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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

*“For thus says the High and Lofty one
Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
‘I dwell in the high and holy place, With him
who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive
the spirit of the humble, And to revive
the heart of the contrite ones.’ ”*

ISAIAH 57:15

IN THIS ISSUE VOL. 58 NO. 7 — December 2015

We are Not Alone	3
We Have Come to Worship Him	4
A High Priest Like Melchizedek	5
George Stoeckhardt	6
Hymn 123, "Our God, Our Help in Ages Past"	8
When Ax Heads Float	10
Benjamin Libby.....	11
"Why Do You Go Overseas?"	12
Prince of Peace - Hecla, South Dakota	14
An Exciting Opportunity in Liberia	16
December "Bread of Life" Readings.....	19
Seen in Passing.....	20
Announcements	20

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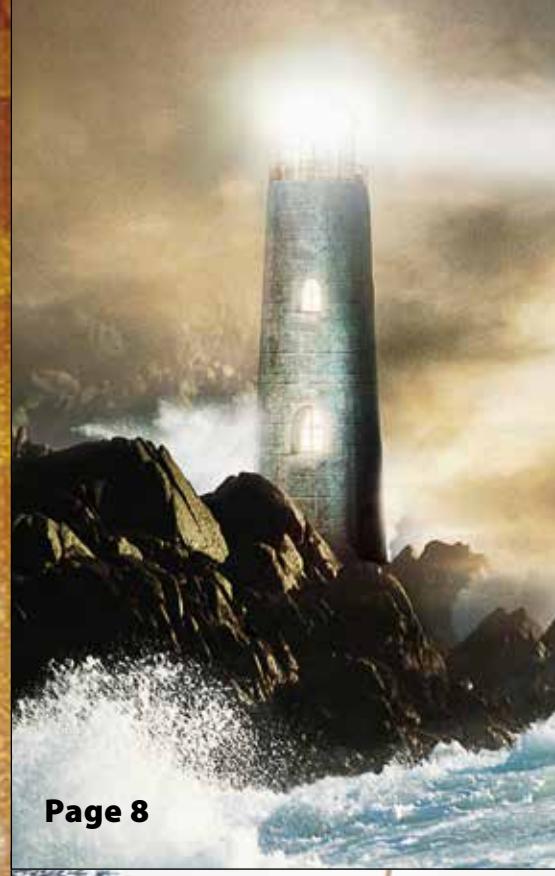


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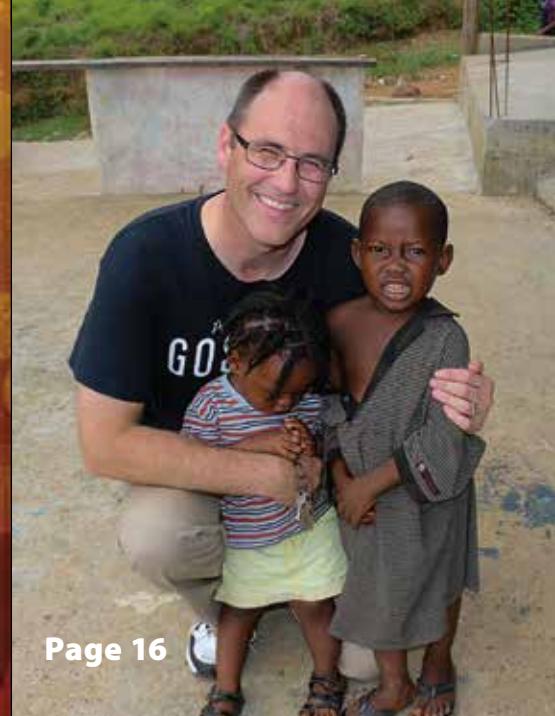
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Page 8



Page 12



Page 16

We are Not Alone

“ I think it's arrogant of us to think that we are alone in the universe. ”

So said a network television news reporter in a discussion of some new discovery in the universe.

That statement is surely one that we would agree with, though not as the reporter intended it. He was not talking about the arrogance of the atheist who says that we are alone in the universe because there is no God. His thought was that there surely must be life somewhere in the universe besides on planet earth; the universe couldn't possibly be as vast as it is with life on only one little speck of a planet in one galaxy.

It is both arrogant and perverse to peer out into God's universe looking for evidence that He does not exist, for the heavens declare His glory and the firmament shows His handiwork (Psalm 19:1), even to those who do not have His Word, or who reject it.

But without the Gospel, contemplation of the universe is no help. Just the opposite: it is downright scary. That the universe is a place so vast, with no apparent end to it, is awesome but hardly reassuring. It testifies of a mighty and wise God but offers no comfort about what His attitude toward us might be. At the same time, the conscience tells sinners that they have offended God, making any thoughts of an encounter with Him to be terrifying thoughts indeed.

But when we believers look at the universe, we see more than God's wisdom and power, for we view the universe through the interpretive lens of the Word. In the Bible God tells us of His love for us sinners, a wondrous love revealed in the person and work of His Son Jesus Christ. It tells us not only of God the Creator, but also of God the Redeemer Who loved us enough to come down from heaven, to take upon Himself our human nature, and to sacrifice Himself to redeem us from sin, death, and eternal damnation.

*"My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret, And skillfully
wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your
eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me, When as yet
there were none of them."*

Psalm 139:15-16.

With this knowledge of God, the universe takes on a whole new meaning. We see it in the Psalms. There David looks at the heavens and marvels that the Maker of them should take notice of us who are so small and so weak, yet he knows that God created us with a high purpose (Psalm 8:4,5); He had knowledge of each of us when He made the universe (Psalm 139:15, 16). To David the vastness of the universe is comforting, for it testifies of a God Who is great enough to care for us, to be in touch with our innermost thoughts and hear our prayers, to fulfill all His promises. He is a God great enough to bring this sin-corrupted universe to an end, to fold it up like a garment and in its place make new heavens and a new earth, an eternal home for us in which righteousness dwells (Hebrews 1:12; 2 Peter 3:13).

As we begin another year, we do so with the confidence that we are not alone in the universe, not left to our own devices with no hope and without God. We have our Savior God Who dwells in a high and lofty place but also with the contrite and humble (Isaiah 57:15). We have a God Who loves us for the sake of His Son Jesus, and Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).



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

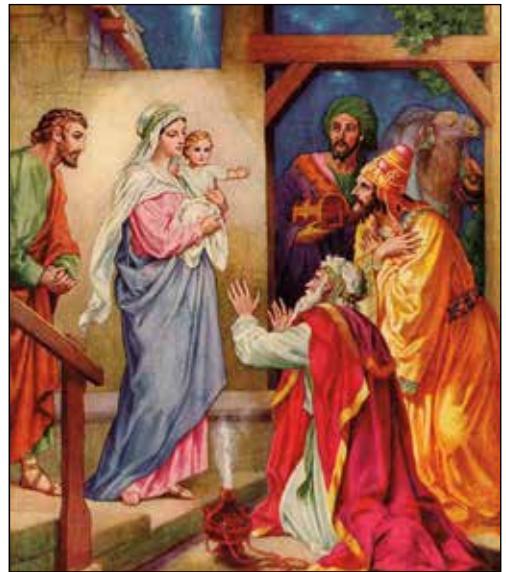
We Have Come to Worship Him

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:1-2).

This account of the coming of the wise men from the East is precious to us because of the significance it has for our own Gentile roots. We are thrilled to see how the Holy Spirit led these Gentiles to come and worship our Redeemer King so early in His life. We are thrilled with how clearly this spells out the intent of God that this Gospel of God's love and forgiveness was intended for the people of all nations, and not for the Jews alone.

We learn from the wise men a proper response to the Gospel. They joyfully went to great lengths to find the One who had been born King of the Jews, simply to worship Him. Consider how important it was to them that they come and worship the Child Jesus. Consider how these prestigious men willingly and even gladly humbled themselves before this Child who was surely living in modest circumstances with working-class parents. Their God-given faith did not falter as they worshiped Jesus, nor did they hesitate to present to their spiritual King precious gifts, offerings from believing hearts.

But these men were not the only ones to respond to this news of the birth of the King of the Jews. King Herod, who was in fact not Jewish but an Edomite, also responded. His response to the news was as powerful and determined as the response of the wise men, but diametrically opposite in its spiritual nature and intent. The same good news of the promised Son of David being born into the world that filled the hearts of the wise men with joy and gladness filled Herod's heart with malevolent hatred and deceit.



How can this be? The Apostle Paul wrote of these contrary effects of the Gospel in his ministry, "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life" (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). So it was that King Herod on the one hand was repulsed by news of the birth of our King, and the wise men on the other hand were drawn to Christ by the Holy Spirit through that same Gospel of Christ.

So it is in this world. There are many who listen to this "story" and may find it charming, judging it to be mere folklore associated with the holidays. Others may even go so far as to mock and seek to discredit the whole account of Jesus' divine nature and the salvation found in His name. What prevents us from being among that number? How is it that we are rejoicing once again this Epiphany season that this Jesus was born to be our Savior also? How is it that we also, through eyes of faith, have seen His star and been drawn to follow it to Bethlehem so that we might worship this One who was born King of Jews as our Redeemer and our Lord? Why do we earnestly desire to present our gifts to Him? It is the gift of faith, bestowed by the Spirit, that allows us to come to the Savior, that Babe of Bethlehem, the One who was born to be our King.

*Then Let Your Word within me • Shine as the fairest star;
Keep sin and all false doctrine • Forever from me far.
Help me confess You truly • And with all Christendom
Here hail You King and Savior • And in the world to come.*" (Worship Supplement 2000, #718:5)



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

A High Priest Like Melchizedek

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him (Hebrews 7:1-10).



Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld's (1794-1872) depiction of Melchizedek, King of Salem, providing Abraham and his army with bread and wine and receiving from Abraham a tithe of the spoils of war.

Three times the writer of Hebrews has described the High Priesthood of Christ as being "according to the order of Melchizedek" (5:6&10, 6:20). In Hebrews 7:1-10 he lays the foundation for this comparison by describing the greatness of Melchizedek, and how his priesthood was superior to that of Old Covenant priests.

Who was Melchizedek? Everything known of this man is recorded in Genesis 14:18-20—how he met Abraham as the patriarch returned from "the slaughter of the kings" (Hebrews 7:1). Despite its brevity, this account is of extreme significance to the writer of Hebrews. He uses it to show five aspects of Melchizedek's greatness.

NAME AND TITLE

The Old Covenant appointed only priests, not kings. And yet Melchizedek was both a priest of the Most High God and the king of Salem (the older name for Jerusalem). His personal name, Melchizedek, means "king of righteousness." His official title, *king of Salem*, means "king of peace." Here there is an unmistakable glimpse of the High Priesthood of Christ. Jesus is our Prophet and Priest and King. By His atoning sacrifice, He brought true righteousness and peace. And where did Jesus accomplish this? In Jerusalem (Salem), the very city in which Melchizedek was king.

GENEALOGY

To serve as a high priest or Levitical priest, one had to prove direct descent from Aaron or Levi. Yet, Melchizedek had no such lineage, and was in fact born centuries before Aaron and Levi. Therefore, his priesthood was not due to the Mosaic Law, but predated it. Here, too, Melchizedek foreshadows Christ. The Mosaic Law did not appoint Jesus as High Priest; God the Father did. The writer of Hebrews states: "So also Christ did not glorify Himself to

*As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Reformation,
we take a brief look at the lives of influential and
important Lutheran leaders and theologians.*

become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’ As He also says in another place: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’” (5:5-6).

AN ENDLESS PRIESTHOOD

Melchizedek was a real person. Yet, none of his life-events (birth, death, lineage) are described in Genesis 14:18-20. He simply appears and disappears. So far as biblical history is concerned, his ministry never ends. And this, too, points to the all-surpassing greatness of Christ’s priesthood. Whereas all Old Covenant priests died, Jesus, the eternal Son of God and the Mediator of the New Covenant, lives forever. As the writer of Hebrews states: “And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life” (7:15-16). See also Hebrews 7:23-25.

BLESSING

When the LORD called Abraham to leave the familiar and travel toward the Promised Land, He said: “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2). And yet, despite the greatness of Abraham’s possessions, faith, and God-given promises, it was not Abraham who blessed Melchizedek. When the two met, it was Melchizedek who blessed Abraham. And as the writer of Hebrews explains: “Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better” (7:7).

TITHES

Abraham also recognized the greatness of Melchizedek. This is why the patriarch gave the priest one-tenth of the spoils taken from the slaughtered kings. And not just a tenth, but the best tenth—the Hebrew word means “the top of the heap.” But this tithe had even more significance. For when Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils, Aaron, Levi, indeed the entire Levitical priesthood—still in Abraham’s loins (7:9-10)—did so too.



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George Stoeckhardt

American-German Theologian & Professor
(17 February 1842 - 9 January 1913)

One can say that what C.F.W. Walther was for dogmatics (the study of Bible doctrine) for the Lutheran church in North America, George Stoeckhardt was for exegesis (the translation and explanation of the Holy Scriptures). After coming to St. Louis, Missouri, in 1878, Stoeckhardt was originally a part-time lecturer in exegesis at Concordia Seminary and then for the last twenty-five years of his life he was a full-time professor at the seminary.

Karl George Stoeckhardt was born in Chemnitz, Germany. Although his father was a chemistry professor and town councilor, his forebears going back to the mid-1600's were orthodox Lutheran pastors. He had three sisters. The youngest, who came to America with him, married Pastor C. C. Schmidt of the Missouri Synod.

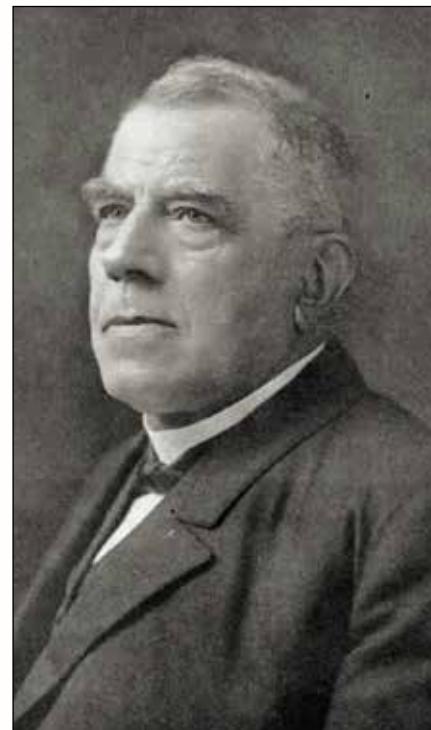
Stoeckhardt studied theology at the Universities of Erlangen and Leipzig (1862-66). At Erlangen, he joined a Christian fraternity, Wingolf, and at Leipzig he and other like-minded students founded a branch of Wingolf, whose constitution contained a clear confession of Christ as the Son of God. The fraternity was also against academic fencing (the object of which was to scar the other person's face), hazing, and excessive drinking.

After graduating, he was a private tutor at what we would call a deaconess school in Tharandt (1867-1870). Of his time as a tutor, he wrote that it required more study to explain theological concepts clearly to his students than it did to teach seminarians, who could be fobbed off with theological jargon. It seems he also began to see

Stoeckhardt is at least the “grandfather” of what later came to be known as the Wauwatosa Theology, if not its “father.”

the importance of exegesis in teaching and explaining the catechism. In 1866 he visited Wilhelm Loehe in Neuendettelsau, and Loehe introduced him to what was happening in North America.

In 1873 Stoeckhardt accepted a call to become the assistant pastor at the state church congregation in Planitz, Saxony. After three years, however, he organized a protest against indifferentism and laxity in the state church. He became acquainted with the Free Church in Germany, and also the Missouri Synod in America. In 1876 he left the state church, and he and others formed the Evangelical Free Church of Saxony and Other States. He became its secretary and also editor of the church paper, *Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Freikirche*. For his articles against apostasy in the state church, he was sentenced to four months in prison.



Karl George Stoeckhardt was a stalwart Lutheran confessor and one of the most important exegetes of the Synodical Conference.

In 1878, Stoeckhardt emigrated to America and became the pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in St. Louis, Missouri, and also began lecturing at Concordia Seminary. C.F.W. Walther had wanted Stoeckhardt elected to a professorship at the seminary, but the synodical convention elected a young graduate instead, Franz Pieper. In 1887, Stoeckhardt was elected professor. His area of expertise was Old and New Testament exegesis, and he wrote commentaries on Romans, Ephesians (translated into English and published by Concordia Publishing House), Philippians, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, the three Epistles of John, Isaiah 1-12, and the Psalms. He also wrote a Bible history. He was a forceful preacher and an orthodox Lutheran. He wrote various sermon books as well as numerous articles for the Missouri Synod's theological journal, *Lehre und Wehre*, and for the *Homiletic Magazine*. Virtually all of his writings were in German, and only some have been translated into English (his commentary on Romans, for example, was translated into English but exists only

as a mimeographed copy and was never published). He was a staunch supporter of C.F.W. Walther in the Predestinarian Controversy and other controversies of the time.

Part of Stoeckhardt's importance lies in the emphasis he put on exegesis, because before his arrival, the Seminary in St. Louis was dominated by Walther's emphasis on dogmatics and citing Luther as well as other orthodox Lutheran theologians. August Pieper wrote that Stoeckhardt produced the Scriptural doctrine and then showed that this was also the doctrine of Luther and the Confessions. Professor Gaylin Schmelting (Evangelical Lutheran Synod) feels that Stoeckhardt is at least the “grandfather” of what later came to be known as the Wauwatosa Theology, if not its “father.”

In 1873, when Stoeckhardt accepted his first call, he married Anna Koenig. Anna's sister accompanied the Stoeckhardts to America in 1878, and in 1881 she married August Pieper. George and Anna Stoeckhardt did not have any children, but adopted two sons after they came to America: Karl, who became a banker in St. Louis; and Ernst, who became a Missouri Synod pastor. When Anna died in September of 1898, Stoeckhardt was so overcome with grief that he suffered a breakdown and eventually had to be institutionalized. By 1901, however, partially through the care of Mary Kohne of Pittsburgh, Stoeckhardt recovered and resumed his teaching duties at the seminary. He later married Miss Kohne. Stoeckhardt continued to teach until 1913, when he died of a stroke at age seventy.



Steven Karp is pastor of St. Stephen Lutheran Church in Hayward, California.



HYMN 123

“Our God, Our Help in Ages Past”

NEW YEAR

 Last August, a *Yahoo News* headline asked, “What Causes Plane Crashes?” My immediate reaction was “Gravity?”

Can you think of anything else as reliable as gravity? Gravity is so universal in our experience and so unfailingly reliable that we never even consider the possibility that it “may not work this time.” When we pour pancake batter onto a hot griddle, we don’t cross our fingers and hope that it will go straight down instead of sideways. When we drop our car keys, we look down near our feet without having to wonder if maybe they landed on the ceiling.

Why do we trust gravity without the slightest doubt and in all circumstances? Our utter confidence in the reliability of gravity is not based on our having taken a college-level course in Newtonian physics. Rather, it is based on our unfailing, everyday experience. In

Hymn 123, drawn from Psalm 90, Isaac Watts expresses that same sort of confidence in our God, and for the same reason: our God has never failed us in the past, He is unchanging, and that gives us confidence to trust Him also in the future. So Watts writes (v.1), “Our God, our Help in ages past, | Our Hope for years to come, | Our Shelter from the stormy blast, | And our eternal Home!” and (v.3) “From everlasting Thou art God, | To endless years the same.”

Our God is more reliable than gravity. Astronauts have been in outer space, where the earth’s force of gravity is essentially negated. But even there, the “force of God” is as strong as it is everywhere else. Whether we are experiencing “the stormy blast” of personal troubles or even (v.5) the grief of death (“Thy word commands our flesh to dust”), God is nonetheless “our Shelter” and we remain

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) was an English nonconformist (that is, a Protestant Christian who did not conform to all the doctrines of the Church of England) hymn writer, theologian, and logician. He was classically educated in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin while in grammar school, which was typically from about age seven to fifteen. W. Gustave Polack, in *The Handbook to The Lutheran Hymnal*, quotes Bensen as saying, “But, as we discuss it [Watts’s achievement], I think we shall come to feel more and more that to a larger view it was hardly more than a dislodgement of the Calvinistic settlement in favor of a reaffirmation of Luther’s, which was the original evangelical settlement of hymnody.” Watts was the author of more than 750 hymns.



“under the shadow of [His] throne” (v.2). There is no place where and no time when the “force of God” cannot be utterly relied upon.

As we begin a new year, some may be tempted to look to the future with feelings of insecurity, even trepidation. But does not our experience of God’s “**Help in ages past**” teach us to rely upon Him, even as we do upon the certainty of gravity?

Why, then, do we still sometimes feel insecure? In large part, of course, that is due to our old sinful nature. But there is another factor, one to which both Psalm 90 and Hymn 123 point. Our insecurity is partly because we are bound within the limitations of time, and accordingly, our perspective of eternal reality is distorted. Watts reminds us in this hymn that the only true and comprehensive perspective is that of eternity; it is God’s perspective. So he writes, “A thousand ages in Thy sight | Are like an evening gone, | Short as the watch that ends the night | Before the rising sun,” (v. 4) and

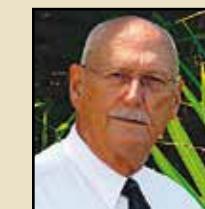
Our insecurity is partly because we are bound within the limitations of time, and accordingly, our perspective of eternal reality is distorted.

“Time, like an ever rolling stream, | Bears all its sons away; | They fly forgotten as a dream | Dies at the opening day” (v. 6). We are as limited by time as a fish is by water. Time is an unbroken boundary to all our personal experience, but that boundary does not encompass the totality of reality. God has revealed to us reality beyond our experience.

Watts ends this hymn with a repeat of stanza 1, but—significantly—changes the last part of that stanza to a confident prayer for God’s protection now and His comforting presence in eternity: “Be Thou our Guard while troubles last | And our eternal home!” (v.8)

Stanzas 4 and 6 of this hymn, by the way (see above), are very direct reflections of Psalm 90, verses 4 and 5, respectively. In fact, compare verses 4-7 of the hymn with Psalm 90:4-6. That echoing of Scripture in his hymns is, perhaps, why *The Lutheran Hymnal* contains thirty-one hymns by Watts.

Is anything else as reliable as gravity? Yes, our God is more reliable than gravity.



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

When Ax Heads Float

It is certainly true that without miracles there can be no Christian Church, no saving faith, no redemption, no life. Foundational are the miracles of incarnation, resurrection and sanctification. Following these are a host of other miracles—all meant to be purposeful and instructive.

The miracles done by Jesus are described as “signs and wonders.” They were done to establish His doctrine and His person: the Son of God with awesome divine power, yet showing compassion and mercy to save, help, and strengthen faith. Except for the cursing of the fig tree (Mark 11:13-21), all the Savior’s miracles were mighty deeds of blessing. Attention was focused on Himself, but never with selfish designs or for entertainment value.

Some of our Lord’s miracles had symbolic significance. The healing of the blind man—Jesus, the Light of the world. The feeding of the five thousand—Jesus, the Bread from heaven. The raising of Lazarus from the dead—Jesus the Resurrection and the Life. Again, all were done to instruct and accomplish His good and gracious will.

So we consider a little gem of a miracle done by Elisha, the Lord’s Old Testament prophet. It also shows the Lord’s power, even through His servants. And it is instructive, as always.

2 Kings 6:1-7 relates a building project. The Old Testament seminary for prophets (preachers) was just too small and cramped for space, so the “sons of the prophets,” Elisha with them, went down to the Jordan River valley to cut down trees for building material. During the chopping, an ax head came off its handle and splashed into the water. Consternation followed, for the ax was borrowed. Elisha threw a stick to the place where it lay, and the iron ax head floated to the surface and was recovered.

Was this just a case of inattention and carelessness, or did someone else “fly off the handle” that day? Was there pride involved, disobedience, doubt? Here we can



only wonder, but we know that in other cases and places God, at least temporarily, withheld His blessing because of these factors (the battle of Ai, Jonah in the storm, and Zacharias).

On the positive side, the ax head was recovered and the building project proceeded on course. Can we not learn that by this miracle, God was blessing this project?

On a church building project in South Dakota some years ago, it was discovered, with great dismay, that the rafters had been sawn incorrectly. Through carelessness, ignorance or pride, a single template had not been used, which led to a multi-inch deviation from one end of the roof to the other. Alas, what to do? The problem was addressed by a wind-storm that blew down the faulty rafters that very night. In my mind, it was an intervention of corrective blessing and approval.

Surely, it is God’s will that building projects in and for His kingdom proceed, with our Savior not only the Master Builder, but also the Chief Cornerstone. Drowning “human ax

heads” are raised to spiritual life. The saving Gospel is to be preached in all the world. Churches are built for the preaching and the hearing of God’s grace in Christ Jesus, crucified and arisen for the redemption and justification of all sinners. Colleges and seminaries are established to train and equip the preachers and teachers. These kingdom projects are successful and God-pleasing when done to His honor and glory.

But there can be human carelessness—even pride, jealousy, and flying off the handle. Satan and overt enemies of the Gospel always try to muddy the water and so prevent or slow down the project. Preachers can preach chaff; work can turn out to be self-glorifying. Truly, it is only by God’s continuous miracle of grace and blessing that kingdom building continues and prospers according to His will. For “unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1). A floating ax head so testifies.

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



Want to meet the person who may be your next pastor or Christian day school teacher?

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



What hobbies, sports or extracurriculars interest you?

I like to play basketball and football. Some of us seminary students play on a flag football team in the recreation league here in town, and I really enjoy that.



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

I am a diehard Michigan fan—Lions, Tigers, Wolverines and Pistons. Most of my friends know that, but it's still important to mention!



Which academic subjects especially interest you?

My favorite class is Practical Theology. We discuss the problems that real-world Christians experience, and how pastors can help them.



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

I don't really know. I think I went to ILC initially simply because I wanted to attend a Christian college. I didn't have any plans past that. But the Lord had a plan for me—He wanted me here for His ministry. I never thought I could become a pastor, but now I see how the Lord gave me the skills necessary to be a preacher of His Word. It's all by the grace of God—He knew what was good for me, even before I knew what I wanted to do.

“Why Do You Go Overseas?”

During the past ten years I have made nine trips overseas to work with our brethren in India and Africa. In the course of those years, I have had people ask me why I feel the need to travel overseas, when there are people all around us in the United States who are lost and need to hear the Gospel. That is a good question, and worthy of a thoughtful response.

It is true that there are many people close to our homes who are in need of the same Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ that we take overseas when we



Above: mission helper Russ Schmidt leads a group of children in Chotororo, Kenya

conduct visitations or Mission Helper trips. Mission work isn't just going to a foreign country to tell people about Jesus, the Savior of sinners. Mission work includes reaching out to the person across the street, in the next cubicle at work, or the Facebook friend across the country. We should be doing that personally, and with members of our congregations at home. But we are confronted with a problem. Not everyone is interested in what Christ has entrusted to us. When someone comes to us and says "I want to know more, come and teach me" or "Come and help me reach others with the Gospel," we should eagerly seize such an opportunity.

We go to places like East Africa, India, and Nepal on Mission Helper trips because we have been asked to



come. We have been asked to come and teach, and to help believers in our fellow church bodies share the Gospel through child evangelism. Our Mission Helper Program is very similar to our Traveling Vacation Bible School Program in the United States. We are going to help sister churches in other countries put on a Vacation Bible School program and, Lord willing, give them the tools to be able to do this on their own in the future. This is our prayer.

Going overseas on a Mission Helper trip or as a part-time missionary doesn't excuse us from our responsibility back home. Instead, it prepares those who participate to be ready to see and respond to the opportunities with which they may be confronted in the future—either next door, across the country, or on the other side of the world.

There is a second benefit that comes from serving the Lord overseas. It changes us. It changes our outlook on the physical blessings that the Lord has bountifully bestowed upon us in the United States. We tend to take these blessings for granted, but when we visit Nepal, India, or East Africa, we invariably leave with a greater appreciation for these blessings. We also come away with a greater appreciation for the sacrifices that our brethren overseas make for the sake of the Gospel. Working with our fellow believers overseas is rewarding, uplifting, and greatly encouraging. It is a joy to see how the Gospel works in their hearts and in their lives! It changes one's perspective on what sacrifice really means.

Finally, relationships are built with our fellow believers

overseas. This is beneficial to them and to us. I have personally seen the gifts and struggles of fellow believers. Knowing this, I have something to keep in my prayers during the years to come. This too, is a blessing for me and for them.

Paul writes: “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20 ESV).

May God bless our witness to all the world!

Nathanael Mayhew is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, and a member of the Board of Missions of the CLC.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church Hecla, South Dakota

Price of Peace Lutheran Church was organized on March 9, 1962, by Christians desiring a church that faithfully taught the Word of God and practiced confessional Lutheranism.

Hecla is a small town in northeastern South Dakota, located near the border with North Dakota. Businesses are few. Apart from a local restaurant and a meat company, agriculture is the chief occupation on both sides of the border. The main highways are paved, of course, but all side roads are gravel or dirt. Nearby communities include Britton, South Dakota, twenty-seven miles away, and Oakes, North Dakota, twenty-five miles away. Aberdeen, some forty-seven miles south of Hecla, is the nearest large town in this part of South Dakota. The climate is relatively dry, and the geography is flat with numerous sloughs. The area—on both sides of the border—is known for its excellent pheasant and deer hunting.

Prior to its organization, the Hecla group had been served by Pastors David Gullerud and Helmuth Rutz, both from Jamestown, North Dakota. From the fall of 1960 to the spring of 1961, members met for worship in a local hall. Later, services were held in the home of a member, Mrs. Lena Eddy. In the summer of 1961, members purchased the Chris Schnable residence on Pine Street to be used as a chapel and parsonage.

In the late fall of 1961, Pastor Clifford Kuehne accepted the call to serve the congregation. Services were held in the chapel/parsonage. When Pastor Kuehne accepted a call to Mankato, Minnesota in 1963, Pastor



Prince of Peace Lutheran Church as it appears today



Arthur Schultz was called to serve the congregation. He remained in Hecla until 1968. In 1969, seminary graduate Walter Schaller took up duties as the new pastor of Prince of Peace.

By this time the congregation had outgrown its chapel/parsonage, and on June 29, 1969, members voted to proceed with plans for a new building. Among several potential property sites in Hecla, the site where the church



Above: Members of Prince of Peace at their outdoor Harvest Festival, August 2015. Inset: Vacation Bible School

now stands appeared to best fit the needs. When the congregation approached Mrs. Preston (Edna) Scott in the fall of 1969 to purchase the lots, she generously donated them to the congregation.

The church basement foundation and block were laid by Darwin Diede from Zion Lutheran, a sister congregation in Ipswich, South Dakota. The church building itself was purchased in 1970 and moved to Hecla from its former location south of Milnor, North Dakota. The altar, pulpit, and other chancel furnishings were purchased from a church in Claire City, South Dakota. Many hours of repairs, refurbishing, and painting were put in by the congregation. A dedication service was held on September 12, 1971. Pastor Walter Schaller served until late fall of 1974. Other pastors serving the congregation included Norman Greve, 1975-1983; John Klatt, 1984-1990; Paul Krause, 1991-1996; John Johannes, 1997-2002; Matthew Hanel, 2003-2005; Nathan Pfeiffer, 2005-2011; and Rick Grams, 2011 to the present.

In July, 1980, members began construction on a twenty-

four by twenty-eight-foot front entry. The interior was completed the following winter. More recently, the congregation has replaced windows, siding and the church roof.

Prince of Peace Lutheran is an active, multigenerational church of forty-two souls. We have two students attending two different colleges. Our other blessings include two preschool, seven elementary, and three high school students. In a recent milestone, Mable Hanson, viewed by many as the matriarch of the congregation, was called by our Lord to her eternal rest on September 9, 2015.

The members of Prince of Peace praise and give all thanks to God our Savior for the many blessings He has showered upon us. We pray for His continued blessing in the years to come, both for us and for all our fellow congregations in the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

Rick Grams is pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Hecla, South Dakota.



An Exciting Opportunity in Liberia

In 2010 a man from Liberia was baptized as an adult and, professing his Christian faith according to what we believe and teach from the Bible, was received into membership at Grace Lutheran Church in Fridley, Minnesota. His name is Alvin Jask. Since then others from his family, originally from Liberia but now living in the U.S., have also become members at Grace, and one of his nephews is enrolled in our Christian day school.

Liberia is probably best known for Ebola, the disease that took so many lives in 2014. According to health officials, this is no longer a threat. However, Liberia is still consistently ranked as one of the poorest nations in the world. Not long ago the country was ravaged by a civil war that significantly set back any national progress. There are also many people who are physically impaired due to the violence of the war—some missing limbs, some without eyesight, and some with deformities due to medical inattention. Health care is neither readily available nor affordable to many Liberians.

Even though Liberia has had various setbacks in its progress (including Ebola), the people there have a fervent yearning to rebuild. Because of this, Liberia's current president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (whom Alvin knows personally) has a number of governmental initiatives in place to rebuild the economy through improvement of roads, infrastructure, health



Top: Alvin Jask — Baptized at Grace Lutheran July 2010. Middle: Alvin Jask with a primary form of local transportation. Bottom: A Liberian selfie with a few of those who enjoyed instruction from the Bible.



Liberia - Location Map (2013) - LBR - UNOCHA" by OCHA.

care, and so forth. Alvin has a personal desire to contribute to this process, having an obvious love for his homeland. Having seen and experienced many of the blessings of living in the United States, he wants to use what he has learned to help his people.

But more importantly, Alvin has a desire to share the Good News of salvation found through our Savior,

Motto: "The love of liberty brought us here"
Capital and largest city is Monrovia.
Liberia means "Land of the Free" in Latin.
 It is bordered by Sierra Leone to its west,
 Guinea to its north, and Ivory Coast to its
 east. It is home to 4,503,000 people. English
 is the official language, but over twenty
 indigenous languages are spoken. The
 climate is equatorial, with significant rainfall
 during the May–October rainy season and
 harsh harmattan winds the remainder of the
 year. Liberia possesses about forty percent
 of the remaining Upper Guinean rainforest.
[Wikipedia](#)

Left: Pastor Emmanuel (a well-respected local pastor) and Pastor Hein. Right: Pastor Hein, Alvin Jask, and Pastor David Koenig.

Preaching the
GOSPEL
IN LIBERIA

**Alvin has been committed
 to and excited about
 sharing the Gospel in
 his home country.**

Jesus Christ. It sometimes seems that the Lord's hand is at work when nations have experienced such lows. This pattern was often experienced by God's people throughout biblical times. During the period of the Judges, there was an oft-repeated cycle of repentance after the people had experienced devastation. Could the same cycle be part of what is happening in Liberia? One thing we do know, the Gospel always has the power to heal!



From the time he began instruction at Grace and learned about his Savior, Alvin has been committed to and excited about sharing the Gospel in his home country. He has spent a significant amount of his own money to construct a building in order to start a Christian day school a few miles northeast of Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. He is now also planning on the construction of a church building nearby.

For the past few years, Alvin and I have been sharing ideas as to how to proceed in Liberia. The CLC Board of Missions has also been informed of Alvin's efforts. The key is having people in place who believe and teach the Bible as we do. Therefore Alvin has been reaching out to many people he knows, and he now has twenty-five contacts who are eager for Biblical instruction, including five pastors. There are several people who are interested in helping him staff his Christian day school.

Missionary Dave Koenig and I have a trip planned to Liberia in November, 2015. By the time you read this, we will have met with our contacts there, investigated the opportunities, and attempted to determine whether doctrinal agreement exists with these pastors. May the Lord bless Alvin's desire to share the Gospel of Jesus in Liberia, and may He give our church body the wisdom and zeal to assist in this work as we are able!



John Hein is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Fridley, Minnesota, and a member of the Board of Regents of the CLC.



Top left: Ten people were baptized, including one family and a variety of others.
Top right: Pastor Emmanuel breaks out with study groups during the Bible seminar.
Middle: Missionary Dave Koenig instructed during 3-day Bible seminar.
Bottom: Pastor John Hien is shown here with some of the people that were most meaningful to him during the trip.

"BREAD OF LIFE" READINGS JANUARY 2016

TLH = The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; WS = Worship Supplement 2000; [] = Biblical Events Remembered

Date	Biblical Events Remembered	Verse	Reading	Comments
Jan 1	[Circumcision and Name of Jesus]	TLH 115	Genesis 3:1-20	When temptations come alluring, make us patient and enduring.
Jan 2		TLH 410	Genesis 6:11-22	God's judgments are always right, but He is also full of compassion as Noah would surely testify.
Jan 4		WS 707	Matthew 1:18-25	Could an angelic appearance convince Joseph to take Mary as his wife? Not by itself, but the Gospel could convince Him.
Jan 5		WS 792	Genesis 8:15-9:17	When Noah left the ark, he didn't complain at the desolation he must have seen, but rather praised God for His salvation.
Jan 6		WS 717	Matthew 2:1-12	They came all that way to visit a Child who didn't even look like a king? Of course! They walked by faith, not by sight.
Jan 7		TLH 409	Genesis 11:1-9	God has a way of getting His way—even when we try to stand in it.
Jan 8		TLH 532	Job 1:1-12	Satan assumed Job's love for God was a product of his comfortable life, but Satan underestimated the love God can instill.
Jan 9		TLH 520:6-8	Job 7:1-11	Job's discouragement sounds a lot like our own. Living in this fallen world is simply difficult, therefore trust the Lord.
Jan 11		TLH 273	Matthew 2:13-23	All the way God's hand is actively guiding His loved ones to safety. Even those martyred children. Even us.
Jan 12		WS 734	Job 19:19-26	Every evil we face must wither at this news: Jesus lives!
Jan 13		WS 740	Matthew 5:1-12	For the Christian, there is happiness in the midst of life's sorrows.
Jan 14		TLH 414	Job 24:1-23	It's hard to watch the wicked prosper, but we know that true success is being counted as one of God's children.
Jan 15		TLH 415	Job 28:1-28	The world seeks its own version of wisdom, but true wisdom is found in following the Lord.
Jan 16		TLH 382	Matthew 7:1-11	When helping others escape their sins, make sure yours are out of the way first.
Jan 18	[The Confession of St. Peter]	TLH 352	Job 38:1-41	These words not only reveal the foolishness of our own complaints, but they strengthen our trust in God at the same time!
Jan 19		TLH 38	Job 42:1-6, 10-17	Our faithful God rescues His servants in the end.
Jan 20		WS 756	Matthew 12:9-21	Jesus did not go out looking for trouble, but looking to help.
Jan 21		WS 784	Genesis 12:1-9	Lord, take my hand too, and lead me.
Jan 22		TLH 422	Genesis 17:15-21	We all remember Sarah laughing, but Abraham laughed too. God didn't let their doubts change His mind, though.
Jan 23		TLH 377:7	Matthew 15:21-28	Those who trust in Him will never be put to shame.
Jan 25	[The Conversion of St. Paul]	TLH 37	Genesis 21:1-21	The God of all grace gives grace to Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and Ishmael—and even to us.
Jan 26		TLH 454	Genesis 25:19-28	When in distress, Isaac prayed, and God answered.
Jan 27		TLH 358	Matthew 18:21-35	We aren't saved because we are forgiving, we are forgiving because we are saved.
Jan 28		TLH 123	Genesis 28:10-22	The God of all generations, (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), makes His promises stand through all generations, too.
Jan 29		WS 787	Genesis 37:1-28	The seeds of jealousy yield a bitter fruit. Lord, keep us from this sin.
Jan 30		WS 786	Genesis 41:46-57	God works through His people to bless the earth. He works through you in your vocation, too, whatever it is.

Lutheran Spokesman

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nominations For ILC President:

The Board of Regents invites nominations for the office of President of Immanuel Lutheran College. The current term of Professor Steven Sippert expires June 30, 2016. All pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of the CLC are entitled to nominate a man from the faculty of Immanuel Lutheran College to serve a two-year term beginning July 1, 2016. Nominations must be written or e-mailed no later than midnight January 5, 2016 to Mr. Craig Ryan; 499 Country Lane; Fulda, MN 56131; E-Mail: cryan@page1printers.com

In accord with our usage and order, **Candice Ohlmann**, who was called by Grace Lutheran Church, Valentine, Nebraska, to serve as the teacher and principal of its newly

reopened school, was installed on August 9, 2015. –Pastor Luke Bernthal

Candidates for Immanuel Professor

Call: The Board of Regents for Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary invites "all pastors, professors, male teachers, and voting members of member congregations of the Church of the Lutheran Confession" (CLC Constitution) to nominate an individual or individuals to fill the vacancy which will be created on the Immanuel faculty by the retirement of Professor John Pfeiffer at the end of the 2015-16 academic year. The individual would teach at the high school (potentially), college, and seminary levels with an emphasis on courses in Hebrew (college) and Old Testament theology (seminary)

and also in other theological disciplines. With the duties including teaching God's Word to adult males, the person is to be a male (1 Tim. 2:12). The position would, God willing, commence with the 2016-17 academic year. Those submitting nominations are encouraged to include information regarding their nominee's educational background and teaching and/or professional experience, also indicating how the person might help our school in supervising extracurricular activities or serving in administrative positions. Please send your nominations postmarked or e-mailed no later than January 20, 2016, to Mr. Craig Ryan, Secretary; ILC Board of Regents; 499 Country Lane; Fulda, MN 56131 E-Mail: cryan@page1printers.com

SEEN IN PASSING

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

No Women Rabbis—for Now—in Orthodox Judaism.

"Women who would be Orthodox rabbis were handed a major setback in October when the highest religious body for Modern Orthodox Jews ruled against their ordination. The Rabbinical Council of America officially prohibited the ordination of women, or the use of the term 'rabbi' or 'maharat' for women." Winston, Kimberly. "Modern Orthodox Judaism says 'no' to women rabbis." *News Wire*. Religious News Service, 2 Nov. 2015. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.

Vatican Under Investigation for Possible Money Laundering.

The Vatican in Rome has launched an investigation of one of its own departments, the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See (APHS). Officials found evidence suggesting that the APHS, a financial powerhouse within the Vatican, had been used for money laundering, insider trading, and manipulation of markets. At least one high-powered Italian banker with ties to the Vatican is suspected of having used the APHS for criminal purposes, presumably with the collusion

of officials inside the Holy See. The cardinal in charge of APHS from 2002 to 2011, eight of the eleven years covered by the investigation, was Italian Attilio Nicora, who is now retired. In a letter to Reuters, Nicora said only that APHS was not a bank "because it does not lend money," but declined to comment on a list of questions sent by email via his secretary. N.a., "Vatican inspectors suspect key office used for money laundering." *World Economy*. CNBC.com, 4 Nov. 2015. Web. 4 Nov. 2015.

Gallup: Number of LGBT Far Fewer than Americans Think.

While social acceptance of LGBT lifestyle and gay marriage has changed radically in America in recent years, one glaring misperception has not—people continue to wildly overestimate the percentage of people who are gay or lesbian. According to Gallup polling in 2014, "the American public estimates on average that 23% of Americans are gay or lesbian, little changed from Americans' 25% estimate in 2011, and only slightly higher than separate 2002 estimates of the gay and lesbian population. These estimates are many times

higher than the 3.8% of the adult population who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in Gallup Daily tracking in the first four months of 2015." Newport, Frank. "Americans Greatly Overestimate Percent Gay, Lesbian in U.S." *Social Issues*. Gallup.com, 21 May 2015. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.

Vast Majority of Americans Still Claim a Religion.

Americans as a whole are growing less religious, but those who still consider themselves to belong to a religion are, on average, just as committed to their faiths as they were in the past — in certain respects even more so. A recent Pew release, the 2014 Religious Landscape Study, indicates that while a small but growing number of Americans are leaving church, the vast majority still do claim a religion. And of those who do, levels of "observance" are as strong as or stronger than they ever were, with just as many attending church or reading their Bibles regularly. Marlowe, Lauren. "Pew study: More Americans reject religion, but believers firm in faith." *Culture*. Religious News Service, 3 Nov. 2015. Web. 5 Nov. 2015.