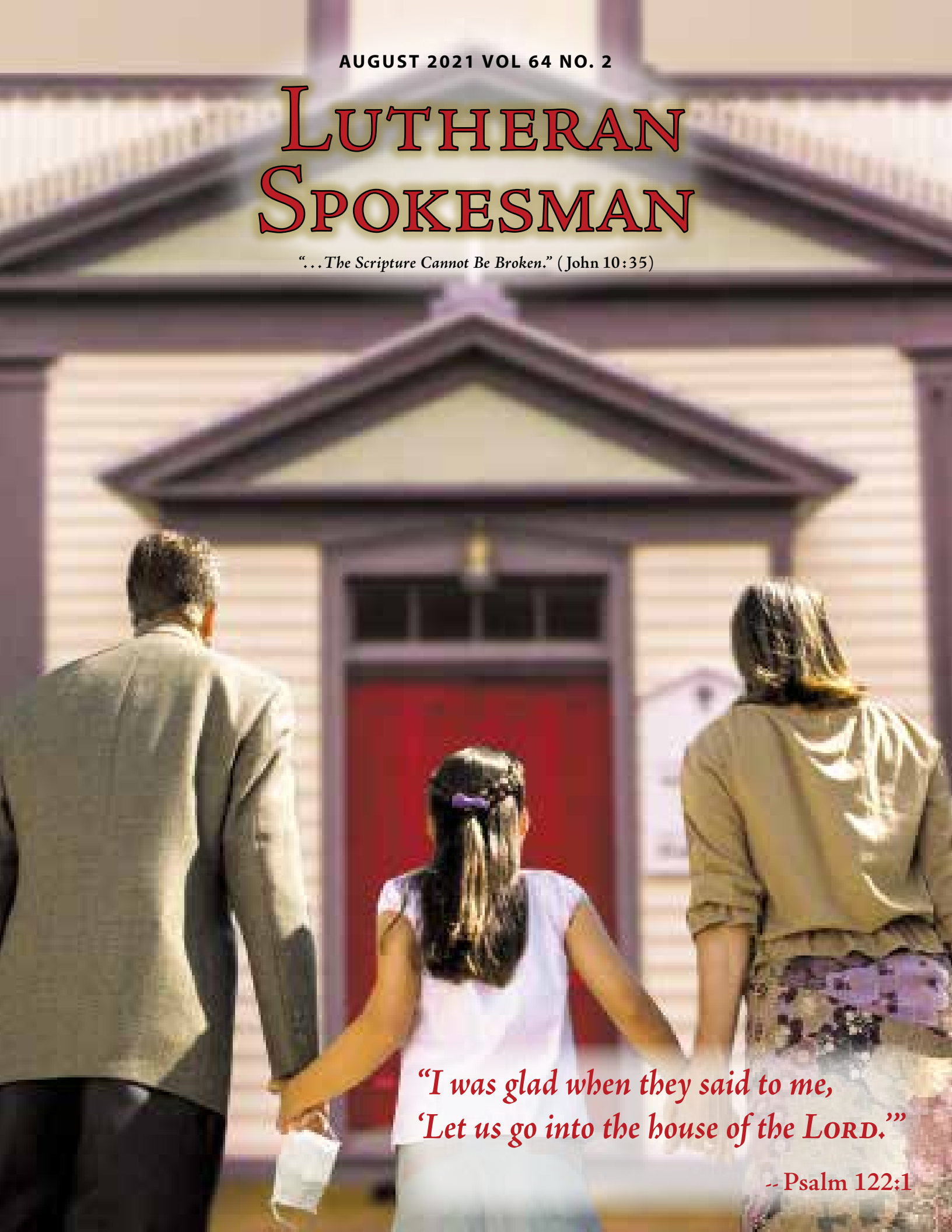


AUGUST 2021 VOL 64 NO. 2

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



*"I was glad when they said to me,
'Let us go into the house of the LORD.'"*

-- Psalm 122:1



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“Welcome Back to Church!”

[Ed: The following is adapted from a letter recently written by Pastor Bruce Naumann to the members of his congregation, Messiah Lutheran Church of Eau Claire, Wisconsin.]

During the past year of pandemic isolation, we all have been very thankful to God that He has provided us with the means to share His Word through live streaming and other venues. Thanks be to God that He has spared the large majority of our members from severe health problems due to the virus! Now that restrictions have been eased and the danger has subsided somewhat, it's a good time to remind each other of the blessings of in-person fellowship.

The word *fellowship* has to do with sharing. *Church* fellowship can be described as “whatever Christians do together as spiritual partners.” Examples include worship, prayer, singing hymns and spiritual songs, sharing the Lord's Supper, Christian education, mutual encouragement in God's Word, and mission work.

God wants to bless His believers through the *interactive* exercise of their faith with others who share the same beliefs in Jesus, founded on the truth of His Word. This fellowship that we share was never meant to be purely passive. Yes, it's possible to do these things in a limited way from a distance, but the best blessings come when you give as well as receive:

“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.” (Colossians 3:16)

“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

Is there a problem with hearing God's Word and practicing one's Christian faith at home? No—we should all be doing that! But when we have the opportunity, God's encouragement is to be with each other regularly, “. . . not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:25 ESV)

It may often seem like attending a church service is only a passive thing anyway. But the fact that you make a point of being there is very important to all the others, since it gives you the opportunity for mutual sharing of the Gospel, for greeting your fellow Christians in Jesus' Name, and for

offering your personal support to them.

Consider a similar example of the importance of “being there.” If a close relative or dear friend were getting married and you were able to attend, how would it benefit others if you said, “Thanks for the invitation—I'll be watching it at home”? Isn't it an even more special occasion when the Lord Himself invites us to spend time, actually together, with our fellow church members to hear His Word, sing His praises, pray in His Name, and receive Jesus' true body and blood in Communion? The fact that we are present says to everyone, “Because of what God has done for us in Christ, I want to take advantage of every opportunity to gather with others who believe this Good News—not only for my benefit, but for theirs as well!”

Of course, there are always those who, because of their circumstances, have little opportunity to share in-person fellowship. Those who are shut-ins or who live at a far distance from church are isolated by necessity. Our congregations strive to bridge this gap by bringing church TO them, through pastoral and member visits, through the mail, and by electronic means. We also understand that some of our members are still exercising caution in order to avoid becoming ill, and that this is a personal health decision.

“Welcome Back to Church!” Worshiping together is a positive way to strengthen your own faith, and to share that faith with others, through Word and Sacrament. Our focus should always be on the great gifts that God has given to us in His Son as our Redeemer, and the Lord's promise to provide us with the great blessings that personal, interactive fellowship will bring. With a Savior like ours, we can all have the cheerful attitude that David expressed in Psalm 122:1, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD.’”



Bruce Naumann is senior pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Congregation, Not Isolation

In the beginning, the Lord punctuated His series of creative “*Let there be’s*” with this simple principle: “*It is not good that man should be alone.*” (Genesis 2:18) But it was only shortly after that when mankind sprinted headlong into isolation. The result of the first sin was that Adam and Eve hid away from God during what should have been the highlight of the day. Then the accusations flew against one another as both sought to save their own skins. We see that sin left people with nothing but separation, both from God and from each other. Thus it has been ever since that when we find isolation depicted in the Scripture, it’s often in the context of lament and suffering. Consider David’s words, “*Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide in times of trouble?*” (Psalm 10:1) Or who could forget the despair of lonely Elijah, “*I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.*” (1 Kings 19:10)

Sometimes, such isolation comes as a form of God’s judgment against sin. We might think of proud King Nebuchadnezzar, to whom the Lord announced through the prophet Daniel, “*You shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.*” (Daniel 4:25 ESV) Separation was also the form of judgment designed for the Judaeon exiles in Babylon—separation from their homes, separation from their temple, separation from their worship. But the most severe form of forced isolation to be experienced in flesh and blood belonged to our Savior. He was the one who “*was despised and rejected by men . . . as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised.*” (Isaiah 53:3 ESV) Isolation from both man and God was His lot, as He cried, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” (Mark 15:34)

Thankfully, such separation was not God’s will for you. Though it was the devil’s intention to cut mankind off from God, our Father declared that the only enemy was Satan. “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed.*” (Genesis 3:15)

At that moment, Adam and Eve had been united with Satan and at enmity with God, but God flipped the narrative. God and man would be reconciled, brought together in the peace of sins forgiven. This was accomplished by those lonely hours endured by your Savior on the cross.

There He laid the foundation for your reconciliation both with God and with one another. Now, to a people for whom isolation and lament and loneliness was a bitter reality, God has replaced those sorrows with joy and companionship and fellowship, as “*God sets the solitary in families.*” (Psalm 68:6)

This coming Sunday, consider your Christian family and the opportunity to gather with them. As Jesus reclined to distributed His body, blood, and forgiveness to a gathering of His disciples, now you have the opportunity to gather and receive the same. As you pray the Lord’s Prayer, you will say, “Our Father,” not “My Father,” for you are not an only child. You were baptized into a family of believers, the Communion of Saints. When you sing, you won’t be the lone voice echoing in an empty room; instead, you’ll be joined even by “*angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven.*” So, gather with your fellow believers this Sunday, for the Christian congregation is a most blessed assembly, as your Savior promises, “*Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*” (Matthew 18:20)



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

Let us
WORSHIP
Together

TLH HYMN 481

“Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow”

Other than what God has told us in His Word, we do not know what the future holds. Several years ago we did not know that the whole world would essentially shut down for an entire year. We did not know that churches would be closed, and we would be watching sermons in our living rooms on video screens, without the benefit of weekly in-person contact with our fellow believers to encourage us in our faith. It has been, we might say, a “night of doubt and sorrow” that was unexpected and long.

When will the next significant trouble appear on the horizon for us? Will it be tomorrow, next week, or next year? We don't know, but we do know that the Lord has given us brothers and sisters in the faith so that we will not need to face the next trouble alone. In Bernard Ingemann's hymn “Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow,” we are reminded of how important it is to stand with others, and for others to stand with us, as we march steadily onward toward the Promised Land. In 1825 he wrote, “Thro' the night of doubt and sorrow, / Onward goes the pilgrim band, / Brother clasps the hand of brother, / Stepping fearless through the night.”

What a blessing that we are able to join with others as we “step fearless through the night,” knowing *together* and being encouraged *together* that we, as children of God through faith in Christ, all share *together* in enjoying His gracious presence and blessing! As we hold each other's hands, He holds us all in His powerful hand so that we sing, “One the light of God's own presence, / O'er His ransomed people shed, / Chasing far the gloom and terror, / Bright'ning all the path we tread.”

We also share together with our fellow Christians the sure confidence of a good outcome at the end of our journey. The Lord Himself keeps this bright hope before us all, and in the third verse of our hymn the author stresses again and again that we have others who share in our walk and

in our goal. One the strain the lips of thousands / Lift as from the hearts of one; / One the conflict, one the peril, / One the march in God begun; / One the gladness of rejoicing / On the far eternal shore, / Where the one almighty Father / Reigns in love forevermore.

By His death and resurrection, our Lord and Savior Jesus has reconciled us together to the Father. We march toward

heaven always appreciative of those whom He has placed at our sides: men, women, and children with whom we worship together (in person once again!) and through whom we are encouraged.

The Danish language scholar and poet Bernhardt Ingemann died in 1862, but he left us a final stanza to encourage us, as the apostle did, to “pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14 *Christian Song Book*). Ingemann's hymn further urges that we pursue it *together*.

Onward, therefore, pilgrim brothers! / Onward with the cross our aid! / Bear its shame and fight its battle / Till we rest beneath its shade. / Soon shall come the great awaking, / Soon the rending of the tomb, / Then the scatt'ring of all shadows, / And the end of toil and gloom.



David Schaller is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

“Commandment”

מצוה

It is likely that every person reading this article has studied the Ten Commandments in Luther’s *Small Catechism*. These Ten speak to us of divine requirements for daily living. The Hebrew word for *commandment* is *mitzvah*. This word is derived from a word meaning “to set up” or “set forth.” In some instances, God “sets up” a barrier, beyond which we are not to go. In others, He “sets up” a target toward which we are to aim our behavior.

The First Commandment sets up a barrier, on which it says, “This far and no further; this God and none other.” When we break this barrier and go beyond it, we are trespassing into forbidden territory.

The Fourth Commandment sets up a target: “Behave like this; honor your parents.” When we miss this target, we sin (the Hebrew word for “to sin” means “to miss the mark/target”).

There is another “target” that God has set up for us. John writes of it in his First Epistle (3:23): “*And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.*” This is an unusual use of the word *commandment*. It occurs in the Old Testament, also. For example: “*The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment [note the singular] of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.*” (Psalm 19:8) As Ephesians 1:17,18 points out, enlightenment comes through the knowledge of Jesus Christ (that is, the Gospel). Likewise, the salvation of the soul is not given to us through the Law, but through the Gospel: “*He who keeps the commandment [singular] keeps his soul, but he who is careless of his ways will die.*” (Proverbs 19:16)

These passages may be few, but they are significant. After all, God commands us, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.*” (Acts 16:31) “*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.*” (Acts 17:30) See also passages that use the word *obey* (normally reserved for the Law): Galatians 3:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, Hebrews 3:18 and 5:9, and 1 Peter 4:17. Thanks be to God that the command to believe carries with it the power that transforms our hearts, so that we can “obey” this commandment.

Just as the expression “the Word of God” embraces both Law and Gospel, so *mitzvah* can mean either Law or Gospel or both. Similarly, the Hebrew word *Torah*, widely translated with the word *law*, means “instruction” and can be understood as both. Both Law and Gospel come from God. Both are set up by Him to benefit His people..

Mitzvah is used to speak of everything that God has set forth for mankind. There is one Gospel “command”; there are many Law commands. It is not surprising, therefore, that most of the *mitzvah* passages refer to the Law. However, there are exceptions. Keep your mind open to the possibility that a given use of *commandment* or *command* may be referring to the Gospel, or to all the truths that God has set up for our faith and life. Try substituting some form of the expression “set up” in a given passage. For example, consider Proverbs 19:16 in this way: “He who keeps what God has set up keeps his soul.”

May God’s divine set-up guide your faith and life.



John Pfeiffer is retired from the pastoral and teaching ministry. He is a former president of Immanuel Lutheran College.

Humble Yourself

“But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” (James 4:6-10)

According to our sinful flesh, we really want to be our own gods. We’d rather the world and even God Himself submit to what we decide and have to say. In contrast, James says, “Submit to God.” Let His commandments stand over your desires. Let His wisdom be greater than yours. Receive His instruction and correction in life, no matter how uncomfortable or painful it may be, trusting that what He has in store for you is much better than what you would choose for yourself.

How can it not be? After all, He’s the One Who knit you together in your mother’s womb. The One Who has loved you with an everlasting love. The One Who offered up His only Son for you even while you were still a sinner and His enemy. That is the One we are commanded to submit to. How can we not humble ourselves and submit to such a God?

When the subject of humility comes up, we may find ourselves thinking about another person who needs to learn this lesson. While it may be true that someone you know may need this message on humility, notice carefully what our text says: *“Humble yourselves.”* James doesn’t say, “Humble your neighbor.” The focus of these verses is your sins, not your neighbor’s; your heart, not your neighbor’s.

You are to draw near to God with *your own* heart humbled. Weeping over *your own* sins. Pleading with God to break down *your own* sinful life patterns and to make *your own* heart clean. Why? Because you are the sinner God is speaking to, through James, in this verse. Forget about what

your spouse, parent, child, friend, or co-worker may have ever done to you, consider what you have done to God! It’s *your sins* you should be concerned about first and foremost. Your sin is a violation of the holy will of God and should drive you to your knees in tears over the serious offense you have committed against Him.



The convicted heart cries out, “I have sinned! What can I do? Where can I go?” James gives the answer: *“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”* What kind of love is this? What kind of God is this that draws near to us in our lowest moments as we freely confess our sinful failings to Him, and then stoops down to bring His grace to lift us up? Why should the holy God of heaven concern Himself with such lowly sinners as we are? Because of His grace. Because He has set His love on us. He has set His righteousness over us through the perfect life and innocent death of His own Son.

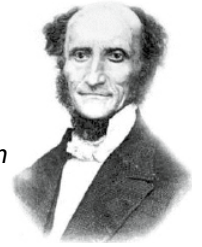
The devil seeks to steal your humility by getting you to think that, if you follow any of the directives in this text, it’s of your own doing. The truth is that if you do weep over your sins, if you do desire a pure heart, if you do humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, then that is all a miraculous proof that the Holy Spirit is in you and at work on your heart through His Word! Is that not a wonder? Doesn’t that make you love God more? Isn’t it humbling?

Thanks be to God for this humble brokenness that helps you to see your great need for your Savior Jesus, and all praise to Jesus, Who humbled Himself to death on a cross to secure your forgiveness and salvation!



Chad Seybt is pastor of the following churches in Wisconsin: Morning Star Lutheran in Fairchild, Trinity Lutheran in Millston, St. Paul’s Lutheran in Melrose, and Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran in Onalaska.

One of the hallmarks of the Lutheran Church is its proper understanding and application of the Bible's two main teachings—Law and Gospel. Dr. C.F.W. Walther's seminal work, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, is the basis for this two-year series. Note: page numbers given are accurate for the 1929 and 1986 editions of the book.



Exactly the Wrong Medicine

“Thesis VIII—In the fourth place, the Word of God is not rightly divided when the Law is preached to those who are already in terror an account of their sins or the Gospel to those who live securely in their sins.”

Imagine two desperately ill patients, one in a diabetic shock and another whose heart had stopped beating. Now imagine if a doctor were to give the first patient a shot of adrenalin, and the second a shot of insulin. Such a doctor would lose his license to practice medicine, and rightly so! Yet an even more serious case of malpractice obtains when the Gospel is proclaimed to secure sinners, or the Law is proclaimed to alarmed sinners. In both these cases, exactly the wrong medicine is applied.

In his twelfth and thirteenth evening lectures, Dr. Walther deals the two halves of this important Eighth Thesis. “Not a drop of evangelical consolation is to be brought to those who are still living securely in their sins. On the other hand, to the broken-hearted not a syllable containing a threat or a rebuke is to be addressed, but only promises conveying consolation and grace, forgiveness of sin and righteousness, life and salvation.” (Page 102)

The Gospel message—that God forgives sins freely for Christ's sake—is the sweetest message there could possibly be. But that sweetness is wasted on those who, unrepentant, feel no need of forgiveness or a Savior. It's like giving water to someone who's not thirsty, or food to someone who's already full. Dr. Walther refers to such people as “secure in their sins,” feeling confident in their own good works, and having no need of repentance. He says (page 118), “Accordingly, we may not preach the Gospel, but must preach the Law to secure sinners. We must preach them

into hell before we can preach them into heaven. By our preaching our hearers must be brought to the point of death before they can be restored to life by the Gospel. They must be made to realize that they are sick unto death before they can be restored to health by the Gospel. First their own righteousness must be laid bare to them, so that they may see of what filthy rags it consists, and then, by the preaching of the Gospel, they are to be robed in the garment of the righteousness of Christ.”

Which brings us to the more important part of Thesis VIII—to those poor people who are repentant, who truly do realize their sinfulness and their desperate need of forgiveness—to such people only the sweet, unconditioned Gospel must be presented, and not a word of Law!

This is what Jesus did. When He was speaking to alarmed sinners who desperately needed and wanted His forgiveness, He had only sweetest Gospel for them. To the sinful woman who anointed His feet He said only, “Your sins are forgiven.” (Luke 7:48); to the woman taken in adultery, “Neither do I condemn you.” (John 8:11); to Zacchaeus, “Today salvation has come to this house.” (Luke 19:9)

This advice isn't just for pastors, but for anyone who wants to witness God's truth to people they care about. Give them the right medicine! If you're talking to a secure sinner, apply the Law. Then, when the Law has done its work and the sinner, in alarm, asks, “What must I do to be saved?” with joy you may reply, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved!” (Acts 16:30-31)



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

[To read Walther's *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* for free on-line, and to access related Bible class materials, go to www.ilc.edu/Walther]

ERROR'S ECHO

In this series we take a look back at some of the most notorious errors and heresies that have threatened the church over the centuries, as well as the subtle (and not so subtle) ways in which those false teachings continue to haunt 21st century thought and theology.

Sabellianism

Whether learning to ride a bicycle or drive a motor vehicle, beginners have to overcome the reflex of over-correction. If the vehicle is veering to the left, a correction too extreme to the right will leave one in the same danger, or even in a worse condition than before the correction.

The same effect can happen doctrinally when one veers off the path of truth. This seems to be particularly the case when it comes to the triune nature of God. If the *oneness* of God is defended so strongly that it excludes the three persons, that is a false teaching. Over-correct this false teaching and emphasize the three persons while losing the oneness of God, and you are still in false doctrine, but on the other side of the “road.”

Monarchianism (*Lutheran Spokesman*, June 2021) sought to defend the unity and sole rule of God. One form of Monarchianism effectively negated Jesus’ divinity lest there would be two gods. Another form of Monarchianism is Sabellianism, named after Sabellius, about whom very little is known—and what we do read about him comes only from his adversaries.

Sabellianism teaches that one god reveals himself at different times in different modes. For this reason, Sabellianism is also called “modal Monarchianism.” Sabellians claimed that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit were only different names for the same god—each name representing different forms, much as an actor might wear different masks. At one point the one god appears as “Father,” at another time he would make himself known as “Son,” and at still other times, “Holy Spirit.”

Sabellius was excommunicated as a heretic by Pope Calixtus I in 220 A.D., and Sabellianism has been recognized as heresy throughout the ages. However, it hasn’t been extinguished. At the time of the Reformation, Sabellianism was reformulated by Michael Servetus, a Spanish theologian and physician, who characterized Christ and the Holy Spirit as representative forms of one Godhead, the Father. In the 18th century, a Swedish philosopher and scientist named Emanuel Swedenborg also taught this doctrine.

Today, Sabellianism can still lure the rational mind into its

error as one tries to grasp the reality of the Trinity. It is a teaching current among some Pentecostal groups, particularly those which are known as “Oneness” Pentecostals or “Jesus Only” Pentecostals. These groups view that the teaching of the Trinity is a “tradition of men” and not scriptural. In defense of this, they note that the words *triune* and *trinity* are nowhere to be found in Scripture.

It is true that these words are not in Scripture, but that does not negate the truth that what these coined words describe is, in fact, in Scripture. “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!*” (Deuteronomy 6:4) Jesus very clearly spoke of three persons when He said, “*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*” (John 14:26) And Jesus also said, “*I and My Father are one.*” (John 10:30).

These and many more passages reveal that God is both one God, and three persons at the same time. Each person is unique and fully God; and yet, and at the same time, equally unified in one holy almighty God.

Unfathomable? Yes.

Fully comprehensible? No.

But it is still the truth because God declares it. All human analogies and pictures that are intended to help illustrate the Trinity fall short in some way. But that is how it is when a created and sin-flawed creature tries to fully comprehend the greatness of his almighty Creator, the amazing love of a sacrificial Redeemer, and the miraculous ways of the Holy Spirit wielding the power of the Gospel in his heart.

How amazing the true God is! How valuable is the true Word concerning Him! The truth is a narrow road, neither over-correcting one way or the other, and that is the road to life.



Wayne Eichstadt is pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Spokane Valley, Washington.

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the church of the Lutheran Confession

Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church Middleton, Wisconsin

“For I am the LORD, I do not change.” (Malachi 3:6)

Since our article appeared in the *Lutheran Spokesman* under the heading “A Slice of Life in the CLC” (November 2015), quite a bit has changed in our congregation. The most devastating change was the closing of our school in the fall of 2016 due to the lack of students. The desire to keep the school going was there, the funds were there, but the children were not.

The congregation turned to the Lord and asked for His guidance and blessings. We recalled our teacher, Miss Claire Abbas, to help initiate a pre-school for our congregation and be the pre-school teacher, if and when we opened one. Organization was begun. Supplies were purchased. State and county requirements were paid for and met. Advertisements were put out, and we waited for responses.

However, during this time Miss Abbas received and accepted a call from Gethsemane Lutheran School of Spokane, Washington, to be its lower-grade school teacher. Undeterred, the congregation then called Miss Miriam Bernthal, of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, to be our pre-school teacher. She accepted in September 2017. We anticipated opening our pre-school in January 2018.

We needed at least ten students to enroll in order for this venture to be able to financially take off. Unfortunately, we only got four who were interested. Our area has quite a few pre-schools already in existence. With sadness, yet confidence in the Lord's direction, we shut down our pre-school plans and released Miss Bernthal from her call in February 2018.

In August 2018 the congregation began a Wednesday morning Children's Play Group, which attracted numerous children and parents who got to know about our church and our desire to re-start our school someday. Unfortunately, because of COVID, this venture has been on hold since



Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church in Middleton, Wisconsin.

March 2020. We intend to restart it in September 2021.

The congregation's desire is to re-open the Christian day school, and we have been setting aside monthly offerings for that endeavor, the Lord willing.

Over these past six years, other changes have taken place in regard to membership. The Lord removed from this vale of tears to Himself several of our founding and longtime members: Duane Riggert, John Birkholz, and Bruce Templeton. He has also blessed us with several new members through adult baptisms and adult confirmations. We also have had an influx of young couples transferring into the Madison area from other CLC congregations.

Second greatest change: COVID! Amazingly, the Lord prepared us for this pandemic when at our January 2020 annual meeting we decided to start video recording our services. Unknown to us, a couple of months later our public services would be shut down for a month. We have had livestream and YouTube services going since February of 2020. When views on livestream and YouTube are added to physical attendees, more people are receiving the Gospel from our church now than ever before. Praise be to the Lord!



Above: Some members of the Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church in Middleton. Right and Inset: Church sanctuary.



Zoom has become a big part of our church life. Wednesday night Bible Classes, monthly “Hannah’s Helping Hands” meetings, church council meetings, and quarterly voters’ meetings all have been held via Zoom. In May we finally had our church council meeting in person.

Since our congregation was last featured, we have implemented several outreach efforts: In 2016 we held our fourth Salt and Light Evangelism Seminar. Theme: “Using everyday conversations to learn about your neighbor’s faith-family relationship, family health, current events, politics. . . .”

In 2017 the congregation hosted the Gospel-centered 500th Reformation Seminar with Pastor Emeritus John Schierenbeck, Pastor Caleb Schaller, and Pastor Mark Bernthal speaking on Reformation history and its application to us today.

In 2018:

- A Christian Apologetics Seminar was sponsored by our congregation with guest speaker Matt Starland, a member of Berea Lutheran, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.
- Our Evangelism group distributed “Invisible Sunday School” materials to waiting rooms in doctors’/dentists’ offices, the public library, and wherever children gather.
- In August the congregation celebrated its 45th anniversary with thanksgiving to the Lord for 45 years of proclaiming God’s Word here at Peace Thru Christ. The anniversary sermon was based on Psalm 27:4-6.
- The congregation hosted the Joint Reformation Service with CLC congregations from southern Wisconsin.
- In November we hosted a “Christianity and Islam Seminar” at the Heritage Senior Living Community in Middleton, with guest speaker Pastor Emeritus David Koenig.

In spring of 2019 the congregation presented a seminar on “Christian Masculinity and Femininity.”

In the fall of 2020, during Bible Class time, Pastor and members of our Evangelism Committee held weekly discussions intended to support our efforts to talk about our faith. The series was entitled, “Whom are you reaching?” It was an interactive series in which we shared experiences and various ways to view the obstacles that challenge our resolve to share our Savior with the people we see every day.

Every year but 2020, we had a float with a Biblical theme at the annual Middleton Good Neighbor Parade.

Through all the challenges, changes, and events of the past six years, our God has remained the same faithful Lord, blessing us with His Word of grace and forgiveness through Jesus. Because of our Savior’s suffering, death, and resurrection, His unchanging word of “Peace Thru Christ” has been preached and proclaimed every Sunday. And we trust that He will continue to abide with, and shower His grace and mercy upon, His children as they work in His kingdom on the shores of Lake Mendota, casting out the net of the Gospel to the lost.

*Change and decay in all around I see.
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me! (TLH 552:2)*



Mark Bernthal is the pastor of Peace thru Christ Lutheran Church in Middleton, Wisconsin, and Vice-President of the CLC.

Persecution of the Truth in India

If there was ever a place where Paul's words apply—"exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles" (Romans 1:23 RSV)—it is in India, with its over 1.3 billion people. Down through the years, Hinduism in India has acted as an amorphous cloud that hovers over the country and absorbs all into itself. The ancient native village gods, too, were absorbed into the Hinduism we see today. They worship literally thousands of gods. For instance, you can find a black rat god. There are even Hindus who claim Jesus as a "god" to them personally, but only as one god among many others, including Vishnu, Shiva, Krishna, and so forth. Of course, our Lord is THE Immortal God. There are no others. *"There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12)

Today in India, the people with whom we are in fellowship believe and teach this truth. Because they do, there is persecution, both open and behind the scenes. What follows is adapted from a report by one of our brethren in India. Names and places are withheld for obvious reasons.

I herewith submit this on the persecution of our pastors.

When India became independent, the constituent assembly adopted a constitution which declared India to be a secular state. The danger began when Hinduism became associated with political power. Hindu nationalists began to win political leadership in the previously secular government. They played on Hindu sentiments to stay in power. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), for example, is a paramilitary Hindu nationalist group that has been involved in widespread persecution of non-Hindus, including Christians. It and various other Hindu political groups, as well as the national Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), are opposed to our



church activities. For example, a local member of the state legislative assembly opposed one of our pastors in his church building construction work and had him beaten several times. Pastors have faced false court cases against them. Many pastors have been threatened. There has been opposition to our Jesus film project and the work of our Gospel team. One pastor's daughter was attacked and raped by Hindu revivalists.

This persecution has not yet ended. And yet Christian love has no limits, and we show our Christ's love to them by praying for them and for their repentance. One man, Jesus Christ, died for all (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Once, when we were seeking fellowship with a Lutheran pastor and his congregation, the man asked that I not



पद्मविभक्त - श्रीलक्ष्मीसिद्धयुद्धरामभक्त - श्रीलक्ष्मीसिद्धयुद्धरामभक्त

Left: Hindu temple.
Above: Lakshmi riding on a tiger in triumph with Hanuman and yogi.
Right: Goddess Lakshmi, 1896.

come in person, as it would draw down persecution on him. Instead, we had several of our local pastors visit him, and they pursued doctrinal discussions with him.

The animal gods are out in force. On the way to one of our meetings I saw a forty-foot statue of Hanuman, the monkey god. A big festival is held each year for Ganesh, the elephant god. Statues of Ganesh are sold and then taken to the river or sea to be sent out into the water and sunk. The statues dissolve in the water like papier-mâché.

Among those resembling mortal man are Shiva, the destroyer god; Vishnu, the creator god; and Krishna, who is often portrayed as a little blue boy playing a flute. Perhaps if I were not a Christian, I'd pick for my favorite god Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. A lot of people look to her for you-know-what. Once, when I was eating at a



restaurant, I saw a calendar on the wall with Lakshmi portrayed on it. She was riding a tiger. That seems appropriate, for with her you certainly have a tiger by the tail! And she always gets her way, what with her many arms! This would all be comical, were it not that the false religion of Hinduism holds literally millions and millions of people in its dark grip.

By contrast, what a great joy it is for us to know that we have a part in proclaiming the Gospel in India through our brethren there. Our men do not hesitate to go into strong RSS areas to speak the Word of God. And God has continued to use them, and us, to proclaim the Good News in India, the CLC's largest and second-oldest mission field.

Pray "that the Word of the Lord may speed on and triumph."
(2 Thessalonians 3:1 RSV)



David Koenig has served as a foreign missionary in Africa, India, and elsewhere. Though officially retired, he continues to be active in the synod's mission endeavors.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS AUGUST 2021

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Aug 2	TLH 536 (LSB 838)	Genesis 16:1-16	When Abram was eighty-six years old, he and Sarai thought they should “help” God’s promise along by having a child through Sarai’s maid. Their weakness of faith only caused trouble.
Aug 3	TLH 549; LSB 764	Psalm 9	We give thanks to the Lord for bringing us safely through days of trouble. Our refuge is in Him now and forever.
Aug 4	TLH 117 (LSB 898)	Genesis 17:1-27	When Abram was ninety-nine, God renewed the promise that he and Sarai would have a child. Additionally, as visible signs of that promise, God changed their names and instituted circumcision.
Aug 5	TLH 497	1 Timothy 3:1-16	The church is always in need of faithful ministers. May the Lord give us many! The mystery of godliness is great. What can you do to help make it known?
Aug 6	TLH 130 (WS 718)	1 Timothy 4:1-16	In these times there is false teaching all around us. Do not be deceived and follow them, but rather meditate on the pure Word of God and practice godly living.
Aug 7	TLH 552 (LSB 878)	Psalm 10	Do you feel sometimes that God has forgotten you? Then call on Him to listen to your cry—and at the same time pray that your heart be attentive to His answers.
Aug 9	TLH 610	Genesis 19:1-29	God chose to bring Sodom and Gomorrah’s time of grace to an end on account of the sexual immorality there, but He lengthened the days of Lot who sought refuge in Him.
Aug 10	TLH 378	Genesis 19:30-38	The men of Sodom and Gomorrah gone, Lot’s daughters wouldn’t wait for God to provide them husbands. Yet God used this to raise up the Moabites—and Ruth—and Jesus (Ruth 4:9-17).
Aug 11	TLH 26 (LSB 797)	1 Timothy 5:1-25	Practical pastoral advice for Pastor Timothy: Treat your church members properly and keep yourself pure, for ministers are worthy of double honor.
Aug 12	WS 788	1 Timothy 6:1-10	Where is true wealth found? It is found in the Gospel of Christ and the godliness that flows from it.
Aug 13	TLH 447 (LSB 664)	1 Timothy 6:11-21	“Fight the good fight of faith.” It is hard, but our motivation is the eternal life we have been given in Christ Jesus.
Aug 14	TLH 580	Psalm 11	The Lord sends tests to strengthen His believing children, but the unbelieving do not benefit in the same way from their trials; they will suffer and be judged.
Aug 16	TLH 572	Genesis 20:1-18	Abraham shows weakness of faith again when he fears for his life and gives up Sarah to Abimelech, but God makes things right and sets Abraham back on track to father Isaac.
Aug 17	TLH 16 (LSB 904)	Psalm 14	Those who despise God are often elevated to high positions in the world and are praised for their great intelligence, but the Bible calls them fools.
Aug 18	TLH 292 (LSB 585)	Titus 1:1-16	The hope of eternal life is revealed in God’s Son Jesus Christ. Titus was left in Crete to protect that hope by rebuking with sound doctrine those who opposed it.
Aug 19	TLH 104 (LSB 385)	Titus 2:1-15	Teaching sound doctrine includes teaching how to live in a way that glorifies the salvation that has appeared to all people in Christ.
Aug 20	TLH 288 (LSB 865)	Titus 3:1-15	Let us continue to teach and follow sound doctrine, doing good works for the benefit of all and to the glory of God.
Aug 21	TLH 622	Genesis 24:1-27	Abraham sought a godly wife for Isaac and he put the final choice in the hands of the Lord.
Aug 23	TLH 621 (LSB 858)	Genesis 24:28-67	Both Rebekah and Isaac realized that their marriage was from the Lord. Would that all married couples recognize that! (see Matthew 19:6).
Aug 24	TLH 529 (LSB 719)	Genesis 27:1-45	When it appeared that Esau would receive Jacob’s blessing (Genesis 27:5-10), Rebekah took matters into her own hands. Will we ever learn to let God take care of His promises?
Aug 25	TLH 428 (LSB 729)	Luke 1:1-25	Zechariah was waiting for the coming Savior, but when the wait was over he couldn’t believe it! A little quiet time would remind him that the Lord’s Word is always true.
Aug 26	TLH 78; LSB 935	Luke 1:26-56	Mary was waiting for the coming Savior, and when the wait was over she believed it! No quiet time here, but instead a hymn of praise: “My soul magnifies the Lord!”
Aug 27	TLH 63 (LSB 344)	Luke 1:57-80	John the Baptist had a great job! He helped lead people to love and appreciate the Lord Jesus and the forgiveness of their sins. Pastors today have the same great job!
Aug 28	TLH 23 (LSB 822)	Psalm 21	The Lord is exalted because He listens to His people! What other gods listen and save those who call on them in faith? The enemies of the Lord will learn the hard way that there are none.
Aug 30	TLH 624	Genesis 29:1-15	Like his father Abraham, Isaac wanted his son to find a godly spouse. It’s still best today for believers to find godly spouses. It’s worth the “journey” to locate them.
Aug 31	TLH 340	Genesis 29:16-35	Laban tricked Jacob into taking Leah as his wife too, but the Lord blessed Leah and she became the mother of Judah, from whose tribe Jesus would eventually come.

Serving our Ever-Expanding Overseas Mission Fields

We are continually overwhelmed by how our gracious God has blessed the CLC with an ever-expanding number of church bodies and contacts in our overseas fields. To meet these growing needs, we have increased the number of called servants working with these contacts and church bodies. With the increase in both areas and the identification of other needs in our foreign fields, the Board of Missions has recently created two new positions.

The first of these positions is that of Foreign Mission Coordinator. Considering his extensive knowledge of our foreign mission fields and the fact that his call requires him to make visits to many of those fields, the Board has appointed Missionary Todd Ohlmann to this role. His responsibilities are to meet regularly with our missionaries and those working with overseas contacts, coordinate the reporting and publicity of work and needs in foreign fields, filter financial requests and make related recommendations to the Board of Missions, coordinate KINSHIP funding requests and disbursements, coordinate MDF and General Budget funding requests and disbursements, coordinate the Online Theological Studies efforts, and report regularly to the Board of Missions. We pray that this position will serve to bring more uniformity in our approach to our overseas work.

The second of these positions is the Christian School Instructor Supervisor (CSIS). The primary purpose of this position is to provide instruction and encouragement to the headmasters and teachers of Christian day schools in Kenya on behalf of the Board of Missions and the KINSHIP committee. The Board has recognized the need to support these schools not only by means of financial assistance, but

also by helping them provide solid Biblical instruction to the students we serve.



CLC-supported Lutheran school in Mois' Bridge, Kenya.

The CSIS will work with headmasters and teachers, and will provide ongoing training in the areas of Christian Doctrine and Christian Leadership. He will also offer support and encouragement in the areas of teaching Bible stories and presenting Gospel-centered devotions, while also providing training in teaching methods and classroom management. The CSIS will communicate regularly with these individuals using email or video conferencing, and will make annual visits. The Board issued a call to recently retired Teacher Ted Quade, and he has accepted this call.

We are thankful for the work of our two full-time missionaries, Peter Evensen and Todd Ohlmann, and our two part-time missionaries, Pastor Michael Gurath (Kenya/Uganda) and Pastor John Hein (Liberia). We also recognize that there continues to be a need for another full-time missionary. The 2018 CLC Convention authorized the Board to call a third foreign missionary, and while several developments made it necessary to discontinue the calling process for a time, the Board plans to resume calling when feasible and when travel restrictions due to the pandemic are relaxed.

We pray for the Lord's continued wisdom and blessings as we seek His guidance in serving our brothers and sisters in Christ overseas.



Robert Sauers is pastor of Luther Memorial Church in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and a member of the CLC Board of Missions,

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Worldview of Most Christians is . . . not Christian. A recent Barna study commissioned by the Family Research Council found that, although a majority of American adults identify as Christian, only six percent actually live out a Christian worldview. 1000 people—half of them claiming to be Christian—were given questions like the following:

“Which of these statements best describes your view of the human condition? –

1. People were originally good but have become corrupted by society.
2. There is no such thing as a person being good or bad; people are who they are.
3. People are born into sin and can only be saved from its consequences by Jesus Christ.
4. People are neither good or bad when they are born, but everyone becomes one or the other according to their life choices.
5. Everyone is a divine creature engaged in the eternal pursuit of unity and a perfected consciousness.”

On the above question, only one-third of respondents chose answer #3. Overall, only thirteen percent of respondents said that their Christian faith has any effect at all on their politics, business dealings, or entertainment choices. O’Neil, Tyler. “Most Christians Are Frauds, Chilling Study Suggests. Here’s What You Can Do About It.” *News and Politics*. PJMedia.com, 26 May 2021. Web. 12 Jun. 2021.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



Installation. In accord with our usage and order, Chad Seybt, who was called by St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Melrose, Wisconsin, to be its pastor, was installed on June 13, 2021. Participating in the service were (l-r) Pastor Mark Bernthal, Pastor Bruce Naumann, Professor Paul Naumann, Pastor Chad Seybt, Pastor Em. John Schierenbeck, Pastor Paul Tiefel, and Pastor Em. James Sandeen.
—Pastor Em. John Schierenbeck



Ordination/Installation. In accord with our usage and order, Drew Naumann, who was called by Trinity Lutheran Church in Spokane, Washington, to be its pastor, was ordained and installed on July 4, 2021. Participating in the service were (l-r) Pastor David Naumann, Pastor David Reim, Professor Paul Naumann, Pastor Drew Naumann, Pastor Em. Robert List, and Pastor Wayne Eichstadt.
—Pastor David Naumann

Correction. The July, 2021, *Lutheran Spokesman* wrongly listed Professor Daniel Schierenbeck as the author of that month’s “ILC Newsletter.” The author was Professor Em. Paul Schaller. We regret the error.