

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

“Joy O joy,
beyond all
gladness,
Christ hath
done away
with sadness!
Hence, all
sorrow and
repining,
For the Sun
of Grace is
shining!”

TLH 96 — Refrain

REJOICE

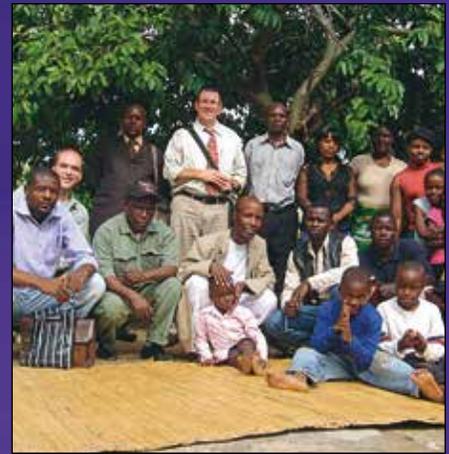




Page 7



Page 10



Page 15

IN THIS ISSUE

VOL. 59 NO. 7 — January 2017

“The Eyes Have It”	3
The Wisdom of the Wise Men	4
Hymn 96, “Oh, Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly”	5
God’s Word Is Very Clear: Only One Atoning Sacrifice Is Necessary	6
An Old Testament Christmas	7
“What Does the Bible Say about Homosexuality?”	8
Life of Luther—School Days	9
The Most Powerful Tool	10
Bread of Life Readings, January 2017	11
St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Dallas, Texas	12
In The Pipeline: Cory Drehle	14
A New CLC Missionary	15
Seen in Passing	16

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“The Eyes Have It”

While that’s probably not the way you would normally see that sentence spelled (“The eyes have it”), it might well be the way Pastor Juan José Olvera would spell it these days. Pastor Olvera is a foreign affiliate of the CLC currently working in the Juárez area south of El Paso, Texas. He, like the Apostle Paul, helps to support himself and his family by sewing—until recently. His ongoing struggle with diabetes left him with serious vision impairment in both eyes. His condition required immediate surgery to correct the problem and to prevent it from leaving him permanently disabled. Thanks to a small gift from the CLC Mission Development Fund and an advance on their modest subsidy, Pastor Olvera had two successful surgeries that have, by the grace of God, restored his vision and allowed him to carry on both his secular and pastoral duties.

Pastor Olvera writes,

Dear Brothers in the Lord,

I give thanks to our God for the blessings I have received. Last week I had surgery on my left eye. All went well with the blessing of the Lord. I received all the necessary care and am very well. Thank you very much for all your prayers and support, both spiritual and material. These blessings make me redouble my efforts to continue talking with everyone in Mexico about the true faith that the Lord has given us. Soon I’ll be sending news of the students in our seminary and the Evangelistic crusades to reach more people for the Lord. Greetings to our brethren in other countries that day by day fight the good fight of faith, as well as our mother church, the CLC. May the spirit of the Lord guide their ministries. I pray always for you, in Christ Jesus.

Your brother and fellow servant in the work of Jesus,
Pastor Olvera

While his physical sight was threatened, not so his spiritual. He not only continues to see his Savior Jesus with the eyes of gratitude and faith, but also all around him he sees the



While most New Year’s resolutions tend to focus on self, our Savior has called us to focus our attention and to pour our best efforts into the work He has given us—to look in love to the desperate spiritual needs of others.

devastation caused by centuries of domination by the Roman Catholic Church. According to the last census, 88% of Mexican citizens are Roman Catholic and are therefore trapped in the blindness of work-righteousness. Pastor Olvera and his fledgling congregation continue to struggle to hold salvation by God’s grace through faith alone before the eyes of their fellow countrymen.

THE EYES THERE ALSO HAVE A VISION OF THE FUTURE.

Recognizing that the fields are white for harvest but the workers are few, Pastor Olvera continues to train other young men for the public ministry. It is difficult for us here to comprehend the struggles they face. Here the Lord has blessed us with a wealth of instructors, beautiful facilities, vast libraries, and growing endowments. There they struggle to secure the basic text books, and must rely on one man for their training. Yet they do so with absolute joy in the knowledge of the One they serve, and in the freedom of our God’s pure, undeserved love. Our brothers and sisters in Mexico treasure the fellowship they have found with like-minded believers in the CLC, and they seek, above all else, our ongoing prayers.

While we tend to think of ourselves as those who give aid to our foreign affiliates, it is often they who help us to look past material distractions and to focus always on that “one thing needful.” We are, or ought to be, reminded of this as we enter another calendar year of God’s grace. While most New Year’s resolutions tend to focus on self, our Savior has called us to focus our attention and to pour our best efforts into the work He has given us—to look in love to the desperate spiritual needs of others. God grant us eyes that look to the future always against the backdrop of eternity and the rapid approach of God’s final judgment. The inevitable result will then be the God-pleasing resolution to work now, while it is still day, recognizing that the night of His judgment will soon fall on all who do not know Him.

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



The Wisdom of the Wise Men

The account of the coming of the Wise Men stands out as one of the highlights of the Christmas and Epiphany seasons. That account should be especially important to us, the believers of the Gentile nations. We look to the Wise Men as the first of the Gentiles to know and worship Jesus as their Savior and Lord. When they arrived in Jerusalem following a long and arduous journey, they immediately began asking about the newborn King. It seems they expected the entire nation to be caught up in the excitement of this momentous event, the coming of the long-promised Messiah. Yes, the question they posed was regarding the birth of the King of the Jews, but they made it evident that they had come to worship Him. This was something more than the usual honor paid when a new crown prince was born. They were searching for their king, a spiritual king.

The Wise Men reported that they had seen His star in the east. This miraculous star piques our curiosity. We want to know what it looked like. Many have attempted to find a natural explanation for this star. Others are focused on how it directed the Wise Men—how did they know to follow this star? In what manner did it direct them on their journey? We know only what the Scriptures reveal. This was a special star, a special heavenly body that the wise men in some manner knew was significant, and that announced for them the birth of the promised Messiah.

We need their wisdom. How did they attain this wisdom? We know that for centuries the kings of the eastern world had “wise men” (magi) upon whom they called for counsel and advice. Sometimes they were seen as magicians who conjured wisdom by mysterious powers. Others studied the



stars not only as astronomers seeking to understand the universe but also as astrologers seeking signs from the sky from which they would derive their counsel for their king. Some would associate the wisdom of these Wise Men with such practices. However, such superstitious practices do not present true wisdom that leads to God or to salvation.

Then again, the wise men of the ancient world ought not to be dismissed as intellectually challenged; the libraries of the ancient world demonstrate the exact opposite. Indeed, writings from the east, the area from which these wise men came, form the framework of our legal system and still very much influence our modern society. They were indeed great

thinkers. But it was not their superior I.Q. that gave these men the wisdom to search for and worship the Lord Jesus.

We know that “*God made foolish the wisdom of this world*” (1 Corinthians 1:20). “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding*” (Proverbs 9:10). It is knowing God’s Word that leads one to God and our Savior Jesus Christ. So it has always been, and so it shall be until the end of the world. While we will not be able to fully explain the wonder of that special star this side of heaven, we can be confident that it was access to and the reading of the Word that was used by the Holy Spirit to give the wisdom of salvation to these Wise Men who came from the east to worship Jesus. Perhaps the Word came to them from the Jews scattered by the Babylonian captivity, or from the writings of an earlier wise man named Daniel.

May the Holy Spirit lead us through His Word to a richer measure of this wisdom, so that we eagerly seek Jesus in our lives, worship only Him, and honor Him with our offerings.



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

HYMN 96

“Oh, Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly”

It may be a new year, but do you get the feeling that you’ve done it all before? Just like last year, you’ve watched the thirty-first of December fade out of sight and the first of January come into focus. Unless the Lord returns first, you’ll likely do the same again next year and the year after that.

In music, when certain lines repeat over and over again, it is called a *refrain*. Thus as the beginning of our year repeats, the words of Christian Keimann’s hymn also repeat through four stanzas: **“Joy O joy, beyond all gladness, Christ hath done away with sadness! Hence, all sorrow and repining, For the Sun of Grace is shining!”**

For as many times as we throw away the old calendar and put up the new, these words stand faithful and true: Christ puts the joy into each year, the happiness into all our moments. Wondrous things our God has done! We rejoice that He became human in the person of Jesus to live with us and to make His home with us month after month—even forever! We find it fitting that New Year’s Day is still part of the Christmas season (the eighth day of Christmas), for indeed as the new year dawns, we **“Tell abroad His goodness proudly Who our race hath honored thus That He deigns to dwell with us.”**

Christian Keimann

Born: February 27, 1607 - Pankratz, Bohemia, Germany
Died: January 13, 1662 - Zittau, Germany

Christian Keimann (Keimann) was the son of Zacharias Keimann, a Lutheran pastor at Pankratz, Bohemia. In 1627 he began his studies at the University of Wittenberg, receiving his master’s degree in 1634.

The same year Keimann was appointed the Town Council of Zittau as associate director of the gymnasium, and in 1638 was promoted to the position of Rector.

Keimann was a prominent teacher and author, especially of scholastic writings. His hymns, about thirteen in number, are among the best of his time; they breathe a firm conviction of faith; they are churchly; they are an expression of sound Christian experience and are characterized by exceptional poetic beauty. Almost all of them came into church use. They rank high among those of the 17th century, being of genuine poetic ring, fresh, strong, full of faith under manifold and heavy trials, and deeply spiritual. The melody was composed by James Tilleard (b England, 1827, - d 1876). A second melody by H. Pope has been taken from a Swedish book of chorales, where it was set to J.O. Wallin’s hymn: *Stilla jag pea dig vill akta.*

Source: ELHHB Website [Dahle, Library of Christian Hymns; Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal]

Your new year will not be free of suffering and sadness. Jesus told His disciples, *“In this world you will have trouble”* (John 16:33). You do not know what poverty may lie ahead or what weakness. If you knew the trials ahead of time, you would surely not choose them. Yet when they come, take comfort in this, that your Savior *did* choose them. **“See, my soul, thy Savior chooses Weakness here and poverty; In such love He comes to thee nor the hardest couch refuses.”** In becoming human, Jesus chose to feel our temptations, to partake of our sadness, to share in all that stings and hurts us in this life, to accept the “hardest couch,” the most difficult path. Why? Because **“All He suffers for thy good, to redeem thee by His blood.”** His path to the cross and to your salvation is a *Via Dolorosa*, a way of sorrows for Him; yet it results in nothing but blessing and good for you.

Can this good news make our new year anything but a year of thanksgiving? **“Lord, how shall I thank thee rightly? I acknowledge that by Thee I am saved eternally.”** As the years repeat, eternal life’s great refrain repeats, and we give thanks *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16 NIV).

Keimann (1607-1662) knew this gospel well. He graduated from the University of Wittenberg in 1634, just 100 years or so after Martin Luther taught there. He became a distinguished teacher and authored thirteen hymns, two of which have been translated into English (the other being *Jesus I Will Never Leave*, TLH 365).

He closes this hymn with a prayer: **“Jesus, guard and guide Thy members, Fill Thy brethren with Thy grace, Hear their prayers in every place. Grant all Christians, far and near, Holy peace, a glad New Year!”**

Yes, dear Jesus, grant us another year under Your loving care, resting in the peace of the forgiveness of sins, and appreciating the joy of Your presence!



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

God's Word is Very Clear: Only One Atoning Sacrifice is Necessary

Space limitations for the article prevent being able to print the text, so we ask you to first read **Hebrews 10:11-18**. We suggest that you also keep this passage open before you for reference as you read the article.

A popular expression these days is "Let me be clear." Speakers preface their statements in this fashion because they believe that what they are about to say is very important and they don't want anyone to miss or misconstrue it.

Thankfully, all of Holy Scripture is abundantly clear. This blessed truth is brought out repeatedly in the Bible, such as in the psalmist's declaration concerning God's Word, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (119:105).

Whether we are reading the Law of God, which reveals God's holy will; or the Gospel of Christ, which makes known God's gracious plan for our eternal salvation, it is reassuring and comforting to know there is no unclarity or ambiguity in any of these important truths.

A good example of the clarity of the Gospel is found in Hebrews 10:11-18. The inspired writer makes it absolutely clear that by Jesus' one sacrifice on the cross, He atoned for all the sins of the world for all time. This is stated repeatedly. We read again and again, "*this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God*" (v.12). "*By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified*" (v.14). "*Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin*" (v.18). You can even go to the verse preceding this section and find it once again stated, "*we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*" (v.10).

If this Gospel declaration is so clear, why the need to say it repeatedly in such a short span in the Bible? This is due in part to the denseness of mankind's sin-darkened mind, and

also his tendency to think that he can contribute to his own salvation.

Consider the following example. While the Roman Catholic Church teaches that Jesus is our Savior from sin, nevertheless they erroneously hold that Jesus' one sacrifice didn't atone for all our sins. Because of this faulty belief, they have manufactured so-called meritorious deeds for sinners to do in order to absolve them of those extra sins. These include repetitiously praying the Lord's Prayer, idolatrously saying the Rosary, and vainly offering up a supposed bloodless sacrifice of Jesus in the Mass (Lord's Supper).

Contrary to these empty practices, the Holy Spirit clearly presents throughout Holy Scripture the case for Jesus' satisfactory payment for all sins through His one sacrifice. The apostle John testified repeatedly both in his gospel and epistle of Jesus' one sacrifice atoning for all our sins. In his inspired record of John the Baptist's ministry, he quotes the Baptizer declaring concerning Jesus, "*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" (1:29). Also in

his epistle, the apostle made it crystal clear that God's one sacrifice of His precious Lamb washed us completely clean of all our sins, saying, "*the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7).

Thank God He is abundantly clear in His holy Word that by Jesus' one sacrifice on the cross, He has made full satisfaction for all the sins of the world!

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



The Holy Spirit clearly presents throughout Holy Scripture the case for Jesus' satisfactory payment for all sins through His one sacrifice.

An Old Testament Christmas

With Christmas just past, we are reminded that the event of the birth of God's Son was surrounded by prayers and songs—especially songs of praise. The choir of holy angels over a Bethlehem field was preceded by Mary's *Magnificat* and Zacharias's *Benedictus*, and followed by Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis*. All thanked and glorified God for filling a great need, a Savior for rebellious and loveless mankind.

The first Christmas was, of course, not the second. But there was a birth in the Old Testament that in several ways prefigured the Christmas account. It involved a woman named Hannah and her son Samuel.

As one reads their story (1 Samuel 1-2), it is clear that Hannah started out a most unhappy wife, with a distressing problem and personal need: she was childless in an age when children were highly valued. Not only that, but her rival—her husband's other wife—had been blessed with numerous children and took great pleasure in rubbing that fact in Hannah's face. The worst times were the festival days, or holiday season. Her husband loved her, but that was not enough to quell her sadness.

And so Hannah prayed that God would reach down, open her womb, and give her a child. But even her godly prayer caused her some humiliation, just as Mary centuries later may have suffered public embarrassment because of her pregnancy. For as Hannah silently moved her lips in prayer, Eli the priest concluded she was drunk, and he rebuked her.

Even as Hannah had a personal need, let us assume she also recognized an even greater need. For she lived in a time when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Men faithful to God's Word and promises were needed. And so Hannah made a vow. If God would give her a son, she would dedicate that same son to the Lord in special service. Who can doubt this is just what God wanted to hear?

In the fullness of time, a son was born to Hannah. Her song of rejoicing seemed to serve as the template for Mary's own *Magnificat* centuries later. At the appropriate age, Samuel was dedicated to the Lord under the care of Eli the priest, and there he "continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men" (1 Samuel 2:26 NIV). Almost the exact words were applied to Jesus centuries later. Thus began years of service for Samuel—a prophet of God great in his faithfulness. In his own way, Samuel was a savior to his people, an instrument of blessing, bringing them God's word and calling them back to godly obedience.



In his own way, Samuel was a savior to his people, an instrument of blessing, bringing them God's word and calling them back to godly obedience.

How shall we keep on celebrating a Hannah/Samuel Christmas? Are you childless and want children? Pray, for "children are a heritage from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3), with whom nothing is impossible.

Do you suffer from the "holiday blues?" Be a Hannah and rejoice in the Lord's salvation. "For He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap" (1 Samuel 2:8). Do you recognize our modern situation, in which so many are again doing what is right in their own eyes? Pray that the terrible scourge of abortion be given its own death needle. Dedicate your children to God and, as possible,

steer them to service in the Lord's kingdom. As you teach them, pray that they grow in wisdom and favor with God and men, that they be saviors in their own right, bringing many to Christ by Gospel Word and godly example. And like Hannah and Mary, don't forget your own kingdom service, perhaps even writing—but especially living—your own song of praise.

For the Lord is to be greatly magnified by His people. In Christ Jesus He has saved us and "makes us inherit the throne of glory" (1 Samuel 2:8).

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



"What Does the Bible Say About **Homosexuality?**"

It may be surprising to learn that the Bible doesn't say a lot about homosexuality. It is mentioned specifically in just a handful of places (such as Leviticus 18:22-24, Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and 1 Timothy 1:9-10). However, what the Bible says about this topic is clear and pointed. Homosexuality is an abomination—a thing hated by God. It is also a sin against society and against one's own body. Any argument in favor or support of homosexuality cannot stand in the light of God's Word.

Unfortunately, what is most certainly a moral issue has, in our society, also become a political issue. Thumbing their noses at God, godless politicians, sociologists, and socially minded clergy have argued in favor of homosexuality to keep themselves in favor with those who desire to fulfill the lusts of their flesh. In an attempt to appear non-judgmental, they willfully ignore the judgment which God Himself makes against those who suppress the truth (see Romans 1).

This article, though, is not meant for those who use their positions to influence others. Rather, it is for those who have been influenced, to one degree or another, by them. Sadly, it is not just the avowed atheists who have bought the lie of homosexuality; many professing Christians are also being influenced into thinking that this lifestyle is nothing more than a personal choice that is morally neutral.

Let it be said up front that while homosexuality is a sin, it is a sin for which Jesus suffered and died on the cross. Many individuals who have been tempted by this sin, and even those who have engaged in homosexual relations, have found comfort and forgiveness from God for Jesus' sake. God is not shocked by the corruption that flows forth from our hearts

*Do you not know that the
unrighteous will not inherit
the kingdom of God?*

*Do not be deceived. Neither
fornicators, nor idolaters, nor
adulterers, nor homosexuals,
nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor
covetous, nor drunkards, nor
revilers, nor extortioners will
inherit the kingdom of God.*

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

**Unfortunately, what is
most certainly a moral
issue has, in our
society, also become
a political issue.**

and minds, but has mercy on us and continues to desire our repentance and salvation.

Homosexual behavior is rebellion against God (as is defending or excusing it). It is rebellion in a number of ways: it mocks the marriage relationship that Scripture specifically says is a reflection of Christ and the Church, it disdains God's blessing of life in that no human being ever resulted from a homosexual union, it seeks first and foremost the fulfillment of one's own fleshly desires, and it ultimately results in calling God a liar for accusing one of sin and for pointing out his need for Christ who is the Savior from sin.

Any and every argument in favor of homosexuality must reject God's own testimony and replace His Word with one's own foolish opinions.

God's Word through the Prophet Isaiah finds application here: *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55:9 ESV). It is interesting to note here that when God spoke the words of Isaiah chapter 55, He wasn't just speaking about what is and what is not sin. He was speaking about how to deal with sin. Sin isn't dealt with by ignoring it, justifying it, or defending it. Sin is dealt with by bringing it to

God in repentance. And this is His promise: *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"* (Isaiah 55:7 ESV).

If you have any questions or if you desire to study this issue further, be sure to speak with your own pastor. God gave him to you for the purpose of helping you grow in your understanding of His truth and especially for bringing to you His forgiveness.



Frank Gantt is pastor of St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lemmon, South Dakota.

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

Life of Luther — School Days



nce Martin Luther was old enough, his parents sought to provide him with an education that would give him a better life, sending him off to several different schools throughout his childhood, first to Mansfeld (in the German province of Saxony), then to Magdeburg, and then to Eisenach.

Your parents provided for your education, too; and you may think well of your schools. Luther had no such fond memories. He said his teachers “belonged to the uncouth class of schoolmasters” who treated children “no different than a jailer treats a thief.” He described his experience as a “hell and purgatory” where nothing could be learned due to constant “flogging, tremor, anxiety, and grief.”

If this sounds like Luther’s monastic life, you are correct. He attended a variety of schools, but they were all run by the religious orders of that day, which were riddled with false doctrine that resulted in false practice.

The spiritual care he received mirrored the way he was treated physically. Their teaching had no comfort of the Gospel, but was filled instead with terror toward God and His Son: according to Luther “As soon as a child was old enough to put shoes on and had scarcely come out of the baptismal waters, he had it stolen away again by such preaching, ‘Oh, you lost your baptism long ago and have defiled your garments in sin such that you must now think only of making penance



**“Works indeed are good,
and God strictly requires
them of us, but they
do not make us holy.”**

Martin Luther

for them and doing enough through fasting, prayer, pilgrimages, and orders, until you make atonement to God and come again thereby into His grace!”

Luther said that any time the name of Christ was mentioned, he would become pale and frightened, because even little boys were taught to regard Him as a terrifying judge. Jesus was “so abominably depicted that we dreaded Him more than Moses” and came to think “that Moses’ teaching was actually easier and friendlier than Christ’s teaching.”

Luther further characterized his school experience this way: “The unspeakable blessings of Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension were denied, His holy Gospel blasphemed and condemned, and faith destroyed in this idle workshop of darkness.”

It sounds horrible, and it was. Luther grew up in the dark days of the papacy, days filled with the devil’s lies. All of this, however, was part of God’s way of preparing him to become the blessed Reformer of the church. In his youth little Martin was steeped in the error of work-righteousness, so that later he would be able to adore the magnificence of God’s grace from the

perspective of his childhood pain under the law.

What a blessing it is that God has given us the Gospel of justification by grace through faith in Christ! When Jesus went to the cross for our sins, He suffered the terrors of hell in our place so that little children as well as adults might know the peace of forgiveness, rather than face the horrible prospect of deserved damnation. All thanks and glory be to Him Who loved us, and gave Himself for us.



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

The Most Powerful Tool

I was in Marangu, Tanzania, for a pastoral conference with men from the Moshi District. Our conference was being held at the Banana Jungle Lodge just outside of town. I was staying in a hut at the lodge. It was nice, but it had a few problems. The glass was missing in one of the windows in the bathroom. The water heater had a slow leak. The cold water handle on the shower wouldn't budge. The biggest problem was the shower. I couldn't take a shower without getting scalded unless the cold water handle was fixed. I didn't want to bother anyone, and I am pretty handy, so I set to work on the handle. But I didn't have any tools—not one. I wrestled with it, but it was no use. "If only I had my tool box from home," I thought, "I could fix this." Finally I had to give up and call in reinforcements. No problem, they said. They would take care of it. One person came to fix it, then another. Finally, they were picking up my things and moving me to a different hut. It couldn't be fixed—at least not with the tools that were at our disposal.



The same is true with the spiritual problem of sin. We try to fix our problem with all kinds of remedies. We try to cover it up, excuse it, or compare our actions with the actions of others, instead of with God's perfect will. We try to make up for these failures with more "good works" or seek atonement for them by making things right with those we have wronged. But none of these "solutions" fix the problem. There is only one solution to the problem of sin—Christ. And Christ is revealed to us in His Word.

It's a humbling, and yet necessary reminder: We don't fix people. We don't solve their problems. We simply bring them the Word, the most powerful tool of all, and the only tool for the job. The Holy Spirit does the rest.

Work in Africa has many challenges: language, culture, distance, and time available all pose major hurdles to the work. But how rewarding it is to work with people who hunger for the Word! The conference at Marangu was a good one. We covered the first two articles of the Augsburg Confession (Of God and Of Sin). There were excellent questions and edifying discussions. At the end of the conference, several of the men expressed their thankfulness for the material presented and the time taken to organize the seminar. They requested that the seminar be done here every year. They were eager to grow and learn more about the God Who created them and redeemed them from their sin through the cross. They desired that most powerful tool of all, the only one that can fix their problem of sin—God's Word.

As a Christ proclaimer, I have confidence that my work is not in vain, because I am using the most powerful tool in the world—the very Word of God. The Word that God used to call this world into existence in the beginning is the same Word that God uses still today to create new hearts

in those who are dead in trespasses and sins and without hope in this world. This second creation is no less of a miracle than the first! But we often doubt its power because we don't always see a visible change from spiritual death to spiritual life. We don't always see the spiritual growth in those around us as we would a full blooming flower burst forth from a simple bud. And yet, seen or unseen, the Word of God is at work, creating and sustaining faith.

Thank God for that same miracle in us!



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

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JANUARY 2017

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

Date	Verse	Reading	Comments
Jan 2	TLH 123:1-4	Psalms 90:1-6	We have to admit that we are nothing next to God. What grace that He takes notice of us at all!
Jan 3	TLH 123:5-6	Psalms 90:7-10	Even those sins we are not aware of are seen by the eyes of our God.
Jan 4	TLH 123:7-8	Psalms 90:11-17	The Lord’s forgiveness, compassion, and unfailing love shall bless us all our days.
Jan 5	TLH 134	John 3:1-4	Jesus revealed Himself as the One sent from God, and the miraculous signs confirmed it.
Jan 6	TLH 127; LSB 401	John 3:5-15	Salvation comes through Spirit-worked faith in Jesus.
Jan 7	TLH 245	John 3:16-21	The Light of the world has come into the world to save it.
Jan 9	WS 717	Exodus 3:1-6	God revealed Himself to Moses at the bush, and Moses respected God’s holiness.
Jan 10	TLH 367	Exodus 3:7-15	God came to rescue His people from slavery in Egypt, just as He later came in Christ to rescue us from sin.
Jan 11	TLH 529	Exodus 3:16-22	Moses needed to be reminded and encouraged that success would not depend on him, but on God.
Jan 12	TLH 398; LSB 411	1 Timothy 3:1-10	Yes, this is how any Christian ought to live before God, but a public minister especially should publicly follow Christ.
Jan 13	TLH 493	1 Timothy 3:11	Pastors’ wives have an impact on the ministry, too.
Jan 14	TLH 397	1 Timothy 3:12-16	A minister strives to conduct himself in a way that reflects the great Gospel he preaches.
Jan 16	WS 744	Psalms 19:1-6	God’s creative work—from the tiniest child in the womb to the highest mountain vista—shows us His glory.
Jan 17	TLH 285	Psalms 19:7-11	The words of the Lord are righteous, trustworthy, and precious. They give spiritual life.
Jan 18	TLH 334	Psalms 19:12-14	We ask the Lord, our Redeemer, to rule over what we say and do so that sin may be put down.
Jan 19	TLH 525	John 9:1-12	Here the glory and power of God are revealed, and He shows He can make even one’s suffering turn out for good.
Jan 20	TLH 133; LSB 545	John 9:13-23	The Pharisees understood that this miracle showed Jesus to be the Christ, so they tried to discredit what had happened.
Jan 21	TLH 132; LSB 402	John 9:24-34	The healed man delivers such a clear sermon that the Pharisees can only resort to name-calling rather than refuting it.
Jan 23	WS 718	John 4:1-12	Could we learn something about evangelism from Jesus? See how He so gently leads the woman to seek living water.
Jan 24	TLH 126; LSB 540	John 4:13-26	Jesus did not reveal the woman’s sin to her without also revealing the solution: The Messiah had come.
Jan 25	TLH 351	John 4:27-54	The new believer became a missionary. She could not help but tell of what she had seen and heard.
Jan 26	TLH 40	Genesis 12:1-4	God promises to bless Abraham, but most importantly this means the way is already being prepared for the Messiah.
Jan 27	WS 784	Genesis 12:5-9	We see Abraham’s faith in action—how he goes where the Lord bids him and then worships the Lord from the heart.
Jan 28	TLH 396	Genesis 12:10-20	Although Abraham believed God, he struggled against his sinful nature too, just as we do.
Jan 30	TLH 99:3	Romans 7:1-6	Just as a death breaks the law’s hold over a marriage, so Christ’s death breaks the law’s hold over us.
Jan 31	TLH 295	Romans 7:7-12	The Law is good and just; that it brings death is solely because of man’s sin.

St. Matthew Lutheran Church

Dallas, Texas



Driving down Frankford Road, a busy three-lane, it is easy to notice the painted cedar-wood exterior and pitched roof of St. Matthew Lutheran Church. Located in a prosperous area of North Dallas, the city has literally grown up around the church since it was built in the late 1980's. Where there were once fields and empty lots, now stands a mix of residential homes, stores, and restaurants. This area of Dallas is about twenty miles north of the downtown skyscrapers, thirty miles northeast of the new Cowboy football stadium, and nine miles from former President George W. Bush's residence on the northern edge of the city line (President Bush hasn't stopped in to see us yet). Dallas itself sits on the plains of Texas at the tail end of "tornado alley," and alternates between droughts and flooding, extreme heat and ice storms, interspersed with countless days of beautiful sunny weather.

The congregation originally chose the Frankford Road location for the church because it sat in the middle of a triangle of current members, somewhat equidistant from everyone. Then, in a labor of love, they built the church by hand and volunteer labor—including installing wooden planks across the high ceiling and constructing stained-glass windows.

The church was completed and dedicated to the glory of God in 1989. The building was originally designed to also house the

pastor, and did so for many years. However, in 2007, a separate parsonage was purchased three miles north, in the suburb of Plano.

The location itself has turned out to be one of the greatest outreach tools for the congregation, which has been blessed with an average of thirty visitors from the area walking through the doors every year. This is also due, in part, to the general cultural climate; which is conservative and friendly to church goers. The Dallas area is home to five of the fifty largest churches in America. There is a strong Baptist presence, but also a general respect for the importance of church and worship that is not found in all metropolitan areas. This leads to many opportunities to share the truth, and many have joined our church family after the Lord has led them through the door on a Sunday morning.

The congregation of ninety-five souls is a mix of southerners, native Texans, and northerners who have moved south for a variety of reasons, including warmer weather and the growth in job opportunities. The congregation began when a group of people in Dallas reached out to the CLC church in Spring, Texas, and later were served by the missionary-at-large, who at the time was in Austin, Texas. The missionary-at-large (Pastor Paul F. Nolting) determined there was great potential in this



and evangelism. It closely examines the breathtaking wonders of God in creation and the errors of the unscientific claims of evolution. This class, created and taught by Mr. Brian Mibus, has been a great blessing to our young people.

St. Matthew was able to connect with the broader CLC when the “Lone Stars” traveled for the first time to the grade school basketball tournaments in Eau Claire in 2015. Many of the parents also made the journey, and it was a unique opportunity to meet fellow Christians and be introduced to the ILC campus. A number of children have also been able to take part in the CLC Youth Camp at ILC as campers and counselors.

If you move to this area, you quickly find out that the soils in much of North Texas, and certainly the Dallas area, have a high clay content. This may not seem important, but when the expansive clays absorb moisture, they tend to swell. Likewise, when they dry, they tend to shrink. This repeated action many times causes the foundations of buildings to move up and down and inevitably causes damage to the structure. Much of the Dallas area is literally built on shifting ground. This is a great reminder of the truth of our own lives as Christians—we do not build the foundation of our lives, our faith, or our ministry on the unsteady soil of this world, but on the rock of Christ.

We are thankful that the Lord has built St. Matthew on the True Foundation and continues to give focus and strength through the cross, to take the joy of the Gospel and message of salvation out into the world.



Matthew Hanel is pastor of St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Dallas, Texas.

area. As the church continued to flourish, it called its first full-time pastor in 1986. The congregation has been served by four different full-time pastors in its thirty-six years.

Much of the current membership of the church is spread out over the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex of seven million people, and a good share live at significant distances. More than one family makes the drive from forty plus miles away through the city to church on Sunday. The challenges of traversing congested city areas are always present for a majority of the members. St. Matthew also continues to serve members and contacts to the north and south on Highway 35 from Oklahoma City, to Waco, to Austin. This makes our time when we can all be together to worship on Sunday morning precious. An average of fifty-five per Sunday gather together to worship, with Bible class for adults and Sunday school for children before the worship service.

In addition to our regular Bible instruction classes for adults, confirmation students, and children; we recently started a young adults’ class that has a wonderful blend of apologetics

Cory Drehle

Age: 25

Program: College—Pre-Theological Studies

Year in School: College Senior

Where were you born? Liberty, Missouri.

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in a town called Norborne, Missouri.

Where is your current home?

Your home congregation?

I am a resident student on the Immanuel campus, and a member of Messiah Lutheran Church of Eau Claire.

Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family.

My parents' names are Gerald and Kimberly. Dad does road work for the county, and Mom has been a teacher for quite a while. I also have two older brothers, Jordan and Devon. Devon is two years older than I am, and Jordan is two years older than Devon.

What hobbies, sports or extracurriculars interest you?

Fishing, football (more so playing than watching), model railroading, things like that.

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

For whatever reason, when I was in 4-H years ago, I took a clowning course. Because of that I know some basic tricks ranging from pantomime to making simple balloon animals. Unsurprisingly, there aren't many needs for these skills.

Which academic subjects especially interest you?

I found Christian dogmatics especially interesting because it covered a lot of ground on many things.

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

I was a sophomore in high school when the ministry first seemed like an actual possibility as a career path for me. Prior to that point, I saw ministry as a necessary job but not a job I'd be willing to even consider. I'm not entirely sure why it clicked that day, except for some of the Christian instruction I had growing up. I wasn't sure it was a good choice for me. Over the years following that moment, I tried teaching at various opportunities, and I participated in different speech contests. To my surprise, I



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.



quite enjoyed those endeavors. These things, along with prayerful consideration, helped on the way here.

What have you appreciated most about your time at ILC?

It goes without saying that we are beyond blessed to have a school that is Christ-centered and does not budge in that stance, but I will say it anyway. The fact that all of the classes, the teachers, the students, and the staff go out of their way to demonstrate their love of God in all that they do, teach, and study both on and off the campus itself is something worth noting. To be a part of this school is an added statement to our already wonderful confessions of faith. Though we may take such things for granted, it is good to know that the Lord has blessed us with this gift.

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

Leaders of the church need willingness and humility. There must always be that willingness to study and apply God's Word daily and to do so faithfully. There must be the willingness to not only speak but also to listen, to not just teach but to be taught, to accept our wrongdoings as the past and focus on the saving words of the Gospel as the present and future. The future leaders of the church will also need humility, the recognition that God is the One in command, and that we are the mouthpieces. The focus of leaders now and in the future should always be on Christ and His message.

A New CLC Missionary

In a September call meeting of the Board of Missions chaired by our CLC President, Michael Eichstadt, a call was issued to Pastor Todd Ohlmann to become our CLC Visiting Missionary. After six weeks of prayerful deliberation, Pastor Ohlmann accepted that call. For this we give praise and thanks to the Lord of the harvest. Pastor Ohlmann will begin his service as a CLC missionary on January 1, 2017. A commissioning service for Missionary Ohlmann will be held at Messiah Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, on Monday, January 2, 2017, at 7:00 P.M. He will fill the position vacated by Missionary Matthew Ude, who has accepted a call to serve Faith Lutheran Church in Markesan, Wisconsin. Missionary Ude served as our CLC missionary for over nine years; he was based primarily in India, but also served West and Central Africa. We thank the Lord for Missionary Ude's service during these past years.

As presented to our CLC Convention this summer, this call is unlike previous CLC missionary calls. Missionary Ohlmann will be stationed here in the United States, but will spend approximately six months each year in overseas travel as he conducts regular visitations to our sister church bodies as well as developing contacts in foreign fields.

The CLC is currently in fellowship with church bodies in the following foreign fields, where we have conducted and plan to continue regular visitations:

- ♦ **Asia** (India, Nepal, Myanmar)
- ♦ **East Africa** (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda)
- ♦ **Central Africa** (Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Zimbabwe)
- ♦ **West Africa** (Nigeria, Ghana, Togo)



Missionaries Todd Ohlmann and David Koenig with church workers in Myanmar.



Missionary Ohlmann (seated, left) with Pastor Rob Sauers, Missionary Peter Evenson, and members of the HCLCN in Nepal.

Special visitations may also be necessary as the Lord provides opportunities through new contacts. Liberia, Haiti, Japan, Rome, and Argentina are examples of locations where we are currently carrying on correspondence with individuals who are interested in fellowship with the CLC.

In the months that he is stateside, Missionary Ohlmann's duties will include visits to domestic subsidized congregations, correspondence with foreign affiliates and new contacts, continuing development of the Online Theological Studies website, assisting with the CLC Mission Helper Program, attending Board of Missions meetings in an advisory capacity, guest preaching, attending area delegate conferences, and any other opportunities that the Board of Missions deems appropriate and necessary.

The Board of Missions will be holding a special meeting on January 2-3, 2017, and working through Pastor Ohlmann's transition as chairman of the Board of Missions to serving the Board in an advisory capacity. We rejoice in the opportunities that are before us as a church body, and give thanks to the Lord for providing this new worker in the harvest of souls. We ask for your prayers on behalf of Missionary Ohlmann and his family as

they continue their service to their Lord and ours in this new way. May the Lord's name be hallowed, His Kingdom come, and His will done!

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

Lutheran Spokesman

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

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Christmas is about US, not ME. Acerbic columnist Peter Laarman writes, “I do, of course, have a bilious concluding ‘meta’ critique of journalism about American religion, and here it is: Nobody seems interested in writing about the biggest mystery of all: the fact that although the faith traditions we inherit are all about ‘we,’ faith on these shores is overwhelmingly about ‘me.’ Here I will speak as a Christian writing in a special season. It’s not ‘unto me a child is born,’ it’s ‘unto us.’” Laarman, Peter. “Ten Religion Stories that Went (Mostly) Missing in 2015.” *Religion Dispatches*. USC Annenberg, 20 Dec. 2015. Web. 26 Dec. 2015.

Study Shatters Myths About Growing Churches. In a recently published study, researchers followed 250 growing Christian churches in the U.S.—those which had a track

record of steadily increasing membership and attendance. The churches were of various denominations, large and small, urban and rural. Among the most surprising findings was the statistically negligible impact of many factors previously assumed to be important to church growth. The list of factors having little or nothing to do with growth included the following: a trendy location, a “culturally relevant” pastoral teaching style (including pastors’ attire), a certain congregational size, the age of the congregation (some hundred-year-old churches were doing as well as new church plants), a big budget, or contemporary worship. Powell, Kara. “Research Says: Young People Don’t Want Hip Pastors.” *Outreach*. ChristianityToday.com, 22 Aug. 2016. Web. 8 Nov. 2016.

Case Dropped Against Pair Who Filmed Planned Parenthood. Last April we reported on the surprising turnaround that took place when a Texas grand jury, convened to investigate the sale of fetal body parts by Planned Parenthood executives, instead indicted David Daleiden and Sandra Merrit, the two pro-life activists who had filmed the illegal sales. We’re happy to report that a Texas judge dismissed those charges on July 26, 2016. Sadly, the Planned Parenthood representatives who trafficked in baby parts remain unindicted. N.a., “Dropped.” *World* 20 Aug. 2016:8.



Pastor John Hein during 2016 Liberia Mission Trip. “Some of the most precious moments of my trip to Liberia were interacting with the beautiful and engaging children! Their happiness wasn’t dependent upon what was material, but upon interacting with others. This was following a Thanksgiving service which they celebrate on the 1st Thursday of November.”



CLC East Africa church: Photo taken by Raven Haight on the 2016 mission trip. Raven’s Facebook page features hundreds of photos from the mission trips she’s been on. Raven asks that you pray for — and consider participating in — an upcoming Mission Helper trip. Grab your passport, pack your bag, and see what you can do to assist with overseas missions in the CLC! Applications are now being accepted for the 2017 Mission Helper Trip to Nepal. To find out more and to apply visit their website at: <http://mht.lutheranmissions.org/> Application deadline is January 13th, 2017.