

April 2019 VOL 61 NO. 10

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



HE IS RISEN



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Risen with Christ!

“Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

(Romans 6:3-4)

Baptists and others like to ask, “When were you saved?” They like to be able to point to a specific time and experience when they “accepted” Christ and committed themselves to follow Him. A friend in Northern Ireland recently gave me a good response to that question. When he is asked, “When were you saved?” he responds, “About two thousand years ago.”

We were not saved by some decision we made or by committing our life to Christ. We were saved by Christ’s death and resurrection alone. When Christ died, we died. Jesus bore all the pain, suffering and shame of our death for us, and by faith we have received all the benefits of His death. So when we celebrate Jesus’ resurrection, we are also celebrating our own resurrection.

Now we have a totally new and glorious life. We died to sin. We died to the Law. Now we live with and for Christ. We have been raised with Him to “walk in newness of life.” It is a glorious, joyful life with God.

We cannot describe that new life any better than God Himself did when He inspired Paul to write Colossians 3:1-17. Read these words slowly, thinking of how this is your new life, for you are risen with Christ.

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth:

fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

**We were not saved
by some decision
we made or by
committing our
life to Christ.**

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor

free, but Christ is all and in all.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”



Risen with Christ! What a glorious life that is. Rejoice! And enjoy

Your Risen Life!

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

Answering for Themselves

Jeslyn just looked at me. I had some very important questions for her, but she gave no answer. “Do you renounce the devil and all his wicked works and all his ways?” Obviously, that is a question to which you would hope to hear an unambiguous “YES!” answer. But, Jeslyn said nothing—she just looked at me.

Why the silence to such an important question? Well, Jeslyn was three weeks old. Her parents had brought her to be baptized in the name of the Triune God. As a three-week-old, of course, she couldn’t answer for herself the questions that have traditionally been asked as part of our Lutheran order of Baptism. So at her Baptism her parents were asked to answer for the child.

For many of us, being brought to the baptismal font as an infant was the beginning of our Christian journey of faith. When we were baptized in the name of the Triune God, the Almighty put His name on us and said, “*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine.*” (Isaiah 43:1)

After Baptism, Christian parents strive to be diligent in raising their children in the Christian faith. From home devotions, to worship services, to Sunday school and, if possible, a Christian day school, Christian parents want to do everything they can to fulfill the second part of Christ’s Great Commission by “*teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.*” (Matthew 28:20)

About the sixth or seventh grade, parents will begin to enlist the help of their pastor in training up their children in the Christian faith through catechism class. Using Martin Luther’s summary of Bible teachings as a guide, the child is taken through the basics of the Bible and the Christian faith.

Then, after two or three years of instruction, those traditional questions that were once asked at Baptism are asked again. This time, after hearing and learning God’s Word, that young person is ready to answer for himself whether he renounces the devil, believes in the Triune God, and holds to the teachings of the Bible. In doing so, this

young person “*confirms*” that what his parents said for him at his Baptism is what he himself believes.

Although the rite of confirmation is not commanded in Scripture, it is a fine Lutheran tradition that gives Christian young people the opportunity to stand up before the congregation and profess their faith in Jesus publicly. It is one way in which the confirmand may “*give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.*” (1 Peter 3:15)

Confirmation is also a great blessing for the entire congregation. It gives each of our members the opportunity to reflect on their own Baptism and confirmation. The blessings which Christ shared with this young person in Baptism, He has also shared with you. You both were covered with Jesus’ holiness as you were “*baptized into Christ*” and have “*put on Christ.*” (Galatians 3:27) In Baptism, Christ “*sanctified and cleansed*” you by the washing of the water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26). Both you and this confirmand were instructed in the same Christian faith from the Bible. You both share the same faith and confess it openly. “*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Jeslyn still has about eleven years to go before she’s ready to answer for herself. Until then, may the Lord help her and all His baptized children grow in Christ. This spring, as those confirmands stand nervously before the congregation, ready to answer for themselves questions about God and their faith, we will give thanks for the good work that has been begun in them by the Holy Spirit and pray that they, with us, will remain faithful to our Lord and this Christian faith, even unto death. May the Holy Spirit help each of us

to always be ready to answer for ourselves about the hope that is within us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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

Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain

Because of editing deadlines, I am writing this Easter piece for the *Spokesman* today, though Easter itself lies many weeks in the future. Looking out my office window, I see nothing but snow, the thermometer stands at -9° F, and most schools in the state are closed for the next two days. It's the end of January, and all anyone is talking about right now is winter. Can there be an Easter hymn somewhere in all this?

One line in particular came to mind from the second verse of a very old hymn by John of Damascus. It dates from the eighth century: **“All the winter of our sins, / Long and dark, is flying from His light. . . .”** So there it is, Easter springing from the depths of a polar vortex!

It's not altogether uncommon for poetry and literature to picture our struggle under the curse of sin as living in a cold winter. If you've ever read *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis, you've read of the fictional land of Narnia where, under the power of the White Witch, it was “always winter but never Christmas.” The only way the spell could be broken was for the great Lion to give up his life at a place called the Stone Table—and then to rise again from the dead. Now, Lewis wasn't spinning a mere children's story, of course; he was illustrating man's bondage to sin and the only escape from it, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The “winter of our sins” is felt by us all.

We try to do what is right, but we cannot do it. We want to do what is good, but so many times we fall into evil instead. We love our God and trust what is sent from His gracious hand, and yet we still doubt and question His decisions and His timing about so many things. Our sinful natures cling to us and will not let go, and we can feel trapped—as we might on a frozen winter's day—unable to get out, unable to be free.

The light of Easter, however, means escape.

Our Savior's resurrection on the third day is the proof that the debt we owed to God for all our sins has been fully paid, and we are not reckoned as guilty any longer. The apostle Paul wrote it like this to the Romans: *“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”* (4:25 NIV84) As the light of an Easter dawn beams above the horizon, sin loses its power over us. It loses its power to condemn us and even its power to tempt us when it tries to stand head-to-head with Jesus' empty tomb.

When John of Damascus wrote *Come, Ye Faithful, Raise the Strain*, he based it on Exodus 15, Moses' song of praise after the Israelites had escaped the clutches of Pharaoh in Egypt. By our Lord's rising, we too have been released from our slavery to sin. The cold winter is gone, and the signs of spring are obvious: joy and peace in believing (see Romans 15:13). **“But today amidst Thine own / Thou didst stand, bestowing / That Thy peace which evermore / Passeth human knowing.”**

By the time you read this, you may hardly remember the sub-zero days of the deep January winter, but that's all right. Let's put away the sin from which we have been freed and delight in our risen Lord, singing,

**Come, ye faithful, raise the strain /
Of triumphant gladness; /
God hath brought His Israel /
Into joy from sadness.**



David Schaller is pastor of Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sister Lakes, Michigan. He also prepares the “Bread of Life” devotions for the *Lutheran Spokesman*.



John of Damascus, 675-749

Preparing A Chamber

Circuit-riding should not be totally unknown to us. Modern competition cowboys ride circuits as well as horses and bulls. Judges in the sparsely populated Old West traveled their circuits of responsibility. And so did some pastors in earlier days, when congregations or preaching stations outnumbered them.

One story passed down by my uncle had to do with a pastor traveling his circuit of congregations. With no hotels available, the man would stay at the homes of parishioners. On one occasion he was welcomed by a couple not well-known by him. But they were hospitable and willingly shared what they had. At bedtime they directed him to his room. Awaking at sunrise, the pastor was shocked to find that all three of them (pastor, husband, husband's wife) were sleeping in the same bed. One bed was all they had, and they shared it.

One gets the impression that the Prophet Elisha was such a circuit-riding prophet, as gleaned from 2 Kings 4:8-11. His travels evidently brought him often or occasionally to the village of Shunem, where the king of Israel had his summer palace.

Shunem was also the home of a notable woman and her husband. That lady constrained the prophet to dine with them whenever he was in town. She also saw another need—sleeping accommodations. So she persuaded her husband to remodel their house, thereby providing a furnished room for the prophet. Thus, whenever Elisha traveled there, he had his own private room and bed on which to sleep.

The notable lady was rewarded for her kindness beyond her wildest expectations. Formerly barren, she conceived and bore a son. And years later, when the son suddenly died, God, through Elisha, raised him back to life.

How are we doing in the chamber-preparing department? The Shunammite woman had already prepared one such chamber before the one in her house. And that was in her heart, for she confessed Elisha to be “a holy man of God.”

And that is what made her such a great and notable woman: her God-given faith.

That faith had consequences—for her and for us. In fact, Jesus taught the great connection and result between faith, love, and keeping His Word. “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (John 14:23) A few verses earlier Jesus had spoken of the Spirit of truth coming to and also dwelling within His disciples on a permanent basis. So Luther prayed, in his familiar Christmas hymn, that the dear Lord Jesus would make within his heart “A quiet chamber kept for Thee.” (85:13 TLH).



Elisha Raising the Son of the Shunamite
by Frederic Leighton (1830 - 1896)

Once that quiet chamber is prepared, the believer is compelled to build another or even many other chambers. The writer to the Hebrews exhorted, “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some have unwittingly entertained angels.” (Hebrews 15:2) Surely Abraham had prepared a chamber of hospitality for his heavenly visitors. So also Lydia in Philippi

constrained St. Paul and his co-workers to stay at her house. Many CLC families have welcomed delegates, pastors, and teachers into their homes. Faith must speak; faith must build and prepare chambers of kindness and hospitality. Indeed, Jesus taught that, in the Final Judgment, such fruits will give evidence of saving faith.

We proclaim not a “prosperity gospel,” but a “blessedness Gospel.” For blessed are those who hear, believe, and do God’s Word (Luke 11:28). The Shunammite woman was blessed with a son conceived, born, and raised again. Our blessings might include everything from children and joy to wisdom, confidence, greater faith, good health, and long life. But the greatest will be our own resurrection to eternal glory, where we will live in the heavenly room Jesus has prepared for us.



David Fuerstenau is pastor of Holy Truth Lutheran Church in Ketchikan, Alaska.

Persevere

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

(Hebrews 13:7 ESV)

The Hebrew Christians who were initially addressed in the book of Hebrews were experiencing persecutions from the Jews for their Christian faith. So severe was this opposition that they were tempted to renounce their newfound beliefs, revert back to the Law-oriented Judaism, and harden their hearts against the Holy Spirit. This would have been eternally disastrous (see Hebrews 6:4-6).

In order to bolster their spirits, the writer gave the Hebrews many examples of Old Testament believers whom God blessed with strength of heart to remain in the faith to the very end (see Hebrews 11), who received the crown of everlasting life.

Now, in Hebrews 13:7, the Hebrew Christians were directed to contemporary religious leaders. These spokesmen of God provided the persecuted ones with indispensable help.

The Hebrews were exhorted to keep in mind exemplary leaders who delivered to them the pure Word of God. It is through that Word that the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith, and helps us fend off temptations to abandon it.

These spiritual guides also had been faced with religious persecution. And by the grace of God they held firm to the faith in the face of opposition. Bringing these faithful ones to remembrance, the Hebrews were exhorted to imitate them.

They were also instructed to consider the final outcome of those who died in the faith. This would help them realize what was at stake. Those who keep the faith are eternally blessed in heaven, whereas those who fall away lose the gift of eternal life.

Some of those leaders that come to mind are Stephen and the apostles who suffered martyrdom (according to tradition, only one apostle—John—died a natural death).

In the case of Stephen, who was stoned to death by the Jews, the Holy Spirit helped him by blessing him with a glimpse of heaven, beholding the glory of God and Jesus

standing at the right hand of God (see Acts 7:56). It was the Lord Who gave Stephen the strength to keep on confessing Christ, to pray for his enemies, and finally to say, “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*” (Acts 7:59)

The apostle Peter was another contemporary the Hebrews could remember. Jesus had foretold to Peter his martyr death (see John 21:18-19). When Peter was about to die, he declared, “*Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.*” (2 Peter 1:10-14)

Certainly, a prime example every Christian wants to imitate is the apostle Paul. Read the long list of tribulations he willingly suffered for the sake of the Gospel (see 2 Corinthians 11:23-27). When Paul came to the end of his earthly struggles, he declared, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*” (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

We would also do well to remember our exemplary religious leaders of both past and present, and imitate them!

May God help us to keep the faith to the end, and to receive the crown of everlasting life through our Savior Jesus Christ.



Mark Gullerud is pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Bowdle, South Dakota, and Zion Lutheran Church in Ipswich, South Dakota.

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTS – UNIFICATION CHURCH

In this twelve-part series we are taking a brief look at some of the major cults, past and present, that have found adherents in the United States. Your pastor can help you if you'd like a more in-depth study of a particular group.

The Unification Church

The Unification Church was established by Sun Myung Moon (“Shining Sun and Moon”) following the Korean War. Claiming that he had received a vision from God, he started out to fulfill his mission of uniting all of Christianity under one headship—his own.

Previous articles in this series have noted that most cults can be identified by what they teach concerning the Bible and concerning Jesus Christ. The Unification Church clearly fits the pattern. Concerning the Bible, it is the official teaching of the Unification Church that “the Bible is not truth itself, but is a text book teaching the truth,” and that it was written for “people whose spiritual and intellectual standard was very low.” Conveniently, and in keeping with every cult that seeks to be aligned with Christianity, only Rev. Moon can properly explain the Bible, so what he says becomes the basis for what is to be taught and believed.

Concerning Christ, the Unification Church teaches that it was never God’s will for Christ to be crucified. Rather, Jesus’ mission was to restore mankind to God’s family by marrying a perfect wife and having children, thus initiating a bloodline free from sin into the human race that would, over time, spread throughout each family. According to Moon, the cross was not supposed to happen, and when it did, Jesus failed in His divine mission. For this, he was cast out of the Trinity. He was raised from the dead, but only as a spiritual being. Those who become followers of Moon, sometimes referred to as *Moonies*, are taught that there is no redemption in the cross of Christ and no salvation to be had in Him. In fact, they are told that they can become superior to Him by following *The Divine Principle*, which is an official publication of the Unification Church.

Moonies refer to Moon as *Father* and believe that the children that came through his second marriage were born without original sin. His followers believe that Moon has taken on the mission that Christ failed to complete and is

therefore now accepted into the Trinity. Moon lived the last half of his life as an extremely wealthy man whose followers were zealous to lavish him with money, real estate, and other possessions. He died in September 2012 from a severe bout of pneumonia.

Followers of Moon, sometimes referred to as Moonies, are taught that there is no redemption in the cross of Christ and no salvation to be had in Him.

While there are many more blasphemous details to the story of Moon and the Unification Church, these are sufficient to show that Moon was nothing more than another narcissistic false Christ, and that the Unification Church he founded is a false church offering false hope. From God’s first promise to send the Seed of the woman to crush the head of Satan, throughout the Old Testament

prophets, to the announcement of Jesus’ conception and birth, and through the writings of the New Testament apostles and evangelists, the crucifixion of Christ is established as God’s own eternal plan for the redemption of mankind. The cross was no accident; it was the focal point of Christ’s divine mission. The Apostle Paul says it this way: “*For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*” (1 Corinthians 1:18 ESV)

Also, in regard to the sufficiency of Holy Scripture in all matters of faith, we are assured by its testimony and the witness of the Spirit in our hearts that “*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*” (2 Timothy 3:16-17 ESV) Any man and any teaching that contradicts God’s Word is just Satan continuing his deceptive scheme to separate man from God through sin. Yet we have Christ’s assurance that not even the gates of hell can prevail against His Church (see Matthew 16:18).



Frank Gantt is pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Loganville, Georgia.

“THIS WE BELIEVE”

In ongoing observation of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we are presenting a brief overview of those confessional documents that make up the *Book of Concord*.

The Small Catechism

I know nothing about sports. But since many of my church members are sports fanatics, I have had to learn a few analogies. One such is the phrase “back to basics.” It means a return to fundamental exercises. The best way to prepare for the overwhelming stress of a tough challenge is to practice the elementary moves of the game over and over.

The phrase “back to basics” has also come up in Bible study, elders’ meetings, and personal counseling. In this context, the “basics” referred to are those found in Luther’s Small Catechism. We’re reminded that the answer to our most trying spiritual challenges can often be found in the plain doctrine first learned in youth. And that’s exactly why Luther wrote it.

Under the papacy, Christians had been taught very little biblical doctrine. Like “sheep having no shepherd,” they were easily swayed by superstition and overwhelmed when it came to God and His Word. Martin Luther rightly identified the need to go back to the basics of scriptural truth.

Over several years, Luther preached on what he considered the six chief parts of Christian doctrine. He exercised these basics himself from the pulpit out loud to refine the words into a “small, plain, simple form” until, in 1529, his Small Catechism was complete.

It begins with the Commandments and the Creed, making clear—in his explanation of each—the stark contrast between Law and Gospel. He considered this fundamental distinction “the highest art in Christendom,” but one which every Christian should be able “to recognize, know, and possess.”

In the Lord’s Prayer, Luther describes our life in God’s kingdom, and how His Word equips us for the spiritual struggles we face.

And in Baptism, the Ministry of the Keys, and the Sacrament of the Altar, he provides a playbook for the heat of the game, directing the Christian to his source of life, the forgiveness of sins in Word and Sacrament.

The end result of Luther’s efforts was a thorough but succinct game plan. By repeating it over and over and

learning it by heart, the Christian would be well-equipped to fight the good fight of faith.

The Small Catechism wisely finds a central place in our Lutheran confessions. Other portions of the Book of Concord might venture into more theological depth, but the complex issues handled elsewhere often reference the plain answers of these six chief parts.

It amazes me how often, for preaching and teaching, I return to the Catechism as a reliable outline to the whole counsel of God. When preparing to unpack a difficult passage for Bible study, I frequently find the best explanation in those already familiar words. And many sermon topics come to mind while teaching the Catechism to our youth.

The Lutheran church has been well-served by a “back to basics” approach. For centuries, sermons and liturgies based on a Catechism review were a regular part of our church year. This practice seems to have gone out of vogue only within the early 20th century, when the church transitioned to English. Sadly, though, there has been a recent trend to de-emphasize the Catechism even for the instruction of children. Memory work is deemed too difficult, its question-answer format not engaging enough. But the churches which decide to “get with the times” and depart from such basics suffer the consequences of their choice.

Our Savior prepared His own disciples for their fiercest challenge by speaking plainly (John 16:29). Our next generation deserves no less. The Catechism does so in the spirit of God’s command that His Word be written “*on the tablet of your heart.*” (Prov. 7:3).

Its subtle brilliance is that it lets the truths of Scripture speak for themselves, giving it a timeless content, for in those simple words is found the Spirit of God.



Do you remember your Catechism . . . as well as you should? None of us do. “Back to basics!” You won’t be disappointed with the results.

Timothy Daub is pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Hecla, South Dakota.

Building Churches

When you saw the title of this article, what came to mind? You probably thought about sending money overseas to build church buildings.

We all want a nice place to gather together to hear God's Word and to praise and worship Him for all that He has done. Our churches in the United States meet in various places, such as rented conference rooms, store fronts, converted homes, and even specially-built church buildings. In the same way, our brothers and sisters overseas meet in various places, from mud-wattle huts with dirt floors to fine churches with granite tiles on the floor (a common flooring in India).

As important as the outward building is, we know that it isn't the building that makes the church. This has been illustrated time and again in villages in India.

In six villages, the false-teaching Seventh Day Adventist group had built churches, but the villagers rejected their false teaching and the churches were abandoned and left empty for many months. Our pastors and members received permission from the village leaders to use these buildings where they now meet and correctly teach God's Word.

In another area, a church body from South Korea sent money to build churches. For whatever reason, the funds were not sufficient, so the buildings were not completed; they lacked flooring, electrical work, and so on. I am not sure what the plan was, but the Korean church provided no training or support, but only left these unfinished buildings. Our congregations have been able to finish and use seven of them as their places of worship.

While the CLC has sent money over the years to help build churches overseas, that isn't the most important part of our work. The Church isn't the building, it is the living stones that God places in His Church—the people who

trust in Jesus, the Savior of the world, through the correct teaching and preaching of the Law and Gospel (1 Peter 2:4-5). For this reason, our focus is not on constructing church buildings, but on building and establishing seminaries and funding ongoing training for pastors so that they can build the Church by preaching God's Word.

The importance of our training was illustrated one day while we were enjoying a tea break during a district pastoral training session. One of the pastors came up and excitedly told me (through my translator) that he had shared with his congregation the teaching on prayer and the Lord's Prayer that I had taught at the previous pastoral training. He told me how great a blessing it had been to his congregation.

At another district, I was teaching a lesson on the incarnation of Jesus. The lesson showed from God's Word that Jesus is both God and man, and why that is necessary for our salvation. A pastor from that district came up during the break and told me (again through my translator) how this lesson came at just the right time! Some of the young students he was teaching in his congregation recently asked him how we knew that Jesus was really God. The lesson that day had given him passages he could use to answer their questions.

While having a place to gather for worship is important, our treasure is the faithful preaching and teaching of God's Word. While we help build church buildings through the Mission Development Fund (MDF), the training and equipping of pastors, which we fund through general offerings to the CLC, is our priority and the reason for our work overseas. May God continue to raise up laborers for His harvest and make them faithful stewards of His Word. Amen.



Peter Evensen is a full time foreign missionary for the CLC. Until recently he made his home in Chennai, India.



Every other month our CLC Board of Missions updates us with recent news from various mission fields.



The Project KINSHIP General Fund

You're probably familiar with the insurance company whose TV commercials feature the tagline, "Mayhem is everywhere. Are you in good hands?" A man in a black suit acts the part of a deer standing in the road, a texting teen, a faulty GPS; and the commercial always ends with an accident. The lesson is that there are certain things in life you just cannot prepare for, so you'd better have good insurance. This lesson certainly is true. Life is full of unexpected difficulties—sickness, death, disasters—for which we can never be fully prepared.

Since 1984, the CLC's Project KINSHIP has provided financial support for orphans and seminary students through the direct sponsorships of CLC members. Still, life provides many difficulties which cannot be foreseen. To aid our overseas brethren through these trials, disbursements are regularly made from the KINSHIP General Fund. This past year, the rainy season in Myanmar brought widespread flooding, displacing over 100,000 people from their homes and destroying eighty percent of the farm crops. In recent years, there have also been the widely publicized earthquakes in Nepal and a rather destructive cyclone in India. In each of these instances, the Lord blessed KINSHIP with the ability to send financial relief for our brethren from the KINSHIP General Fund.

Further aid was sent this past year to help V.S. Benjamin,

who had been hospitalized with lung problems. At Christmastime, gifts were sent to two congregations of lepers within the BELC. There are many widows of former pastors in Nigeria and India who all receive modest financial support from the KINSHIP General Fund. In addition to all of these unforeseen difficulties, the General Fund is also used to support the two CLC-Kenya schools, in Etago and Moi's Bridge.

Due to an increase in disbursements in recent years, the KINSHIP General Fund has gone down significantly. In January 2015, the fund held a balance of \$47,000. This January, the fund held \$12,500. Nevertheless, there is reason for optimism. To the question, "Are you in good hands?" we can confidently answer, "Yes." We are in the hands of a loving God. A God who not only knows and plans for all of our unexpected difficulties, but also a God whose hands were outstretched to bear the punishment for our most significant problem. *"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32 ESV) We remain in good hands.



Samuel Rodebaugh is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida.

Berea Lutheran Church

Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota

People often ask, “Why the name *Berea*?” With a large Twin Cities metro area filled with Protestant and Lutheran churches with familiar names, the name *Berea* does indeed stand out. More importantly, it has a rich biblical significance (Acts 17:10-12) as a city visited by the Apostle Paul and commended as a flock which “received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things [preached to them] were so.” Like the name of our extended spiritual family, the Church of the Lutheran Confession, we pray our name conveys our identity as a church—a deep love for, appreciation of, and commitment to our biblical and Lutheran heritage: God’s holy Word and the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. By God’s grace we have been blessed with a spiritual calling and unity in Christ that is as precious as it is rare in these last days.

As with many of our CLC churches and other synodical ventures, the Berea story was not the product of any human wisdom or planning, but rather the Lord’s wisdom and blessing in setting the solitary in families (Psalm 68:6) and thereby building His Church. Impelled by the need and desire for the Word and fellowship, a small flock of Twin Cities faithful contacted their pastor, Gordon Radtke of Immanuel, Mankato, and in October of

1959 held a Reformation service in one of their homes.

What began so humbly resulted in the Spirit’s impetus to organize as a congregation and purchase a small St. Paul church (1960), become an early CLC mission (1961), purchase a parsonage (with services held in the basement) and seven-acre property in Inver Grove Heights—SE Twin Cities metro (1970), construct a two-story church and fellowship hall (1976), begin a Christian Day School (1978), build an on-site teacherage (1985), expand with a new sanctuary and remodeled classrooms and fellowship hall (1993), add an Activity Center—fellowship hall/gym, kitchen and multi-purpose room—(2001), another classroom expansion (2005), and most recently a complete parsonage renovation (2017-18). Through it

all, the Lord has met our every need—providing vital “people gifts” of dedicated pastors, teachers and lay people (Ephesians 4). Pastors serving Berea have been Marvin Eibs (1960-70),

Paul Larsen (1970-83), David Schierenbeck (1983-2018), and the current undershepherd, Nathan Pfeiffer. Berea currently numbers 390 souls with an average Sunday attendance of 180.

One constant and joyous sight at Berea through the years has been our “quiver full of children” (Psalm 127:5), prompting a significant emphasis on Christian education both in

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Above: early church in St. Paul, circa 1960. Top: the current church and school.



Photos, clockwise from upper left: Sunday school children; chancel at Christmastime; a recent worship service; vacation Bible school children.

CLC identity: Living Word of Eden Prairie. As a strong supporter of both local and CLC mission efforts, we well recognize our calling of seeking ways to serve precious souls searching for light and truth in our sin-darkened world.

Perhaps the clearest visual witness to our Berea identity greets every worshiper who enters our sanctuary. The Berea chancel picture includes a triptych (age-old term for a three-panel design, usually depicting sacred truths). Designed and built by Bereans James and Betsy Doring to cover sound and organ speakers, the three colored panels of acoustically transparent and visually opaque dyed silk strikingly convey and direct every worshiper to the cross (1 Corinthians 2:2), to our Lord as “the Alpha and the Omega” (Revelation 1:8) and to Jesus as the only Way (John 14:6) that leads the sinner through his earthly life (the “green earth” of the triptych) to the skies and to his eternal home (the darker blue-to-purple upper portion of the triptych).

our congregation and in the establishment of our Christian day school. Full-time teachers have included Marlys Gerth, Beth (Nolting) Kranz, David Bernthal, Robert and Judith Snell, and currently Susan Rehm (Grades 1-4) and Matthew Thurow (Grades 5-8). In addition, many part-time instructors and volunteers have served our school, including current staff Cathy Augustin (music and lower grades) and Anne Gullerud (kindergarten and pre-school). Many of our students have gone on to “higher” Christian education at Immanuel Lutheran High School and College, and have become blessings in our congregation and synod as witnesses for our Savior.

For many years Berea has shared fellowship blessings with our north metro sister flock—Grace of Fridley. More recently, a number of our west metro members were instrumental in forming a new southwest metro



David Schierenbeck is a recently retired pastor who for many years served Berea Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS APRIL 2019

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Apr 1	TLH 24	Genesis 47:13-27	Through Joseph, the Lord extended many a person's time of grace. I would hope that some Egyptians were brought to faith in the Lord during that time!
Apr 2	TLH 152	Psalms 38	When we are troubled by our sins, the answer is not to ignore our nagging consciences, but to confess our guilt to the Lord and find comfort in Him.
Apr 3	TLH 403	Luke 12:49-53	There are times when following Jesus may set you against friends and family who are not following Him. This happens. Stay the course and stay with Him!
Apr 4	TLH 149 LSB 435	Luke 13:1-9	How important is repentance? Those who do not repent of their sins will eventually perish.
Apr 5	TLH 530	Psalms 39	David was frustrated with life's trials and bemoaned the foolishness of man's ways, yet he looked to the Lord to relieve his burdens.
Apr 6	TLH 516 LSB 424	Luke 14:25-35	Can we expect that being a true follower of Christ will be easy? Just the opposite. It is very difficult to deny the desires of our sinful natures and give up the ways of the world.
Apr 8	TLH 278 LSB 612	Luke 15:11-32	The Shepherd died for sheep who loved to wander. Let's return to Him when we find ourselves straying.
Apr 9	TLH 28 LSB 809	Exodus 2:1-10	Joseph's generation was long dead, but the Israelites needed help again, so God was preparing another man who would lead them to safety.
Apr 10	TLH 654	Psalms 41	Even when we are weak and sick, the Lord still has mercy on us.
Apr 11	TLH 611 LSB 508	Luke 16:19-31	It is critical to repent and believe in Jesus right now, because everyone's day will come when they have no more opportunity to do so.
Apr 12	WS 787 LSB 753	Exodus 3:1-15	When the Lord wants you to do something that you are afraid to do, remember that He is with you.
Apr 13	TLH 655	Proverbs 1:1-7	A wise person does not reject words of insight and understanding from someone else who knows better, and the Lord's wisdom should never be rejected.
Apr 15	TLH 158 LSB 433	Luke 17:11-19	We give thanks to Jesus, Who heals our diseases and forgives our sins.
Apr 16	WS 721 LSB 428	John 11:38-57	After raising Lazarus from the dead, the Author of Life prepares to give His own life into death.
Apr 17	WS 722	Matthew 20:29-21:11	Compassionate to the last, the Lord heals two blind men before continuing on to Jerusalem.
Apr 18	TLH 142 LSB 438	Matthew 26:17-56	This section ends with one of the saddest sentences in Scripture: <i>"Then all the disciples deserted him and fled."</i>
Apr 19	TLH 168 LSB 430	Matthew 27:11-31	Jesus became the substitute for Barabbas—and for us all.
Apr 20	TLH 151 LSB 420	Matthew 27:32-66	<i>"Why have you forsaken me?"</i> Jesus cried. We know, don't we? It was for us.
Apr 22	WS 733 LSB 482	Matthew 28:1-10	Now the dead is living!
Apr 23	TLH 204 LSB 487	Exodus 7:1-13	The great deliverance of Israel begins in earnest as Moses approaches Pharaoh.
Apr 24	TLH 286 LSB 569	Proverbs 3:1-17	Our own wisdom is faulty and incomplete, but the Lord provides us with perfect wisdom in His Word. Trust in His wisdom!
Apr 25	TLH 200 LSB 461	John 20:10-18	Jesus' resurrection turns our tears to joy!
Apr 26	TLH 195 LSB 458	Exodus 12:14-36	The deaths of the Passover lambs delivered the Israelites from death—and those Passover lambs were a sign of a greater Passover Lamb.
Apr 27	TLH 208 LSB 472	John 20:19-31	Jesus gives the ministry to His disciples (the authority to forgive or not forgive sins). We are His disciples too, with that same authority.
Apr 29	WS 735 LSB 485	John 21:1-19	Jesus reassured Peter that even after his denials in the courtyard, he would still go on to be a minister of the Gospel.
Apr 30	TLH 400 WS 786	Proverbs 6:16-29	Let's live a new life in the risen Lord and keep our bodies from impurity.

Our Future Easter

It's the service no one wants to miss. After forty days of somber Lenten reflection and repentance, everyone is hungry for the exuberant joy of Easter morning. It's time to put on the best dress and suit. Trumpets, organ, and voices crescendo into one thundering "Alleluia!" after another. In many of our churches the service is preceded or followed by fellowship time over breakfast. Everything feels fresh and new. Hope abounds—for good reason!

Christ is risen!

The sin and death brought into the world by one man is defeated by the second Adam. Jesus proved Himself to be just Who He said He was—the God-Man, the Messiah anointed by God to be the Savior of all people. He accomplished all He set out to do. He was faithful in every situation where we have disobeyed God's will. He was obedient even to the point of death, the death of the cross where He suffered the penalty of hell itself for your sins and mine. We never tire of hearing the angels' stunning question and exclamation to the women: "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (Luke 24:5-6 NIV84) How awesome to be present in the upper room when the resurrected Christ suddenly appeared!

While we rightfully commemorate the first Easter, there is another, even greater and more glorious one on the horizon. My congregation has a custom of inviting members to bring "remembrance lilies" to our Easter service. Typically, dozens fill the altar and spill over onto nearby tables. They are placed in remembrance of loved ones who have been called from this earth through death, but whose souls are with the Lord now, and who, along with us, will one day experience their own personal "Easter."

Paul explains, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 15:20 NIV84) God commanded His Old Testament people to offer Him the first harvested sheaf

of ripe grain brought in from the field. By doing so, they expressed their thanks and their confidence that the rest of the harvest, which they depended upon for their livelihood, would certainly follow. Likewise, Jesus' resurrection is the first of countless resurrections to come when He returns, calls all from their graves, and ushers believers with their glorified bodies home to heaven.

Just imagine that celebration. "For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:52 NIV84) It won't be only our local churches with pews filled, but "a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9 NIV84). Clothed in the dazzling white robes of Christ's righteousness, we will join the thousands of angels in singing praises to the Lamb. We will enjoy the feast of salvation which has no end.

Our celebration of Easter Sunday 2019 will quickly come and go.

Monday will bring all the usual challenges, obligations, blessings, and frustrations. We will face Satan's temptations and the pressures of those around us at work or school to compromise our stand on the Word. Our congregations will wrestle with financial shortfalls, an aging membership, and the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel so as to be heard in our noisy, social-media-driven society. We will grieve at the toll death takes on family and fellow believers.

But then look ahead. A future "Easter" is on the way, that final and most glorious one of all, made possible by the empty tomb outside Jerusalem. It's the Easter none of us want to miss!



Michael Eichstadt is pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Hales Corners, Wisconsin, and president of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

New Twitter Campaign Launched Against Christian Schools.

With the Twitter hashtag #ExposeChristianSchools, Indianapolis writer and self-described “ex-evangelical” Chris Strop introduced a popular and trending discussion strongly critical of Christian schools. In part a reaction to recent events involving Karen Pence and Covington Catholic, the discussion broadly condemns Christian education, whose teachings “can misrepresent science and history and potentially breed intolerance.” Julie Ingersoll, a professor of religious studies at the University of North Florida, spoke of the “harms” done to students at Christian schools: “These harms were often related to sex, gender, shame, and abuse,” said Ingersoll. “But stories also detailed impoverished education, especially when it came to science and history.” On the other hand, many posted messages defending Christian education, saying that their schools are literally a blessing—a place where children can learn in accordance with biblical teachings, untainted by the secular norms of public schools. And facts tend to demonstrate the opposite of “impoverished education.” Students from Christian schools routinely outscore public school students by a wide margin in standardized and college-entrance testing. In SAT scores from 2017, e.g., religious school students averaged 574 on the reading portion, compared to 527 by public school students; math and science was 560 for religious students, 517 for public school students. Crary, David. “Hashtag stirs debate over role of Christian schools in US.” *Science*. APNews.com, 2 Feb. 2019. Web. 3 Feb. 2019.

Study Links Faith with Health, Happiness.

Actively religious adults (people who attend religious services at least once a month) are more likely to be involved in their community—and also more likely to describe themselves as “very happy”—than are those who are religiously inactive or unaffiliated, the Pew Research Group recently reported, drawing

on data from three cross-national surveys. “More than one-third of actively religious U.S. adults (36 percent) describe themselves as very happy, compared with just a quarter of both inactive and unaffiliated Americans,” researchers noted. Active churchgoers are more likely to be non-smokers (85%) than the non-religious (72%). They are more likely than the non-religious to belong to civic organizations (58% to 39%); more likely to vote (69% to 48%); more likely to exercise (64% to 60%), be non-smokers (85% to 72%), and to avoid frequent drinking (96% to 92%). Dallas, Kelsey. “Does faith make you happier? New research explores links between religion and well-being.” *InDepth*. DeseretNews.com. 31 Jan. 2019. Web. 3 Feb. 2019.

Christians Should Control Their Technology—Not the Other Way Around.

In an article for Patheos, religion columnist Bill Blankschaen joined the outcry against the many ways in which technology—especially smart phones—have taken over our lives. But this is particularly sad, he said, when it happens to Christians. “We reach for [the phone] as we roll out of bed and light up the screen as our first contact with the world each day. We have a moment to think or pray and we whip out our phones instead to surf social media. We find ourselves waiting in line with our children and, instead of engaging them in conversation, we scroll to discover the latest news. Worse yet, we find the sermon dull so we open email to make sure we’re not missing something more important.” The solution? That’s up to the individual believer, says Blankschaen, but he’s discovered one strategy that works for him, and that is to *designate specific On and Off times each day for access to technology*. “For me, as an entrepreneur, I’ve chosen not to check email or team communication channels until 9 AM each day. The morning is protected for

sharpening the saw, thinking, and writing. It takes faith not to check my email and trust that, if I put first things first, God will supply my needs. Then choose a time each evening when you’ll put the phone away. I choose to shut it down as I head to dinner with the family at 6 PM.” He concludes, “Some trust in chariots and some in smartphones and instant email access, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. That doesn’t mean we don’t use those tools to fulfill our calling, but we don’t make it our life calling to use those tools. If we don’t set boundaries on our access to technology, our faith will suffer.” Blankschaen, Bill. “One Proven Way to Control Technology Overload.” *Evangelical*. Patheos.com. 24 July 2017. Web. 3 Feb. 2019.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



installation

In accord with our usage and order, **Edward Starkey**, who was called by Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Red Wing, Minnesota, to be its pastor, was installed on February 17, 2019. Also participating in the service were Pastors Emeritus James Sandeen, David Schierenbeck, Daniel Fleischer and Paul Fleischer, Pastors Nathan Pfeiffer and Bruce Naumann, and Professors John Ude and Paul Naumann.

—Pastor Douglas Libby