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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



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Jesus, the Good Shepherd

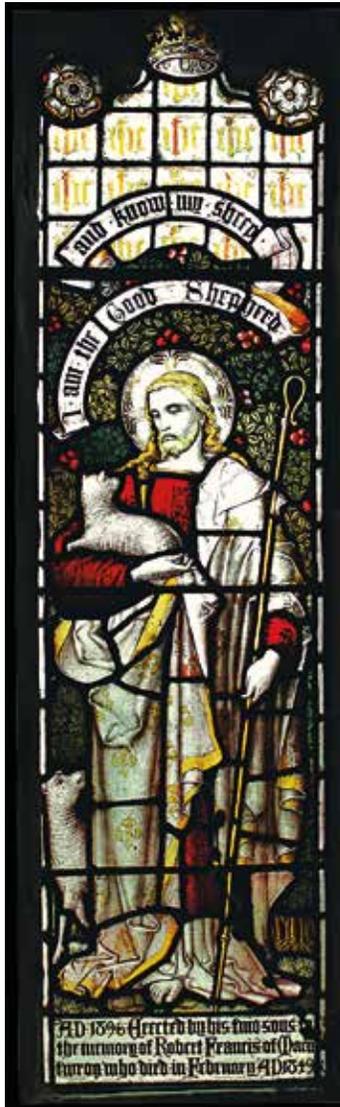
Communication requires two things: a sender and a receiver. The most powerful transmitter in the world is worthless if no one turns on a radio, and all of the radios in the world are of little use if no one is broadcasting.

The same holds true with human interaction. Someone has to send, someone else has to receive. If either one is missing, communication fails. Wives tend to understand this, since husbands tend to have their “radios” turned off a lot. Kids too, for that matter. And yet wives and moms just keep transmitting . . .

Why is this general topic so important? Because as Christians, you and I are in the communication business. That’s our job, that’s our calling, that’s our mission—and it ought to be our passion. When we listen to God’s Word, we are supposed to be the radios, receiving and actually *hearing* God’s message to us. But our life’s work is to be transmitters. In leaving us with His Great Commission, our Lord commanded us to center our lives upon the communication of the Gospel, which we all agree is the key to eternal life. The message we are to broadcast is very simple: Whoever believes that Jesus paid for the sins of the world through His sinless life and innocent death on the cross will be saved.

Understand that this is not part of our life’s work; this is our life.

It is the sum and substance. Failure in every other secular pursuit is as nothing if we but succeed in our calling to “go and make disciples” for Jesus Christ. You and I are supposed to be the “senders” of the information—the transmitters. If Christians fail in this critical mission, Gospel communication fails. No one is saved by what they don’t hear. If Gospel communication fails, it must never be the transmitters who fail. Our communication can take many forms. Our actions often speak louder than our words. But while our actions might make those around us curious, it is always and only the Word of God that can convert and save, for through that Word alone the Holy Spirit works.



Jesus, of course, was the master Communicator.

That means that whenever and whatever He communicated to us had a point and a purpose. It carried depth and wisdom. He used no pointless or “throw-away” words. That means that every word He spoke, every picture that He drew, every lesson that He taught deserves our careful study. So also, Jesus once said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11 ESV)

There are many things going on in those two simple sentences. A thorough analysis would fill pages, so we focus on just a few. First, if Jesus is the Shepherd, then we are the sheep. Sheep are stupid. Sheep are careless, helpless, and really good at getting themselves into predicaments from which they need to be rescued. I once heard a rancher explain how sheep, when attacked by a wolf, will run—but only until one of their flock is caught. They will then just stand and watch, until the wolf (which never tires of killing) looks for another victim.

That’s us, only we can’t even see our wolf, let alone defend ourselves. Our natural dilemma, once we come to realize the danger, is incapacitating and terrifying. We can only stand there, stupidly, waiting for our inevitable eternal destruction.

It’s then that our Good Shepherd enters the picture and places Himself between us and our terrifying enemy. More than that, our Good Shepherd “lays down his life for the sheep.” By His sacrificial death, He gives us life.

This is the simple, sublime message of the Gospel. This is what we have *received* from our God, and our life’s work is to communicate this life-giving truth to the world. The Good Shepherd has, once and for all, laid down His life for the sheep. Forgiveness and life are His gifts to mankind.

Michael Roehl is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bismarck, North Dakota.



Graduating to the Real World

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.” (Phil. 2:14-16)

Formal education is a time of preparation. That is the way it is seen in the world, and by Christians as well. We strive to prepare our young people for what is coming in life. Of course that includes preparing for a job, profession, or vocation. In the world it is seen as especially important that an education expose young people to new and different ways of thinking, challenge their values, and broaden their intellectual and cultural standards. The Christian educator would agree that it is important to open the eyes of the student to what is out there in the world; however, it may be with much more caution and far less blanket endorsement.

So it is at this time of year that our thoughts turn to those who have now successfully completed their course of instruction. The time has now come for them to move on—either to the next level of schooling or into that world about which they have heard so much, but from which they have been sheltered or restrained to one degree or another. So what is the Lord’s message for His children venturing out into the world? The counsel of the Apostle Paul in our text is appropriate for us all. We should recognize our responsibilities as children of God and fulfill those roles for which the Lord has prepared us, without complaining or arguing about it. We all should strive to live lives that are seen by those around us in the world as blameless and harmless. The point of this is not that we should be praised, but that we might shine as lights in a crooked and perverse world. It is that light that shines in our



hearts that distinguishes us from the world.

That light is the light of the glory of Christ. He came into the world to serve, to give His life for us “that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:14)

He paid for us with His holy and precious blood and freed us from the slavery of sin that still dominates this world. As Christian graduates leave the halls of academia and go out into the world, they need to go out armed with the knowledge of this truth so that they might continue to shine as lights in this sin-darkened world.

That leaves us with one important thought.

We have heard it time and again, but it still bears repeating: we all need to continue to learn. I heard a radio talk show host comment that people need to continue to read books in their field if they are serious about achieving success in their lives. This advice is doubly important for the child of God as he lives in this world. The Apostle Paul reminds us of our need to hold fast to the Word of life. No matter what our occupation may be, we need to remain well-versed in this Word of life for our vocation as children of God. Then we will continue always to shine as lights in this world, that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).



Theodore Barthels is pastor of St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Austin, Minnesota.

HYMN 436

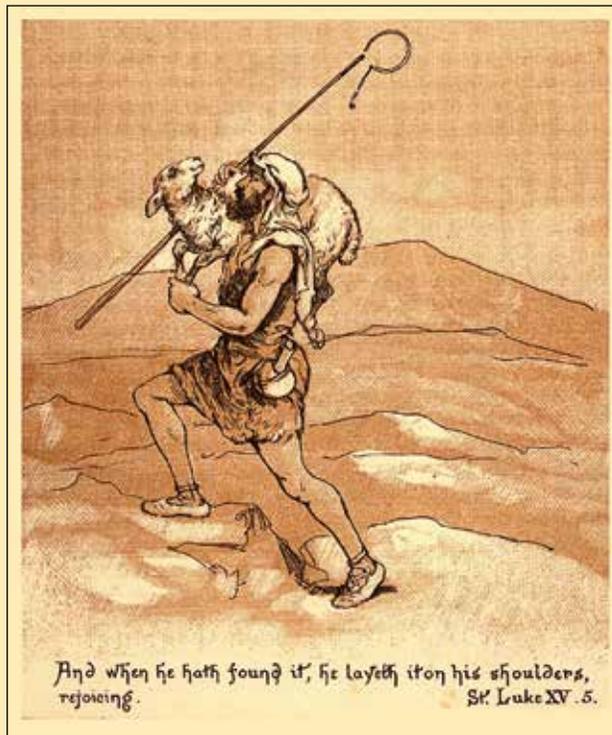
“The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want”

This hymn is a metrical translation of the 23rd Psalm—a psalm of comfort. Most psalms of comfort (for example, Psalm 91) speak words of comfort to believers, but Psalm 23 is different; it is the exuberant exclamation of a believer, joyous that he is a lamb of God, with Christ as his shepherd.

The key note (pun intended) to the entire hymn is the first clause, **“The Lord’s my shepherd.”** (verse 1) All else derives from that glorious truth. Say it with an exclamation point: “The LORD is my shepherd!” It is as if David is bragging, “Look at Who my shepherd is. It is the great God Almighty!”

What, then, are some of the results of the fact that it is God Himself Who cares for us even as a shepherd cares for his sheep? First of all, it means that **“I’ll not want.”** (verse 1) This lack of want is not an assertion of the false “prosperity gospel”—the lie that if we are abiding in God’s will, He will bless us with material wealth. The statement “I shall not want” cannot mean that the Christian will never undergo any kind of financial difficulty, emotional distress, sickness, or persecution. The Bible tells us otherwise. What, then, does it mean? Quite simply, it means that we can be confident that we are being well cared for both in good times and even in the midst of adverse circumstances, because we have the Good Shepherd’s promise to that effect.

Adding to the list of blessings, we sing, **“My soul He doth restore again.”** (verse 2) What are we to make of this? Believers sometimes suffer great tribulation of soul. King David, the human author of Psalm 23, knew that feeling. He wrote in Psalm 42:5, “Why are you cast down, O my soul, And why are you disquieted within me?” At such times, we may become despondent and despairing. We cannot



“pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps.” Shepherds know that sheep can become “cast,” or “cast down.” That happens when they are overly fat, or their fleece is very heavy and perhaps full of mud, if they lie down in a comfortable hollow in the ground. If the sheep rolls to its side, its center of gravity may shift to the point that it ends up on its back with its feet flailing the air. It then cannot get up. If the shepherd does not find and rescue it, it will die. Like that helpless “cast down” sheep that is saved by the watchful care of its shepherd, so also we must look to our Good Shepherd for our own “soul restoration” when we are downcast. We can’t do it on our

own. Our flagging spirits and burdened souls are restored as we rest confidently upon the promises and care of the Good Shepherd.

Verse three of this hymn turns from the sheep’s exclamation of joy at being under Jesus’ care to a direct address to the shepherd Himself. **“Yea, tho’ I walk in death’s dark vale, Yet will I fear no ill; For Thou art with me, and Thy rod/ And staff me comfort still.”** A shepherd’s rod is actually a club. It is a weapon of defense, used to protect the sheep from predators. The shepherd’s staff is a tool unique to the care of sheep. It is usually quite long and slender, with a crook at the end. With it, the shepherd guides his sheep in the best way for them and he pulls them away from danger such as snakes, poisonous plants, or cliffs. Through the rod of His Word and the staff of His Holy Spirit working through that Word, our Good Shepherd protects and guides us in all the circumstances of our lives, so that we also boast with David, “The LORD is my shepherd.”



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

Behind the Scenes

He is known to history as “Cyrus the Great”; born 590 B.C., died 529 B.C. A skilled military strategist, Cyrus united the tribes of Persia (modern-day Iran), defeated the Medes and Babylonians, extended the Persian Empire westward to Macedonia and eastward to India, and showed extraordinary compassion to the people he conquered. To this day, the Iranians celebrate Cyrus as the founder of their nation.

In Scripture, however, Cyrus is not known as “the great,” but as the “shepherd” and “anointed” of the Lord—appointed by God to free His people from Babylonian captivity, and to finance the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple.

More than a century before Cyrus was born, the Lord gave him his name and his assignment: “*He is My shepherd, and he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid.’*” (Isaiah 44:28)

The historical fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in 2 Chronicles 36:22-23: “*Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, ‘Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judea. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!’*”

Cyrus was the greatest ruler of his time. Yet, the Lord used this powerful, pagan monarch to serve His purposes in history; just as He used the Egyptian pharaoh to display His glory, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar to punish the rebellious Israelites, and Caesar Augustus to schedule



Are ruthless world leaders and crazed dictators controlling our history?

the census that led Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem where, according to Micah 5:2, the Savior was to be born.

In fact, as stated in Acts 4, God used even the unwitting Roman government and stubborn Jewish leaders to carry out His great plan of redemption in Jesus Christ: “*For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.*” (27-28)

You and I live in a frightening age, the final age of the earth, of which Paul wrote to Timothy, “*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come.*” (2 Timothy 3:1) Courtesy of 24-hour news cycles, cable TV, and worldwide internet access, our days and nights are filled with worrisome news: wars, riots, racism, hatred, terrorism, crime, financial distress, natural disasters.

On the surface, things may seem to be out of control. We may be tempted to wonder, “Who’s in charge here, anyway?” Are ruthless world leaders and crazed dictators controlling our history—names like Vladimir Putin, Bashar Assad, Kim Jong Un; or organizations like Al Qaeda, Hamas, ISIS, and the Muslim Brotherhood? The world once thought the same of names like Cyrus the Great, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Caesar.

But rest assured, Christian friends—to quote Jesus, “*Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*” (Luke 12:32) Almighty God is always controlling history, always working “behind the scenes” in infinite wisdom and power to fulfill His purposes, prosper His Gospel, and preserve His people.



Mark Weis is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Cape Coral, Florida.

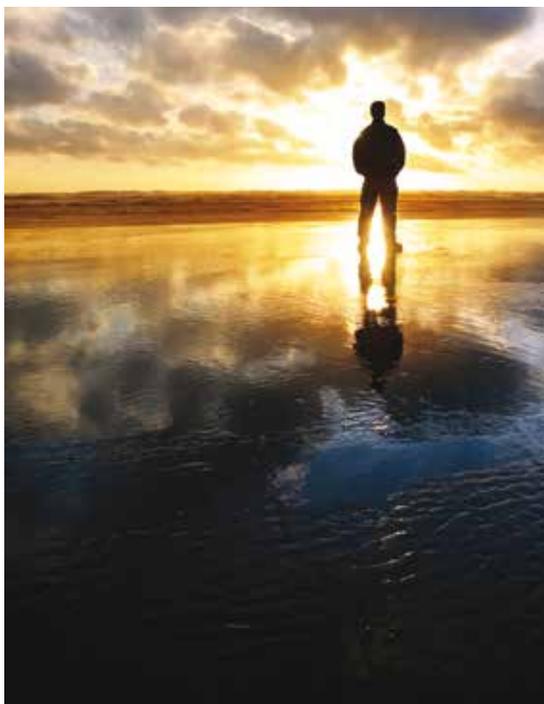
Confident in Christ

“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ‘For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.’ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” (Hebrews 10:35-39)

There are times in life when a lack of confidence seems altogether reasonable, if not expected. If an individual routinely shows up late or not at all for work, his employer will understandably lack confidence in his ability to hold a job. If a particular airline has a history of losing your luggage, you will not be able to travel with them confident that you and your clothing will both arrive at your destination at the same time. If a product on the market suffers from multiple recalls and poor reviews, consumers will not be confident in purchasing that product. In all of these examples, we are dealing with products made or services provided by fallen people in a fallen world. The confidence which is spoken of here in Hebrews is a confidence in a higher Person and a higher promise.

This topic of confidence comes up often in Hebrews. Hebrews 3:6 says that we are of the house of Christ *“if we hold fast the confidence . . . to the end.”* Hebrews 4:16 says that because Jesus is our truly perfect and sinless High Priest we may *“come boldly [confidently] to the throne of grace”* in prayer. And just prior to our text, in Hebrews 10:19, we are told that we can have *“boldness [confidence] to enter the Holiest through the blood of Jesus.”* Therefore the verses above speak of the confidence found in the perfect righteousness and blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanses us from all sin.

Why might someone be tempted to cast away such confidence? Well, the key word here is *tempted*. Every



Every temptation Satan hurls at us is designed to get us to cast away our confidence in Christ.

temptation Satan hurls at us is designed to get us to cast away our confidence in Christ, and he has quite an arsenal of temptations on hand to use for this very purpose. He assaults us inwardly by using false teachers, with their appeals to man-made authority or work-righteousness. These may cause us to question the authority and truth of God’s Word, or to doubt the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice. Satan attacks us outwardly using the world with its various forms of persecution, which may cause us to wonder if our faith is worth such suffering. And unfortunately, Satan has a willing partner in our own sinful flesh which says, *“Your faith gets so many poor reviews, and so many have rejected it. Don’t buy into something which inspires so little confidence among so many!”*

In reality, the confidence we should cast away is any confidence we might be tempted to find in these lies of

Satan, the world, and our own sinful flesh. They promise great rewards—but deliver only sin, death, and utter misery. In contrast, the promises of Jesus are absolutely sure because His actions of salvation back them up. He has redeemed us by His blood. He has overcome Satan, the world, sin, and death. Therefore we can be confident that He will deliver on His

promise of granting eternal life to *“those who believe to the saving of the soul.”*

Chad Seybt is pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Cheyenne, Wyoming.



In preparation for the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we are presenting a brief survey of the life of Martin Luther. The series will culminate in the October 2017 issue with an account of his posting of the Ninety-Five Theses.

Luther Begins Teaching: 1508-1509

Luther Martin, the Augustinian monk, became Father Martin. This was not something Martin desired; his fear of the tremendous majesty of God, especially as revealed in the mass, made him very reluctant. But he obeyed the command of his superiors, was ordained a priest on April 4, 1507, and celebrated his first mass a month later.

It was also contrary to the desire of Hans Luther (Martin's father), who, however, did attend this mass—coming with some ceremony with twenty mounted companions and a generous gift for the monastery. But during the feast that followed, when Martin said that he was called to become a monk by a voice from heaven, his father responded, "God grant that it wasn't a spook of the devil!"

Life did not change much for Martin.

It was back to his studies, this time to gain his Bachelor (and ultimately Doctor) of Theology degree. He applied himself with a will, devouring all the required texts. There were the scholastic authorities, such as Lombard and Aquinas, Occam and Scotus. Then there were the church fathers, ancient and medieval, especially Augustine and Bernard, but including many others. He absorbed history and pondered works of devotion. He was counseled by his teaching advisor, Dr. Nathin, to leave Scripture for later; but he followed the better advice of Staupitz, the head of his monastic order, and memorized it by the chapter. Midway through these studies he was assigned the added duty of lecturing.

Then, in the fall of 1508, he was sent to a new location, the fledgling university at Wittenberg. This was his first glimpse of this small and unimpressive town, which would later become his permanent home. He was to lecture on ethics

using the Greek philosopher Aristotle as his text. He was to do this while vigorously continuing the pursuit of his own studies.

This was not all as he would have chosen.

A letter he wrote from this period to Johann Braun survives. He spoke of the hard schedule and complained about being stuck with teaching philosophy, which didn't interest him very much; he would much rather have traded it for theology. And not just any theology, either, but that which "delves into the kernel of the nut, the core of the wheat, the marrow of the bones."

After a semester of this at Wittenberg, he had advanced far enough in his studies to be assigned the task of lecturing on the Bible. What he was assigned to teach and how he approached the subject is lost to us. No record has survived. A brief foretaste of things to come, it lasted only a semester. Recalled to Erfurt, he served as a junior professor and teaching assistant while still pursuing his degree. He would remain there for three semesters before returning to Wittenberg for good.

As this summary shows, we can trace Luther's activities and academic progress during this time, at least in broad outline. But what is there here to allow us to predict what he would become? His inner development can only be surmised as we look back upon his life. This hidden period of his life can perhaps be compared to the forty years Moses spent as a shepherd in the wilderness, or the three years Paul spent in Arabia after his escape over the walls of Damascus. God prepares His servants quietly for important work ahead. Luther was diligently preparing for a career as a teaching monk and trying to find personal assurance in the midst of his own doubts. All the while, God was preparing him to reform His church.

Norman Greve is pastor of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Iron River, Michigan.



Ministry to India's Lepers

Several years ago on a Mission Helper trip to India, I was riding with Pastor Moses, one of the district chairmen, on the back of his motorcycle. We rode past a large billboard that read, "Leprosy is a treatable disease." My first thought was, "There are lepers here?!"

Leprosy is something we often read about in the Bible, but for most of us it is not something that we ever see. Modern multi-drug therapy has made leprosy (Hansen's disease) rare in the western world, but it still has not been eradicated in India. In a recent plea to the central government to work toward the elimination of leprosy, advocate Pankaj Sinha claimed that 125,000 people are infected with it each year.

Even with effective treatment, by the time the bacteria is stopped, a person has often been disfigured in some way. Even though Hansen's disease is not really very contagious, lepers are stigmatized and ostracized and confined to leper colonies, which usually surround a leprosy hospital. Here the Berea Evangelical Lutheran Church (BELC), which is affiliated with the CLC, works in two such leper colonies.

One colony has a population of approximately five thousand. Pastor John Paul has been serving the BELC congregation in this colony since 2007. There are around seventy-five adults and twenty-five children who attend this church. The church does not have its own building, so the believers meet in the courtyard and veranda of one of the houses.

Pastor Augustin serves the BELC congregation in the other leper colony. This colony has a population of over one thousand, and there are forty-seven members in this church.

Each Christmas, Project KINSHIP provides funds for a special Christmas celebration at these two churches. At these celebrations we give the people a small gift of clothing and food. This small gesture means a great deal to these people who have so little and whom the world would rather



forget. When Jesus touched the leper in Matthew 8:3, it may seem like a small thing to us, but think of how much it must have meant to the leper who had to avoid all human contact. The clothing and food we give is a small way that we touch the lives of these people, a people who are considered untouchable. And it shows them that they are part of a much greater fellowship of believers. It shows them that they have brothers and sisters on the other side of the world who care about them.

Most importantly, however, at these celebrations and at every service, the people hear about the far greater gift God has given all of us: the salvation we have through Jesus Christ. Today we can look to modern medicine to cure physical leprosy, but only the blood of Jesus can cure a person from the leprosy of sin. These two pastors, along with

all the pastors in the BELC, work each week to call people to Calvary's holy mountain to find the spiritual healing and eternal life that only Jesus brings.

District Chairman Moses would like to start an orphanage for children affected by leprosy. Orphans are already disadvantaged; leprosy orphans are doubly so. Because the believers here are very poor, funding such an orphanage is a big challenge, and adequate funds are not currently available. Pray that the Lord would provide the means to start this orphanage.

There are so many who need to hear about their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Pray that the light of the Gospel would shine forth and bring salvation not only in these colonies, but also in every village in India.



Peter Evenson is a CLC foreign missionary. He lives in Chennai, India.

St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church Bismarck, North Dakota

Now on the prairie often comes early—and sideways. Once it finally reaches the ground it keeps tumbling and swirling until it finds a low spot or depression, and there it finally comes to rest. In the late fall of 1992, that resting place was the basement of the then-under-construction church and parsonage of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bismarck, North Dakota. It was only October, but prairie folk are used to that sort of thing. Then it warmed a bit, rained, and got cold again, covering everything with a shiny half inch of ice. Not to be deterred, the members shinnied along the trusses chipping ice off every one of the rafters so they could install the roof decking. But that still left a basement full of snow—which they then shoveled up to the ground-floor level and from there out the nearest window.



Such was the determination and resolve that the Lord granted to the earliest members of St. Paul congregation, along with their shepherd, Pastor Warren Fanning. With the congregation taking on virtually every aspect of the construction that local building codes would allow them to perform, slowly but surely the “little house on the prairie” was completed and dedicated in the spring of 1993. CLC members from neighboring congregations were regular volunteer laborers, all under the watchful supervision of contractor Jack Mayhew, a member of Grace Lutheran Church of Valentine, Nebraska.



Two years later, in 1995, Pastor Fanning accepted a call to Holy Trinity of West



Top: former pastor Warren Fanning;
above: founding member Hal Klausnitzer.



Top: 2002 expansion underway;
above: remodeled sanctuary after expansion.

Columbia, South Carolina, and the congregation called its current shepherd, Pastor Michael Roehl.

Though first constructed “out in the country,” the City of Bismarck rapidly enveloped the property, and it is now bordered by one of the busiest thoroughfares in the city. The blessed result is a steady stream of visitors, on an almost weekly basis. The location proved to be a great blessing for another reason. The congregation had wisely purchased three acres of land, which quickly appreciated in value. As the congregation outgrew the original facility, two of the three acres were sold at a substantial profit to help finance capital improvement, including a major expansion project in 2002. Again the members took on the work themselves, and again under the supervision of Mr. Mayhew. Both the original building project and the later expansion were made possible, in part, by loans from the CLC’s Church Extension Fund. The current facility was completed and dedicated in 2003.



Above: first construction finished in 1993; left: St. Paul Lutheran Church today.

The first group of CLC members struggled for many years, unsuccessfully, to establish and grow their own congregation. Then, in His wisdom and mercy and according to His plan, the Lord provided what was needed to

grant the long-standing prayer of His children in Bismarck to finally have their own church home. He did so first of all by providing a local shepherd when Pastor Fanning, for reasons of doctrine and conscience, left his former church affiliation in Bismarck and joined the CLC through colloquy in 1989. The group now had a pastor and a core group of members. What they lacked was a facility.

As is common to such start-ups, the group worshiped in whatever space they could find—members' homes, the basements of two bank buildings, an electric cooperative, and others. Once again, the Lord heard their prayer and answered it in amazing fashion. One of the founding members, Mr. Paul Blumhardt, worked as the city forester. He heard that the City of Bismarck was selling parcels of land that they owned on the northeast corner of the city. Despite the very reasonable asking price, the decision to buy the property required great faith on the part of the members of St. Paul. They were much encouraged and aided by the membership of the CLC, which had granted mission status to the congregation in 1988. The rest, as they say, is history.

What the members of this congregation would like to share with their brothers and sisters in the CLC, especially those struggling to establish their own congregation, is encouragement through what the Lord has accomplished through and for them. The struggle may be long and difficult, but the Lord of the harvest certainly hears our prayers. The congregation here is now turning its gaze outward, seeking how they might help others, as they were once helped. And so grows the Lord's Church.

Michael Roehl is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Bismarck, North Dakota.



The most recent addition was a beautiful church organ purchased through CLC member Barry Hay, a member of Faith Lutheran Church of Markesan, Wisconsin. That instrument was dedicated to the glory of our Lord in 2016.

Surely the Lord has richly blessed this gathering of His children. Membership is now 106 souls, with an average attendance of around 50. The congregation continues to carry forward the mantra first coined by Pastor Fanning: "Everyone does something around here." The near-term goal is to retire the congregation's Church Extension Fund mortgage within the next two years, and the congregation is hopeful that they might someday open their own Christian Day School, all as the Lord wills. Visitors have commented that St. Paul is one of the "most visiting congregations they have ever seen." It is a group that struggles to make church the center of their lives, rather than just a small part. Several member families drive as far as ninety miles one way to attend weekly services. It is not uncommon for a substantial number of members to still be visiting in the fellowship hall an hour after the end of services.

While all of this is true (for which we thank and praise our Lord), the process of establishing and growing an orthodox Christian congregation in the Bismarck area has certainly not been without struggle and hardship. Nothing came quickly, and nothing easily. The congregation was originally founded by two groups, the first a core group of area CLC families that were faithfully served by CLC pastors from neighboring congregations in Jamestown and Bowdle. The second group was a blessed influx of Christians from another church body. This second part of what would become St. Paul Lutheran Church was composed of those who, recognizing the errors of their former church body, dropped their former memberships and began worshiping at what was then a preaching station in Bismarck.

"How do Lutherans differ from other churches on the Lord's Supper?"

For Luther, there were three questions about the Lord's Supper that needed to be addressed.

Generally speaking, all Christian churches fall into one of three categories: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed/Protestant. Though they share some teachings in common (think: Apostles' Creed), there is disagreement in others, such as conversion, the natural condition of mankind, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and so forth.

For Luther, there were three questions about the Lord's Supper that needed to be addressed. The answers needed to come not from church dogma or human reason, but from Scripture alone. These three questions flushed out critical differences among the three groups.

1. What is the Lord's Supper? Luther answered,

"It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, given to us Christians under the bread and wine to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ Himself."

(see Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

How does the Catholic Church answer the question? They say that the bread and wine are *changed into* the body and blood of Christ once the priest blesses them.

Most Reformed/Protestant churches answer, "Since Jesus has bodily ascended to heaven, receiving His body and blood in Communion is not possible. Therefore, you receive merely a *symbol* of His body and blood in a spiritual, but not physical, way."

Luther did not argue. He simply stuck to Scripture. Does God have the power to give us His body and blood "in, with, and under" the bread and wine? Yes. Does the Bible tell us that we eat bread and drink wine, but receive the body and blood? Yes. Does the bread *turn into* His body, and the wine into His blood? No, that is not what Scripture says.

2. What purpose does the Lord's Supper serve?

Luther taught that the sacraments are pure Gospel.

"The words, 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,' show us that God gives forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation through the sacrament."

Reformed/Protestant churches, in general, teach that the Lord's Supper is not a sacrament, but an ordinance; not Gospel, but Law; not something God does for us, but something we do for God.

The Catholic Church lists the Lord's Supper as a sacrament, but for them, it is really a sacrifice that the priest offers for the sins of those who commune. That means that the sacrifice Jesus made "*once for all*," (Hebrews 10:10) was not really once and for all.

3. How can eating and drinking do such great things? Luther:

"Eating and drinking actually do nothing. It is the words, 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins' which do this. These words, together with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main part of the sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: forgiveness of sins."

Most Reformed/Protestant churches would say that the eating and drinking mean nothing because the benefit is symbolic anyway. The Catholic Church would say that the eating and drinking mean everything. The mere fact that you receive the sacrament has value, even apart from faith.

By letting the simple words of Scripture speak, Luther recognized the amazing treasure that God gives us in Holy Communion. To souls weary with sin or struggling with guilt and regrets, Jesus does more than tell us of His forgiveness and love. He lets us taste it personally with our own mouths.

When you see the Communion set on the altar, prepare yourself for an astounding miracle. Penitent sinners are soon to dine in the presence of God Himself (Exodus 24:3-11). He

comes, not with the hammer of the Law, but with the pure Gospel of grace.

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



“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS MAY 2017

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

Date	Verse	Reading	Comments
May 1	WS 727; LSB 697	1 Thessalonians 4:1-12	You are already living to please God, but now I urge you to do it more and more, for this is the will of God Who loves you.
May 2	TLH 603	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	The dead will surely rise, and here are some details as to how it will happen. What encouragement for us!
May 3	TLH 201	Mark 16:1-8	The women weren't expecting Jesus to rise, but He did just as He said. So also we will rise just as He has said.
May 4	WS 759	Mark 16:9-20	Jesus' post-resurrection appearances are additional proof for us that He lives again.
May 5	WS 730	Psalms 150	Praise God for His acts of power, especially the raising of His Son from the dead!
May 6	WS 783	Psalms 23	The LORD is my Shepherd.
May 8	TLH 436	Daniel 3:1-12	The three served their Good Shepherd, and Him alone.
May 9	TLH 368	Daniel 3:13-25	The Good Shepherd is with His people in the day of trouble.
May 10	TLH 435	Daniel 3:26-30	No other Shepherd can save the way our Good Shepherd can.
May 11	TLH 434	Proverbs 31:1-9	As Jesus defended us in our weakness, we stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves (the unborn, children, and others).
May 12	TLH 625	Proverbs 31:10-24	A wife of noble character who shows true love for her family is worth far more than all the world's wealth.
May 13	WS 790; LSB 855	Proverbs 31:25-31	Let husbands and children praise God for giving them Christian wives and mothers. Let them show her their appreciation for her work.
May 15	TLH 624	1 Peter 3:1-7	Peter teaches us about true beauty as well as the God-given roles of husbands and wives in the family.
May 16	TLH 414; LSB 844	1 Peter 3:8-16	In your hearts set Christ apart as Lord, for He hears your prayers; and in your living be good to all people.
May 17	WS 731	1 Peter 3:17-22	After His resurrection, Christ proclaimed His victory over Satan, sin, and death in front of the evil spirits themselves.
May 18	TLH 188; LSB 671	John 10:1-10	Jesus came to give us "life to the full," a life that will never end.
May 19	TLH 192	John 10:11-21	Jesus laid down His life for us on the cross—accepting the punishment we deserved for our sins—and then He took it up again!
May 20	WS 785	John 10:22-42	They set out to kill Him because He claimed to be God—which, of course, He was—and no one can snatch us from His hand.
May 22	WS 773	Matthew 28:1-10	An Easter Mission Festival: The women were to begin telling the good news of the resurrection right away.
May 23	TLH 189	Matthew 28:11-15	The enemies of Jesus lost no time in opposing the Gospel of the resurrection, just as they do today.
May 24	WS 735	Matthew 28:16-20	Not just the women at the tomb, but all of us take the Easter message into all the world.
May 25	WS 757	Acts 1:1-11	Although they would no longer see Him visibly, Jesus' Spirit would give the disciples boldness to witness.
May 26	TLH 489; LSB 489	Acts 1:12-26	In preparation for the day of Pentecost, the disciples prayed together, and a new apostle, called by Christ (v. 24), replaced Judas.
May 27	TLH 218; LSB 494	Psalms 110	The Lord Jesus Christ stands victorious over all His enemies.
May 29	TLH 443; LSB 849	John 6:1-15	Jesus took care of the crowd's hunger, but the miracle served the preaching of the Word, which was His first priority.
May 30	TLH 219	John 6:16-24	Looking for a "bread king," the crowd pursued Jesus, but He had left to help His believing children in the boat.
May 31	TLH 275	John 6:25-59	When the crowd caught up to Him, He told what the true Bread from Heaven was: Himself. To "eat" this Bread (believe in Him) is to live!

This series profiles the men and women who are preparing for the public teaching and preaching ministry at our Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Stefan Sonnenfeld

Age: 31

Program: Seminary

Year in School: Senior

Where were you born? La Crosse, Wisconsin

Where did you grow up?

Winona, Minnesota. I also lived in Fargo, North Dakota, for four years after I got married.

Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family.

I have been married to Sarah Sonnenfeld (née Naumann) for eight years. She is a pharmacist. We have two children—Ingrid (two and a half) and Elijah (nine months).

What hobbies, sports, or extracurriculars interest you?

Golf, reading, cooking, watching football and old movies.

Tell us one thing about yourself that most people don't know.

I probably have the record for the shortest ILC flag football career—two and a half games. I was also probably the oldest rookie, at twenty-seven.

Which academic subjects especially interest you?

Dogmatics, Hebrew, Greek, Church History

How did you first come to consider the public teaching or preaching ministry as a career?

I had a good relationship with my childhood pastor, and admired his job. I didn't know that I wanted to do it until my freshman year of high school, when I figured I should put my Latin to good use (little did I know that Latin was not required at ILC!). Spending time shadowing pastors in subsequent years reinforced my excitement for spreading the Gospel in the preaching ministry, and years of study in pre-theology cemented my desire to remain in God's Word and to teach and preach it to others.

What have you appreciated most about your time at ILC?

When I first came to ILC, I had been a CLC member for a little less than five years. I hardly knew anybody and was intimidated by the close ties that so many people have with others. ILC was a quick way to get to know people from all over the CLC. It's been great to become familiar with my brothers and sisters in Christ both locally and abroad. Also, after a few years spent outside of a Christian



school, it's been wonderful to once again delve into God's Word on a daily basis with my fellow believers. ILC's great strength is the faculty's God-given ability to excite students who want to pursue the public ministry by showing the great blessings God gives through the preaching and teaching of His Word.

What qualities do you think will most be needed by the future leaders of the church?

Though it's been nearly two thousand years since the apostle Paul wrote the pastoral handbook for Timothy (1 Timothy), Paul's inspired advice to that young pastor is still the standard for today's leaders in the church. *"Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. . . . Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."* (1 Timothy 4:12-13,15-16) The "bottom line" is that a leader of the church must remain in the Word, and all that he does must stem from the true doctrine of sin and grace and our justification through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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

Mini Classes!

Immanuel Lutheran High School and College students got a break from routine classwork this February during a three-day event known as "Mini Classes." It's a tradition that was introduced nearly twenty years ago by Professor Ronald Roehl.

From Wednesday through Friday, February 15-17, students were invited to select from over sixty intriguing "mini classes." Classes were presented on subjects as diverse as sign language, automobile maintenance, wood-burning, and ice fishing. Each ninety-minute class was a stand-alone unit, with a goal of giving enrollees experience in a hobby, skill, or occupation that they might wish to pursue in the future.

For example, those with a curiosity about the construction trades got hands-on training in skills like house framing, electrical wiring, and the installation of siding. Those who like cooking could check out classes in pie-making, pizza baking, and stir fry. Fine-arts offerings included watercolor painting, voice, acting, dance, photography, and cross-stitch.

An introduction to engineering was offered, with a survey of computer-aided design and an off-campus trip to see how a computer numerical control (CNC) machine works. In the sporting arena there were classes in badminton, soccer, golf, bowling, skating, disc golf, and weightlifting; with some of the participants making excursions to off-campus facilities.

Photos, clockwise from top left: Professor Em. Ronald Roehl teaches wood burning; Messiah member Tim Noeldner teaches household wiring; students lead a class in western line dancing; Professor Mark Kranz and his class on ice fishing; a student in the pizza-making class.



There was one session of mini classes with a specifically spiritual focus. These classes included Christian apologetics, Biblical Hebrew, how to survive college as a Christian, witnessing, Christian music, and others. A career fair, attended by all the high school students, was Thursday afternoon's centerpiece.

Some mini classes were taught by instructors from the ILC faculty, some by older students, and some by members of Messiah/Eau Claire and other CLC churches who volunteered their unique skills in widely-varying fields of expertise.

Mini classes have enjoyed a broad popularity among ILC students over the years, serving as something of a respite in the long, wintry stretch between the Christmas and spring breaks.



Paul Naumann is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and editor of the *Lutheran Spokesman*.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

In Case You Forgot

Why We Needed the Reformation . . .

Last month several Catholic bishops proclaimed official “dispensations” to members of their diocese so that they could eat corned beef on St. Patrick’s Day without sinning. This year the celebration fell on March 17, a Friday. Catholics over age 14 are required by the church to abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent, but many bishops this year reversed the rule for that day only. Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul explained to members, “When you get a dispensation . . . you should do penance on another occasion. So, it’s like a get-out-of-jail-free card, but you have to pay sometime.” Zimmerman, Carol. “Corned beef conundrum: Some dioceses give St. Patrick’s Day dispensation.” *News. Catholic News Service*, 27 Feb. 2017. Web. 28 Feb. 2017.

Decline in Church Membership Caused by Lower Birthrates.

Why are there fewer people in church? Hint: it’s not the music or the liturgy or which translation of the Bible you use. The answer may be as simple as demographics—the fact that Americans are having far fewer children, and having them later in life. In two extensive studies commissioned by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, a direct correlation was shown between lower U.S. birthrates and sharply declining church membership. Among the findings: **the Missouri Synod now baptizes fewer than one-quarter as many children as they did in the 1960s.** For the first time, the number of adult confirmations has surpassed child baptisms (though adult confirmations are declining as well). The synod has lost over 20% of its membership since the 1970s, half the loss coming in the last fifteen years. One in ten synod

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2017 Minnesota Delegate Conference

Faith Lutheran Church, New Ulm, Minnesota
June 4th, 3:00 P.M.

—Submitted by Secretary Neil Aymond

2017 West Central Delegate Conference

Grace Lutheran Church, Valentine, Nebraska
May 31-June 1

Agenda:

- Being Mindful of the Inherent and Often Subtle Errors in Reformed Material—Lakewood Delegate
- Using Social Media to Preach the Gospel—Pastor Chad Seybt
- How Should the Christian Respond to the Government’s Intrusion on the Authority of the Family?—Sioux Falls Delegate
- How Ought the Predominance of the Gospel be Manifested in Our Preaching Ministry?—Pastor Delwyn Maas
- Keeping our Presentation of the Gospel Gratuitous and Maintaining a Proper Presentation of Sanctification —Pastor Michael Roehl
- Devotional Presentation of a Minor Prophet—Pastor James Naumann
- Dealing with the Coarseness of Popular Culture in Our Day—Lemmon Delegate

- Comparing the Events in the Book of Judges to Today’s Society—Pastor John Klatt
 - Conference Chaplain—Pastor Mark Gullerud
 - Communion Service Speaker—Pastor Thomas Schuetze
- Submitted by Secretary, Pastor Chad Seybt

2017 Great Lakes Delegate Conference

Faith Lutheran Church, Coloma, Michigan June 5-6 (start time on the 5th, 10:00 A.M. Eastern)

Agenda:

- Changes in Procedures & Practices in Church Discipline in Recent Years —Pastor Mark Bernthal
 - Making Better Use of the Gifts and Talents of the Women in Our Congregations—Pastor Michael Wilke
 - End of Life Decisions—Pastor Andrew Schaller
 - Conference Chaplain—Professor Steven Sippert
 - Communion Service Speaker—Professor Paul Schaller
- Submitted by Secretary, Teacher David Bernthal

elementary schools closed in the last five years. According to the studies, however, confessional Lutherans are not alone – even more severe demographic losses have afflicted the mainline denominations. Hawley, George. “A District-Level Examination of Demographic Trends.” *The Journal of Lutheran Mission* Dec. 2016:1ff. Print.

“Pastors” Hold Ecumenical Service to Bless New D.C. Abortion Clinic.

In January, two dozen religious leaders from the Washington, D.C. area held an ecumenical prayer service to bless and dedicate Planned Parenthood’s newest abortion facility in that

city. The event featured leaders from different Christian denominations, a rabbi, abortion providers, Hindu priests, and a Muslim imam (over Skype). The service included prayer, visual art, an all-female percussion troupe, and liturgical dance. “In almost every message to our staff, I talk about our doing sacred work,” said Dr. Laura Meyers, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington. “This confirms the sacredness of the work we do.” Kurzius, Rachel. “More Than 20 Faith Leaders Bless Planned Parenthood’s New D.C. Clinic.” *News. DCist.com*, 10 Jan. 2017. Web. 28 Feb. 2017.