aloud!

Following every service was prayer time, when the pastors would each take a line of people who were waiting to have individual prayers offered for them. The needs were real—a child with typhus, a man crippled in a traffic accident, a woman whose husband had strayed from the Lord. Equally obvious was the unfeigned faith of these people, Christians who know that the throne of God’s grace is the only place to go in time of need, and who are unapologetic about going there!

Monday morning saw us back at the compound in Nidubrolu, lecturing to the students at the Bible college. These men, too, seemed to hang on every word as their instructors discussed the difference between Lutheran and Reformed doctrine, the proper distinction of Law from Gospel, and the home life of Martin Luther. Here in the U.S., we are impressed with the determination of the handful of young men who are applying themselves to learning God’s Word at our seminary in Eau Claire. Imagine the thrill when one looks out at a large room crammed with *forty* young men, all of whom are eager to deepen their knowledge of Scriptural doctrine, so that they can be pastors who are well-equipped for the Lord’s service.

We took updated photos of all the students, so that we could share new pictures and information with their CLC sponsors here in the States. Then the children of the orphanage were brought in to have their photographs taken. A few were nervous and unsure about the process, but there were also plenty of radiant, beaming smiles from children who are obviously being well fed—both physically and spiritually—by the CLCI workers who care for them.

I came away from this experience with a profound sense of gratitude not only to the committee who sent me, missionaries Ed Starkey and Matt Ude who guided me, and the gracious Indian Christians who hosted me; but also and especially to the Lord of the Church. He it is who has laid this important work before us, and He it is who promises, *“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it”* (Isaiah 55:11).

For more pictures and information from Pastor Naumann’s India trip, go to <http://pastorpnaumann.wordpress.com/>



Paul Naumann serves on the Project KINSHIP Committee. He is also pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington, and editor of The Lutheran Spokesman.

Messiah Lutheran Church—Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Like many CLC congregations, Messiah Lutheran Church was born when the Lord moved a number of His people to leave their former fellowships in order to be faithful to His inspired Word. The first service was held in the basement of a member's home on December 11, 1960, with seventy-one in attendance. The first shepherds to serve this flock were Pastor Arvid Gullerud and Pastor Keith Olmanson. Messiah became a confessional member of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) in August of 1961. The congregation worshiped in a rented sanctuary for about fifteen months. During this time they purchased the current property and constructed the first church, which was dedicated on Easter Sunday of 1962. The members immediately recognized the need for Christian education for their children, and opened Messiah Lutheran School in September of 1963. It was a one-room blessing from God, held in the back of the sanctuary. Miss Shirley Wendland was the first called teacher, and was assisted by a number of Messiah members.

In the fall of 1963, Immanuel Lutheran College began its first school year in Eau Claire. Throughout the years, Messiah and Immanuel have had a very close relationship. Messiah has had the privilege of serving as a "home away from home" church for the students. In addition, dozens of student practice teachers and seminary vicars have come to Messiah Lutheran Church and School for observation of and practice in the public ministry. Messiah's members have been grateful for the



Messiah Lutheran Church

opportunity of continuing Christian education at ILC for their children, and have been active supporters of Immanuel.

The Lord has blessed Messiah with steady growth throughout its history. Our church membership has recently exceeded 800 souls. Our school enrollment in Pre-K through 8th grade is 133 students. As the needs arose, the Lord blessed us with the means to accommodate the work at hand. The list of building projects from past years includes classroom expansions, two parsonages and one teacherage, and a fellowship hall. A major project in recent history was the building of a new sanctuary, which was dedicated in April of 2007. Along with the needed property expansion, the Lord has provided called servants to serve the church and school. Messiah Lutheran School currently has five full-time teachers, and five who serve part time. Our ministerial staff has recently been increased to three full-time pastors. Beyond the work of our called servants, there are countless tasks and responsibilities that are faithfully performed, on a volunteer basis, by



Children of Messiah Lutheran



Messiah main sanctuary

our members. We owe it all, of course, to the work of our gracious God. He has not only provided eternal life through the death of His Son in our place, and called us to faith through His inspired Word, but has also moved the hearts of our members to serve Him for the growth of His kingdom.

The Lord is blessing Messiah with many opportunities for inner growth, including Saturday and Sunday worship services and Bible classes, midweek fellowship and study meetings for young and old, confirmation instruction for more than thirty students, and an active youth group. We also have many open doors for reaching out with God's Word for others, including the following activities:

- ♦ Seven weekly worship services at senior care facilities, conducted by volunteer lay-preachers and musicians.
- ♦ A dozen adult instruction classes at any given time.
- ♦ An active Outreach Committee which organizes flier handouts, promotion of church events, a fair booth display for a number of local venues, an annual evangelism workshop, and public seminars on biblical topics of interest.

- ♦ Video broadcast of our services on public access TV, on the Internet (www.eauclairemessiah.com and www.facebook.com/EauClaireMessiah), and through an extensive DVD mailing program.

The members of Messiah face many of the same challenges that confront smaller CLC congregations. How will we continue to proclaim all of the truths of God's Word in a world that is becoming more and more hostile to what God says? How will we best serve those who have strayed from the faith, or who seem to place little value on using the Means of Grace? How will we bear up under the continuing need for the funds to support our work for the Lord's kingdom? In all of these challenges, we continue to look to our gracious God, who has promised "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Hebrews 13:9). It is a matter of faith to be confident that, when we seek first the kingdom of God and His

righteousness, all these things will be added to us as well.



Bruce Naumann is Associate Pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin



MLS faculty left to right

- Barb Gurgel, 3-4
- Karen Franson, School Secretary
- Mary Ryan, 4 (part time)
- Lisa Noeldner, Church Secretary
- Seth Schaller, 7-8 & Principal
- Lori Worth, 5-8 Language Arts
- Carrie Reim, 1-2
- Eileen Tiefel, K
- Kathleen Oster, Preschool
- Susan Hulke 3 (part time)
- Paul Tiefel III, 5-6
- Heather Thompson (not pictured), Music

February 2015

TLH = The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; WS = Worship Supplement 2000; SC = Martin Luther’s Small Catechism;

[] = Minor Festivals or commemorations in the Christian Church Year

Date	Reading	Verse
Feb 2	Luke 2:22-40	TLH 137
	[The Presentation of Christ]	
	Joseph, Mary, and Jesus heed the Law of Moses, and Simeon and Anna get to see their Savior close up.	
Feb 3	1 Corinthians 8:1-13	WS 713:1, 3
	May our lives help bring others to Christ rather than lead people away from Him.	
Feb 4	1 Corinthians 3:1-11	TLH 493
	We are God’s field-workers, but it is He who makes things grow. We are thankful that’s His responsibility!	
Feb 5	Genesis 32:9-32	TLH 444:4
	[Commemoration of Jacob]	
	Fearful of the future, Jacob persists until the Lord blesses Him. God is not upset with such wrestling matches.	
Feb 6	Deuteronomy 18:15-20	TLH 134
	God desires to communicate with us, and He does so especially through His prophet Jesus.	
Feb 7	Mark 1:21-39	WS 730
	There is no enemy our Lord Jesus Christ cannot defeat.	
Feb 9	Isaiah 40:21-31	PS 111
	He who has created the world and can reduce its rulers to nothing will surely care for you, His child.	
Feb 10	Mark 4:26-32	SC Lord’s Prayer II
	The forgiveness of sins in Christ may at first appear a small thing, but it ever conquers more and more hearts.	
Feb 11	1 Corinthians 9:16-27	PS 147:1-11
	As God is concerned with saving the weak, so this concern is reflected in the actions of His believers.	
Feb 12	Matthew 14:22-33	PS 77
	Although the disciples were a considerable distance away, Jesus was well aware of them. Comforting, isn’t it?	
Feb 13	Genesis 11:1-9	TLH 416
	God’s discipline at Babel prevented the people from going further in their sin. May He discipline us in love.	
Feb 14	John 15:9-13	TLH 363:1-3
	True love is sacrificial—as Jesus demonstrated when He offered His own life as payment for our sin.	

Date	Reading	Verse
Feb 16	Mark 9:2-9	WS 720
	“... they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.” Jesus stays with us too, glorious God though He is.	
Feb 17	2 Corinthians 3:7-12	PS 50:1-6
	Do you want to see something glorious? Examine the good news that Christ’s righteousness is yours.	
Feb 18	Romans 4:1-8	TLH 387
	[Death of Martin Luther]	
	By faith (not by works) we stand righteous before God, this righteousness being a free gift from Him.	
Feb 19	Joel 2:12-19	PS 51
	The repentance God works in us is not a mere outward show, but involves the heart’s cooperation too.	
Feb 20	Hebrews 13:12-21	PS 148
	What can we give the One who sanctified us with His own blood? How about a sacrifice of praise from our own lips.	
Feb 21	Matthew 6:1-6	TLH 399:4-6
	We say, “To God alone be the glory!”—but we short-circuit this when we discover ways to glorify ourselves instead.	
Feb 23	Mark 1:9-15	TLH 61
	Seven short verses, three major events (vv. 9-11; 12-13, 14-15). Consider how they all relate to Christ’s gospel ministry.	
Feb 24	Matthew 9:9-13	TLH 342
	[Festival of St. Matthew]	
	Jesus not only made a tax collector into a disciple, but a sermon at Matthew’s table further told of His concern for sinners.	
Feb 25	James 1:12-18	SC Lord’s Prayer VI
	Don’t blame God when you fall into temptation. He is the author of good and wants a crown of life for you.	
Feb 26	Genesis 3:1-15	WS 714
	Satan, His temptations, and the world’s ruin are reversed by a single promise in v. 15 (see also 1 John 3:8b).	
Feb 27	Genesis 22:1-18	PS 6
	God provided a substitute sacrifice and Isaac’s life was spared, calling to mind a greater Substitute.	
Feb 28	Matthew 16:21-23	TLH 142
	Yet another temptation resisted by our Savior. Not once did He fail or falter in His journey to the cross.	

The All-Revealing Question

Here is one question you can easily memorize that will assist you greatly in your attempts to witness your faith to others. This question will allow you to cut through all the peripheral issues and discover exactly what the person you're talking to believes about life and death, sin and grace, heaven and hell.

You can use this question on anyone.

People almost never object to the question, or are offended when you ask it.

Most people will consider this question carefully and then give you a thoughtful (and very revealing!) answer.

You may lead the conversation up to the question, or just introduce it out of the blue:

"Let me ask you this—if you were to die tonight and God asked you, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' what would you answer?"

Of course, the correct (scriptural) answer is, "I trust that God would let me into heaven because Jesus is my Savior, who died on the cross to redeem me from my sins."

However, if your experience is typical, you will find that nine times out of ten you will get a wrong answer. The answer will nearly always be very similar to the following: "Well, I've tried my best to be a good person.

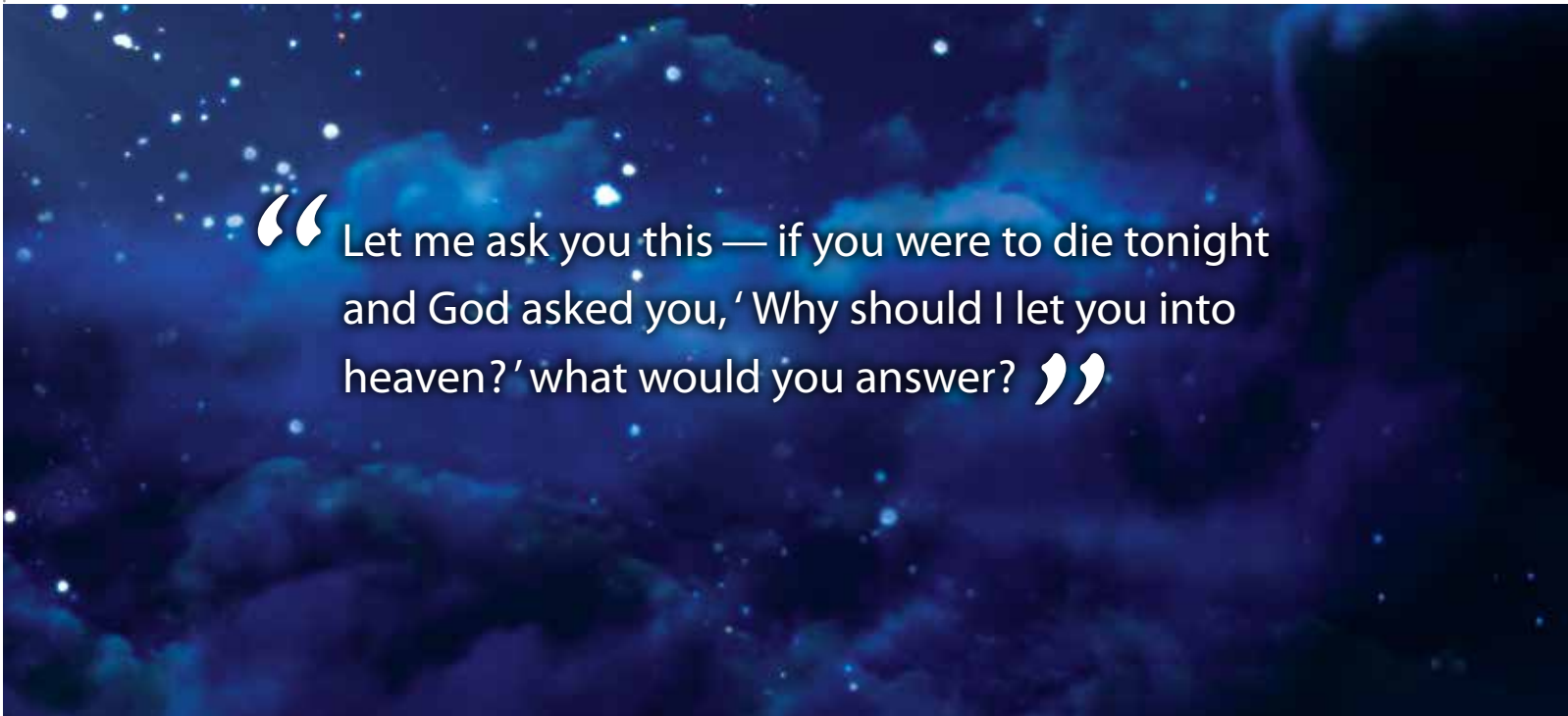
These brief topics were written to help members of Ascension Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington, think about the ways in which they share the Gospel with others. Cut this page out if you like and post it on your refrigerator. Decide for yourself whether this is a helpful addition to your "outreach repertoire."

I try to live an honest life. I've never intentionally hurt anyone. . ." etc.

You can respond to this with two simple passages that are easy to memorize:

"Yes, many people feel they can earn salvation by doing good works. But God says in Galatians 2:16, 'By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.'" "I'm so glad that God provides another way to be saved. For the Bible also says in Romans 3:23-24, 'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'"

You can go on from there. Keep it simple—just tell the truth! Say what great things the Lord has done for you in your life. Always lead the discussion back to God's Word — that's where the power is. Invite people to learn more by joining you for worship or Bible class. Let them know that your pastor would be happy to visit and answer more questions, if they like.



“ Let me ask you this — if you were to die tonight and God asked you, ' Why should I let you into heaven?' what would you answer? ”

SEEN IN PASSING

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

“Identification with Catholicism has declined throughout Latin America, according to a major new Pew Research Center survey that examines religious affiliations, beliefs and practices in 18 countries across Latin America and the Caribbean. From 1900 through the 1960s, at least 90% of Latin America’s population was Catholic. Today, the survey shows, 69% of adults across the region identify as Catholic. In nearly every country surveyed, the Catholic Church has experienced net losses from religious switching, as many Latin Americans have joined evangelical Protestant churches or rejected organized religion altogether.” Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project. “Religion In Latin America.” *Pew Research Center*. 2014. Web. 22 Nov. 2014.

Good News for Pastors: Court Overturns Atheist Victory on Housing Allowance. “Churches can stop worrying that their pastors’ best benefit will be taken away by an atheist lawsuit—for now. Today, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a lower court’s high-profile 2013 decision that the longstanding clergy housing allowance was unconstitutional.” Zylstra, Sarah Eekhoff. “Good News for Pastors:

Court Overturns Atheist Victory on Housing Allowance.” *Gleanings. Christianity Today*, 13 Nov. 2014. Web. 14 Nov. 2014.

The Forgotten 9th and 10th Commandments “Americans have difficulty remembering, much less keeping, the commandment, Thou Shalt Not Covet. . . . Our culture fixates on the good life, with its perfect home, car, clothes, jewelry, and even relationships, creating an environment in which success is measured against the gains of others. Social unrest can occur when people are almost taunted by levels of consumption that few can achieve. A thriving economic system should celebrate achievement and allow all people equal access to create for their own good and the good of others. But it must be rooted in the belief that people should be content with what they have and be able to congratulate those who have more. Remove this heart attitude, and the middle class will disappear.” Bentley, Chuck. “The Ten Commandments and Crabs in a Barrel.” *American Thinker*. n.p. 9 Nov. 2014. Web. 14 Nov. 2014.

Missouri Synod Studies Reasons for Decline in Church Membership. Surprise: it’s not close communion, it’s not the

hymnal and it’s not the liturgy. LC-MS President Matthew Harrison: “It is evident to me that historically the greatest source of growth in the Missouri Synod (and especially following WWII) had been procreation. The single most significant factor causing our decline has been that fact that we have largely adopted the prevailing cultural attitudes toward marriage and reproduction. Our young people are marrying later, if at all, and are having far fewer children.” Harrison, Matthew. “Unworthy Servants.” *Lutheran Witness* Oct. 2014: 3. Print.

Decline Affected by Attendance as Well as Membership. Researcher Thom Rainer has concluded that shifting trends in church attendance are having as much or greater impact on the church than loss of members. Statistics show that churchgoers are attending with less frequency than they did just a few years ago. “For example, if 200 members attend every week, average attendance is 200. But if half those members miss one out of four weeks, average attendance drops to 175. . . That’s a 12 percent decline simply because half the members slightly changed their pattern of attending.” “Attendance Leaks.” *Leadership Journal* Fall 2014: 13-14. Print.

Photos taken by Kate and Rob Sauers during the 2014 Mission Helper trip to Nepal.

Left: Hindu man at Shree Simle Primary School in the Rasuwa District of Nepal (near the Tibet border). He was excited about the gospel shared by the mission helpers and requested a crown that said “Jesus is King!” **Center:** Kate eating fresh fish at the Nigale Fish Resort.

Right: Fresh trout from the Nigale Fish Resort near Kakani, Nepal (on the way to the Rasuwa District). The fish were caught, fried, and eaten all within a span of two hours.



CORRECTION:

In the article, “The Theories of Science Change – The Facts of the Bible do Not” (March, 2014), author Paul Naumann incorrectly states that the Columbia River meets the Pacific at Portland, Oregon. After travelling through British Columbia, Washington and Oregon, the Columbia actually meets the Pacific at Astoria, 90 miles to the northwest of Portland. Also, the author may have left the impression that all ice-age scouring *must* be the result of the Great Flood of Genesis 6-8; this is not necessarily the case.

Interested in taking part in a future Mission Helper trip? Go to <http://mht.lutheranmissions.org/>