

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

For her our prayer shall rise
To God above the skies;
On Him we wait.
Thou who art ever nigh,
Guarding with watchful eye,
To Thee aloud we cry,
God save the State!

HYMN 577 VERSE 2
(THE LUTHERAN HYMNAL)





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Me — a Patriot?

I urge, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

(1 Timothy 2:1-4 NIV84)

pa·tri·ot

“A person who loves, supports, and defends his or her country and its interests with devotion.” This is a dictionary definition for the word *patriot*. Do you think of yourself as one who falls into this category? Perhaps not. When you hear the word *patriot* your thoughts may turn to American heroes like Paul Revere, who made his daring midnight ride to warn the colonial militia about approaching British forces before the battles of Lexington and Concord. Or men like Patrick Henry, the American orator, known for his fiery declaration before the Second Virginia Convention: “Give me liberty, or give me death!” Those men were patriots. But me? I don’t think so.

Think about it

When you think about it more carefully, though, can you see that, as a believer in the Lord Jesus, you are in a position to serve your country as a patriot *in the highest sense*? You understand, don’t you, that history is not ruled by happenstance, but by your almighty Savior, Who has determined the pre-appointed times and boundaries of the nations. This being true, you may approach His throne of grace, imploring Him to bless your nation with wise leaders who will govern the citizens of your nation well. Martin Luther once remarked that, next to the Gospel, no more precious possession exists on earth than a government that administers and upholds justice. He included “good government” in the list of the daily bread items we should pray for in the Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer. Luther was right to so encourage us, for who but children of the heavenly Father can offer prayers that are heard and answered for Jesus’ sake, including the requests we make for our country’s leaders?

Another way you may show patriotic devotion for your country is by prayerfully seeking to let your light shine in your

conduct as a citizen. When you show respect for the governing authorities, submitting to them because you recognize each of them as “*God’s servant to do you good*” (Romans 13:4) and obeying the laws of the land for conscience’ sake, know that He will use your example of godliness and piety as a salt to help preserve our society from moral decay (Matthew 5:13).

The greatest act of devotion you can perform for your country is keeping your eyes open for opportunities to share the saving truth of the Gospel (1 Peter 3:15). As you speak to others in your sphere of life about the hope God has given you in Jesus, you may rejoice to know He will use your witness as a tool to lead others to trust in Him as you do, to know the peace of sins forgiven as you do, and to enjoy all the precious benefits that come from being a citizen of the better, *heavenly* country (Hebrews 11:16).

Do you see yourself as a patriot?

By the grace of God, you surely may! As you commemorate the July 4th holiday (viewing a fireworks display? watching a parade? enjoying a backyard cook-out?), set aside a moment to ask the Lord to help you to serve Him in this way. Pray that through your witness as a Christian citizen, more souls may be gathered into His family and become part of the glorious band out of every nation who will one day stand before His throne, dressed in white, shouting joyfully, “*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever.*” (Revelation 7:10,12)



Thomas Schuetze is pastor of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lakewood, Colorado.

Citizens by Birth — and Rebirth

The screaming crowd was ready to riot when the object of their fury was taken into custody by the Roman commander. The commander ordered his centurion to bind the prisoner and stretch him out for a lashing with the Roman scourge, as a quick and dirty means of interrogation. But Paul, who had been testifying of Christ to the people of Jerusalem, still had a significant card to play. He asked, “*Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?*” (Acts 22:25)

The officer was skeptical at first, saying “*With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.*” Paul, who came from the Roman colony of Tarsus, answered him by saying “*But I was born a citizen.*” At this revelation the Romans were alarmed and released him, for citizens of the empire had protections and privileges that others did not have, including the right to a trial before being convicted and punished.

Citizens by Birth

Many of the *Spokesman’s* readers claim citizenship by birth, as well. Anyone who is born within the United States or its territories is a citizen, as well as those who are born abroad to parents who are U.S. citizens. This citizenship status carries with it a very valuable array of rights, including the freedom of speech and religious expression, the right to bear arms, the right to a speedy trial by one’s peers when accused, and protection against unreasonable searches and cruel punishments, among others. Paul did not hesitate, at the appropriate time, to make use of his earthly citizenship status, and neither should we. We do this when we exercise our civil freedoms in our homes, churches, communities, and particularly in the voting booth. We rightly celebrate these freedoms each Independence Day on July 4.

Citizens by Rebirth

As valuable as our earthly citizenship is, its worth cannot compare with our citizenship in the Lord’s kingdom, the

Paul did not
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Holy Christian Church. Paul recognized the difference when he wrote in Philippians 3:20, “*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.*” What can possibly compare with the blessing of redemption from all sin through Christ, peace with God, His abiding protection throughout this life, and entrance into life eternal as His gift of grace?

Since we are such citizens of heaven, the remarks of both the centurion and the Apostle Paul are true of each of us, in a wonderful way:

The centurion observed “*With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.*” This man paid

handsomely to obtain his earthly civil status. A large sum was also required to purchase our heavenly citizenship. It was the Lord Jesus, not we, Who paid the awful price. “*You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

“*But I was born a citizen,*” Paul replied, and so were you—a citizen of heaven. This did not happen, however, through your natural birth. It happened when you were reborn by the working of God’s Holy Spirit. Now, as a child of God and a citizen of His heavenly kingdom, you are in full possession of all the blessings He confers upon His own, “*having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.*” (1 Peter 1:23)

In a natural way, those who are born in the United States are blessed with many liberties and privileges. Responsibilities come with those rights—the obligation to abide by our laws and to be ready to defend the freedoms which we share. In a supernatural way, we have been reborn to new life in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit through His means of grace.

May we always treasure these far greater blessings, and live responsibly each day for the Lord, Who paid for our heavenly citizenship with His own blood.



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

TLH HYMN 577

“God Bless Our Native Land”

History indicates that nations or governments almost never last more than five hundred years. By that measure, the United States of America today would be considered middle-aged. Although she may seem a great power that can never be toppled, so did the Roman Empire at one time. And remember the old saying, “The sun never sets on the British Empire”? Well, it does now. Therefore we would do well to keep the nation in our prayers because one of these years she could be gone—along with all our treasured security and freedoms.

Prayers for our country are always appropriate, as the Apostle Paul indicates: “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority.” (1 Timothy 2:1-2 NIV84) So one may hear national and patriotic hymns in church, especially during the first week of July. One of the most stirring of these is the prayer expressed by the poem “God Bless Our Native Land” (TLH 577).

It seems the lyrics originated around 1745, perhaps from a Latin text, although it is uncertain. Appearing initially in English as “God Save the King,” Siegfried Mahlmann, a German poet, adapted it for his own country’s use (“God Save Saxony”). Later (1834), Charles Brooks of Massachusetts adapted the first verse again for use in America, and the text was modified yet again about ten years later by then well-known musician and writer John Sullivan Dwight (1813-1893), giving us the hymn with which we are now familiar: **God bless our native land! / Firm may she ever stand / Thro’ storm and night; / When the wild tempests rave, / Ruler of wind and wave, / Do Thou our country save / By Thy great might.**

We call upon God to protect our nation by His almighty power. Surely He who is able to control the weather, the wind and the waves, is able to do this! After all, “*He spreads the snow like wool and scatters the frost like ashes. He hurls down*

his hail like pebbles. . . . He sends his word and melts them; he stirs up his breezes, and the waters flow.” (Psalm 147:16-18 NIV84) We recognize, too, that no country can stand by its own strength, for it is not the wisdom and power of human governments which ultimately uphold a nation, but rather it is God’s great might (see Daniel 2:21; Romans 13:1). We pray with the confidence that He will use that might in the wisest possible way for the benefit of His redeemed children, His believers in Christ Jesus.

In his *Large Catechism*, Martin Luther explains well the good habit of praying for the nation because through her God gives us needed blessings. “There is, indeed, the greatest need to pray for temporal authority and government, as that by which most of all God preserves to us our daily bread and all the comforts of this life. For though we have received of God all good things in abundance, we are not able to retain any of them or use them in security and happiness, if He did not give us a permanent and peaceful government.

For where there are dissension, strife, and war, there the daily bread is already taken away, or at least checked” (*Luther’s Small Catechism* Lord’s Prayer, Fourth Petition, paragraph 74).

The hymn’s majestic tune (the origin of which is also unknown) has been quoted in the compositions of many world-famous composers and is the national or royal anthem of over a dozen countries. One can scarcely pray the words without imagining or hearing at the same time the immortal melody. Listen: **For her our prayer shall rise / To God above the skies; / On Him we wait. / Thou who art ever nigh, / Guarding with watchful eye, / To Thee aloud we cry, / God save the State!**



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*.

“There is, indeed, the greatest need to pray for temporal authority and government...”

Martin Luther

A Fixer-Upper

Anyone familiar with the DIY Network has heard of Chip and Joanna Gaines. They are the married couple from Waco, Texas who find and “fix up” older houses for clients. The process includes demolition, “demo day”—loved by Chip—followed by renovation and refurnishing. A common response by many of the delighted clients in seeing their fixer upper is at least one profane, “OMG!”

Even more famous in Christian eyes is Gideon, the hesitant judge of ancient Israel, and the only judge personally called by God. His mandate was to clean out the Midianites—an enemy who had been a sliver in the hand of Israel for years. And that Gideon did, with but three hundred men armed only with trumpets and torches.

But before that happened, Gideon was given a smaller fixer-upper project—one which involved his own family (Judges 6:11-27). Demo day was the first order of business. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon in a way similar to His appearance to Moses, and instructed Gideon to smash up the Baal altar and tear down the sacred pole dedicated to Asherah, which had been built by Gideon’s own father, Joash. With ten willing men, their “demolition day” was a resounding success, as the altar stones were scattered and the Asherah pole chopped into kindling.

Next came the renovation, as a new altar was built to the true God.

And finally the refurnishing. Gideon was instructed to take his father’s best breeding bull, and offer it up as a burnt offering to the Lord on the newly constructed altar. Indeed, this was something special, for the aroma of this sacrifice was to the Lord a sweet-smelling savor. For Gideon it was a sign of repentance, a confession of faith in the mighty God Who would give him victory over the Midianites, and in the gracious God Who, in the promised Christ, would freely



Gideon and His Men Destroy the Altar of Baal, by Maerten van Heemskerck (1498-1574).

forgive all sins. We can only hope that there were many “Oh My Gods” uttered in the following days, not as a profane expression of astonishment, but in thanksgiving, praise, and glory to God’s saving name.

Are we in need of our own fixer-upper project? Are there any secret idols still standing only half demolished in our hearts? Still any Baal altars or Asherah poles of lust, pride, selfishness, or other pet sins still hanging around like bad wallpaper?

Then it’s time for demo day. Pray the Spirit for strength to smash, tear down, and remove for good out of your life that which displeases God and affects your own faith and the beauty of your temple-house. As Jesus Himself twice cleansed His Father’s house in Jerusalem, so clean out your own house as a fitting and holy temple for the Spirit of God. Inspect daily for the termites of self-righteousness which can bore out a soul.

Then rebuild and renovate, using only the true and solid Rock of Christ Jesus, the Chief Cornerstone. Continue building on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, and the divine Word which proceeded out of their mouths.

And then refurnish. With a new heart and Gideon-like attitude, offer up the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. With daily repentance check for any trappings that might lead you away from your Savior and throw them into the dumpster. Redecorate your life with a pattern of behavior and good works that are well pleasing to the Lord as they are done out of love and according to His will. Nail your commitment to the rafters and glue it to the floor joints. Let your life be a daily OMG: “Oh My great and gracious God; You have chosen me as Your fixer-upper. I am the workmanship of Your hand. Forgive my sins and make me holy and beautiful in Your love and give me strength and zeal to continuously glorify Your name.”



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

God's Loving Discipline

"It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

(Hebrews 12:7-11 NASB)

If you had the choice of having a father who disciplined you in a firm and loving way or a father who didn't discipline you at all, which would you choose? For those who have had the former kind of disciplinarian, the answer is easy. When we look back upon our early lives and see how our fathers helped us grow up as children of God through their training, we respect them and thank the Lord for them.

As believers, we recognize that we needed discipline because of our inherently rebellious nature. Without caring discipline, we would be like an un-weeded garden. If you have ever tried raising vegetables in that neglectful manner, you know that such gardens are not very productive.

While we were going through those "weeding" years, we weren't very happy when discipline was meted out. But over time, the careful rearing we received from our parents bore the fruit of Christian maturity in our lives.

We understand that our fathers' discipline wasn't always perfect. This is due to the simple fact that they were sinners like us. But we forgave them, just as we forgive others who have wronged us.

While we had imperfect fathers who tried their best to raise us, thankfully we all have a heavenly Father Who is perfectly loving, patient, merciful, gracious, wise, and good in disciplining us. Above all, He is a forgiving Father Who does not disown us for our waywardness, but pardons us for all our

transgressions through our Savior Jesus Christ.

In His governance of our lives, He has used various afflictions and hardships to bless us with His correction and training. His disciplinary measures may have included problems with our health, interpersonal troubles, subjection to economic challenges or natural disasters, or similar trials.

None of God's discipline is easy to undergo or pleasant to experience. Instead, it can be very painful and grievous.

However, we have learned from God's Word that everything works together for our good (Romans 8:28). And the great good that comes from God's discipline is the blessed fruit of growth in Christian faith, hope, and love. Through His gracious Word of life and salvation in Christ Jesus, our Father in heaven helps us to be transformed in the spirit of our minds so that we become more Christ-like, growing in righteousness and true holiness (see Ephesians 4:22-24 and Romans 12:2).

Knowing all this about God's loving discipline, with His help we submit to and patiently endure it.

The great good that comes from God's discipline is the blessed fruit of growth in Christian faith, hope, and love.



Praise be to God for making us part of His eternal family, *and for His loving discipline!*

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

“The church’s job is to help people with their earthly needs.”

As the word is typically used, a *job* is work performed for pay. In that sense, the church has no job. All that God provides us, whether for body or soul, He provides “purely out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy,” and by grace. God never owes us anything; still He provides us with all that we need and more, because He is love. So He “*makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*” (Matthew 5:45 ESV)

When we come to know the love of God through faith in Christ Jesus, we are transformed in our minds so that we no longer think in terms of “owe” or “job,” but are given the mind of Christ, Who deals with us in love. God’s love toward us teaches us how to respond in love toward others. Where there is a need, love responds by filling that need, whatever it may be.

It is important that Christians don’t take on the same attitude as the unbelievers around them when it comes to this issue. That the world tends to think in terms of “job” and “owe” comes as no surprise; it’s the Law at work in their hearts. When the church thinks in those terms, it does so contrary to the Gospel that frees us from trying to use the Law as the means to godliness. God’s Ten Commandments certainly guide us in how to respond to our neighbor’s needs, but it is the Gospel of forgiveness through Christ that sets us free from the life of slavery to a “job” that must be performed. Instead, “*We love because He first loved us.*” (1 John 4:19 ESV)

To pit love against itself is a temptation, especially in this matter. On the one hand is the temptation to focus solely on the spiritual needs of people; on the other to focus solely on their physical needs (the so-called “Social Gospel”). Love

The greatest need is always the need to be reconciled to God through the Gospel, yet there are still other needs brought on by sin. Love responds to all those needs.

cannot be isolated in such a way. Love sees the whole person that God has created and that sin has corrupted. That corruption of sin has specific consequences on body and soul so that the individual’s needs are many. It cannot be denied that the greatest need is always the need to be reconciled to God through the Gospel, yet there are still other needs brought on by sin. Love responds to all those needs. It takes to heart these words from Hebrews 13:16: “*Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*” (ESV)

Yes, we have jobs to do in this world—carpentry, engineering, farming, teaching, and so on—and through them God provides for us in our earthly needs. Those jobs serve the purpose of His love toward us. They further serve God’s love as, through them, God allows us to carry His love into this sin-corrupted and sin-damaged world. Those jobs allow us to support preachers and teachers of His Word in our own communities, missionaries to places farther away, and even to drive ourselves across town to speak God’s Word to an acquaintance. The love of God is poured out as sinners are called to repentance and find forgiveness through Jesus’ cross. Those jobs, however, also allow us to meet people’s earthly needs. The love of God is at work when a hungry person is fed, a sick person receives relief, or a lonely person receives company for Jesus’ sake. Such things are not the only function of the church, or even the main objective of the church. But they are ways in which we Christians, who make

up the church, can show ourselves more than just job performers—we are children of God, children born of His love.

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



THE ROAD TO REFORMATION

In observation of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we are presenting a brief survey of the life of Martin Luther. The series continues with major events in the life of the Reformer that took place after 1517.

—1529—

Two Catechisms, and One Important Meeting

When a toddler writes on things, it is destructive. But when Martin Luther wrote on something as a grown man, it revealed his passion for the Word of God.

Rewind to 1525. Luther began exchanging sharp words with Ulrich Zwingli, a former priest in Basel, Switzerland. The two agreed on much, but not all, doctrine. Zwingli taught that the Holy Spirit could come to a person outside the Word. He was vague on original sin. But the clearest separation between the two theologians was on the Lord's Supper.

Zwingli believed that communion called to mind the body and blood of Christ, but he rejected Luther's teaching that Christ's body and blood are truly present together with the visible elements.

Other Swiss reformers worked toward compromise, convincing Zwingli to admit Jesus was present in a "sacramental way," that something "special" was received in communion. Luther thought the word play proved Zwingli was of a "different spirit." Luther said, "How the words sound is where your heart stands."

Europe's doctrinal diversity filled Luther with the resolve to confess Scriptural teaching in clear and immutable fashion.

He began preaching on what he called the six chief parts of Christian doctrine, in order to get the words as precise as possible. In 1529, he published those words in "small, plain, simple form." This *Small Catechism* allowed pastors and fathers to teach the faith in a repeatable and standard way, in the spirit of God's command for His Word to be written "on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:9) and "on the tablet of your heart" (Proverbs 7:3). He also published the *Large Catechism*, a thorough explanation of each carefully chosen word.

In July, Luther and other like-minded reformers began work on the Schwabach Articles. This document clarified what

Scripture taught concerning the key doctrines contested across Europe and would serve as a precursor to the Augsburg Confession.

Then, in October, Luther and Zwingli finally met—the only time they would.

German political leaders were desperate for reconciliation. Basel and Wittenberg were independent of Rome, but several states in between were loyal to the Pope. They hoped that an agreement between Zwingli and Luther might serve to unite the Protestant states in the face of the Catholic threat.

Philipp of Hesse arranged for Luther, Zwingli, and others to hold a colloquy, or doctrinal discussion, in Marburg. The Colloquy was a four-day affair that included sumptuous wining and dining. Philipp reserved the face-to-face meeting for later. First, Luther was to meet with milder Basel theologians. They were also to discuss fourteen other points, hoping to find themselves in agreement.

When the time to face Zwingli directly had arrived, Luther wanted few others in the room, just Philipp of Hesse and an ally for each side.

The reports of that closed meeting are mixed, but that there was passion is undeniable. Some say Luther scratched the words "This is My body" into Philipp's fine velvet tablecloth with chalk. Others say a knife gouged the letters into the tabletop's fine veneer.

Whatever the bold action, the Marburg Colloquy ended with a fifteenth point declaring that no agreement could be found. The only statement Luther would sign was one which confessed and delineated their doctrinal differences.

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



A SLICE OF LIFE IN THE CLC

SNAPSHOTS OF CONGREGATIONS FROM AROUND THE CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

Ascension Lutheran Church Tacoma, Washington

When you think about Washington State, what is the first city that comes to mind? It's Seattle, isn't it? Seattle is one of the top cities in America. It is famous for businesses like Boeing, Starbucks, Microsoft and Amazon. It is probably the city most identified with the Pacific Northwest.



Western Washington is known for its mild climate. Although we get a lot of drizzle, especially in the winter, it very seldom snows here. Things stay green nearly year round. The Pacific Ocean is a short distance to the west, and to the east is picturesque Mount Rainier. You can often see "The Mountain" as you go about your business around town.

Tacoma is Seattle's next-door neighbor, though in this area of urban sprawl, it can be hard to know exactly where one city ends and the next one begins. Located thirty-two miles south of Seattle, on Puget Sound, Tacoma is the third-largest city in Washington State, behind only Seattle and Spokane. Thirty miles farther to the south lies Olympia, the state capital.

Ascension Lutheran Church began in the late 1980's as a preaching station of Redemption Lutheran Church of Lynnwood (a northern suburb of Seattle). For many years, Pastor Bertram Naumann faithfully and regularly brought the Word of God to CLC members in the Tacoma area, meeting in members' homes and in various public venues.



Top: Ascension Lutheran Church under construction in 2003. Above: members and friends of Ascension at Pastor Naumann's farewell service, July 2016.



Mrs. Dot Abbott in her workshop, creating a stained-glass window for Ascension.

The congregation was incorporated in 1992, and was served for two years by Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, the synod's missionary-at-large at the time. In 1995 Ascension called Rev. Paul Naumann as their first permanent pastor. A parsonage was rented in the village of DuPont, Washington, just south of Tacoma. Sunday services were held in the DuPont city hall.

In 1998, after a lengthy search and with the help and advice of the CLC Board of Missions, the congregation purchased a four-acre property in unincorporated Pierce County between Tacoma and Puyallup. A spacious house, already on the property, was designated the church's parsonage, and the whole property was dedicated to the Lord's service on August 15, 1998. Worship continued in temporary quarters.

In 2003 the Lord further blessed Ascension by providing them the means to build a church of their own. The general contractor for the project was Jack Mayhew, a member of Grace Lutheran Church in Valentine, Nebraska. Volunteers—including many from Redemption—provided labor during the construction. Redemption Pastor John Hein was a frequent worker, and member Dot Abbott crafted the beautiful stained-glass windows that adorn the sanctuary. The finished chapel measured 1,400 square feet and has a posted capacity of sixty-five, though the congregation has occasionally hosted larger crowds for special services. The sanctuary doubles as a fellowship hall, facilitated by having movable chairs rather than permanent pews.



With an uptick in membership came a need for more parking space. In 2010 the congregation undertook an expansion of the parking lot, as well as extensive upgrades to the landscaping and grounds.

Another change came in 2016 when, after serving the congregation for twenty-one years, Pastor Naumann accepted a call to teach at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Pastor Benjamin Libby, a recent seminary graduate, replaced him as Ascension's new pastor.

Ascension's location is a strength. The church is situated on a major north-south arterial only three minutes from Interstate 5. All branches of the armed forces have bases in the area, the most important being Joint Base Lewis McChord, in DuPont. Ascension continues to enjoy the fellowship of a steady stream of CLC service-members stationed in the area.

Additionally, the Tacoma area has one of the highest immigration rates in the country; more people are coming to this area than ever before. Couple this with western Washington's status as one of the least-churched regions of the U.S., and you have a mission field with plenty of potential! Here there is never a shortage of prospects with whom to share the message of Christ crucified.

We Christians here in the Pacific Northwest "walk through the valley of the shadow of death" just like any other believer anywhere. There are plenty of challenges to face and adversities to overcome. But the Good Shepherd will continue to watch over and guide us. Here at Ascension, the mountains are an ever-present backdrop to our daily lives. They serve as a constant reminder of our Lord's protection: *"I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth."* (Psalm 121:1-2 ESV) May the Lord, Who made the heavens

and the earth, continue to keep us at Ascension in His grace, as also all believers everywhere!

Benjamin Libby is pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington.



Our Mission Strategy: Static or Sweeping?

“We have a problem. Twelve disciples we could handle, but seventy? How can we keep tabs on what they are doing? And then there is this thing going on in Samaria. Furthermore, we have heard that men from Cyprus and Cyrene are now preaching the Lord Jesus to the Greeks at Antioch! We can’t keep up!”

The early church in Jerusalem, or a segment of it, may well have had this response to the early successes of the Gospel. It is an awe-inspiring overview when we look into the Book of Acts—how many were the emissaries of Christ! How quickly the Good News spread! Our own fellowship might react the same way regarding our efforts in India, Nepal, Myanmar, Nigeria, Togo, Congo, Tanzania, Kenya . . . and the list goes on. What a glorious problem to face! What a comfort to know that it is the Lord Jesus’ church, that the Holy Spirit works on the heart of each, and that the Father knows exactly what is going on!

Prior to World War II, the French considered the Maginot Line of fortifications to be impregnable; in the event it was irrelevant. The Germans in 1940 attacked through the Ardennes Forest where they were least expected and where the defense was light. Despite all the time, effort and money spent on the splendid line of fortresses, it stood as a hollow monument to static defense. The Germans employed mobile forces that broke through and swept up and around their enemies.

Are we sometimes guilty of what seems to be a static defense instead of a mobile warfare that sweeps forward in our kingdom work? For the Germans, there were great risks.



Above: members of the Lutheran congregation in Arusha, Tanzania.

They could outdistance their fuel supplies and be held up. Their infantry perhaps could not catch up sufficiently to hold the ground that was gained through Blitzkrieg. The risks attendant on this method of warfare were real and dangerous, but the sweeping, surging movement proved extremely effective.

There are a variety of risks for us also as we operate in a mobile and forward-surging movement called “outreach.” The terrain for us is rugged, and the risks exist. It would be a daunting task except for the fact that we are led, not by an earthly field marshal, but by the “*Commander of the army of the Lord*” (Joshua 5:14), Who has already won the victory! We are to be mobile and forward-moving as our Lord taught, “*I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*” (Matthew 16:18) In hearts He builds a force that is mobile and expanding, not stationary.

Whether as a missionary, a board, or a synod, if we fail to take note and go where He points, we risk falling back on a static defense and may one day be overwhelmed.

When we continue in the surging, sweeping movement, the impregnable is overcome and the impossible becomes possible. “*All things are possible to him who believes.*” (Mark 9:23)

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



“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JULY 2018

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

Date	Verse	Reading	Comments
Jul 2	TLH 392	Psalm 32	King David contrasts the torment of unrepented sin with the blessed sweetness of forgiveness in Christ.
Jul 3	TLH 4	Leviticus 11:29-30, 41-47	God put these food laws in place for Israel to teach them about being holy before Him and to prepare them for Christ Who gave them His holiness.
Jul 4	TLH 577; LSB 965	2 Kings 2:1-14	The Lord will continue to provide faithful ministers of the Gospel until He comes again.
Jul 5	TLH 310; LSB 713	Psalm 80	When we fall into sin and see the sad result of our failure, we call upon the Lord to restore us and revive us again.
Jul 6	TLH 366	Proverbs 8:1-21	Want to be wise? Respect God and trust in Him. That is true wisdom.
Jul 7	TLH 605; LSB 513	Luke 17:22-30	When Christ comes again, His return will be quick and without warning, interrupting the daily routine of life on earth.
Jul 9	TLH 608	Philippians 3:7-14	Don't give in to temptation and give up on the Lord, but keep in mind the glory of your coming resurrection, and press on toward that goal.
Jul 10	TLH 270	2 Kings 10:18-28	God brings judgment on unbelief—sometimes sooner and sometimes later, but it always comes. Here He used His servant Jehu to bring such judgment.
Jul 11	TLH 556	Psalm 82	When God brings judgment on those who are evil, it means deliverance for those who are righteous in Christ.
Jul 12	TLH 422; LSB 842		Proverbs 10:8-19 We can do much damage with our speech. A wise heart is careful about what and when to speak.
Jul 13	TLH 281	Ezekiel 29:1-6	God's judgment is prophesied against Egypt, a prophecy fulfilled when Babylon overran it. Perhaps some in Egypt would learn the danger of impenitence.
Jul 14	WS 794	Luke 19:11-27	No need to worry about when Christ will come again when you can be busy with His work until He comes.
Jul 16	TLH 389	Colossians 2:6-17	"Deceptive philosophy" and "human tradition" teach that salvation comes through keeping God's laws. Not true—it comes through faith in Christ.
Jul 17	TLH 147	Leviticus 16:1-22	The lesson of the scapegoat is really a lesson about Jesus taking away our sins.
Jul 18	TLH 433; LSB 782	Psalm 86	The psalm summarizes the Christian life: we lean on the Lord for forgiveness and comfort, and ask Him to help us walk in truth.
Jul 19	WS 752	Proverbs 12:1-15	No matter how we may be tempted by it, the way of wickedness is never a better way.
Jul 20	TLH 325	Ezekiel 33:1-11	God's goal (and ours) is to show Christ's love to the wicked, and to lead them from impenitence and unbelief to faith.
Jul 21	WS 789; LSB 787	Luke 21:1-4	Christ became poor, suffering even death on the cross, so that we might be eternally rich. With joy we return our thanks to Him!
Jul 23	TLH 309; LSB 643	Luke 22:14-26	While we are so often distracted by our own "greatness," Jesus is busy giving His body and blood—for our forgiveness. That is truly great!
Jul 24	TLH 21	2 Kings 19:14-19	When the king of Assyria wrote and insulted Hezekiah's God, Hezekiah prayed for deliverance—not for his own sake, but so God's name could be glorified.
Jul 25	WS 767	Psalm 87	The people of Zion include all those who follow the Lord and whose hope for salvation is in Jesus Christ. God loves them and knows them all.
Jul 26	TLH 19	Psalm 89:1-13	The Lord's faithfulness and might surrounds you! Praise Him!
Jul 27	WS 758	Luke 22:63-71	Jesus declares that He is the Son of God.
Jul 28	TLH 157	Luke 23:32-49	The Holy Spirit can bring someone to repentance and faith even at the last moment. Case in point: the dying thief.
Jul 30	WS 730; LSB 474	Luke 24:1-12	Like the women, sometimes in our own sadness we aren't looking for the empty tomb either—but it is still there! He is risen!
Jul 31	TLH 191	1 Thessalonians 1	The Holy Spirit works in our hearts (verse 5) through the Gospel of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (verses 9-10).

ILC NEWSLETTER

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



ILC's New Dorm Parent

Up until the 1980-81 school year at ILC, when North Hall was built and then occupied in the second semester, the boys' dormitory supervisors had routinely been college or seminary students. When the boys' dormitory was located in Northwest Hall (no longer standing), Prof. Paul Naumann served as the supervisor while enrolled in college. CLC president Rev. Michael Eichstadt served next in that same capacity while attending Immanuel Lutheran Seminary. This pattern of the past is about to be repeated when Gus Falkenberg returns to Immanuel Lutheran College this fall as a part-time student who takes on the



duties of serving as the next dormitory supervisor of North Hall. He replaces Brian Fox, who concluded his service at Immanuel shortly after graduation.

Gustave Falkenberg comes back to ILC seventeen years after his last stint as a part-time college student preparing himself to enter the seminary. After graduating from UW-Madison in 1999, he spent three semesters at Immanuel Lutheran College taking pre-theological courses in Greek, Hebrew, and religion. A change in plans, however, saw him forego seminary enrollment and instead obtain a post-graduate degree in library and information science. During his time away from Immanuel, he and his wife Karen



Brian Fox accepted the divine call to serve as teacher and principal of Valley Bible Academy at St. John's Lutheran Church in Clarkston, Washington.

have lived in Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls. They have three children, the oldest of which will continue as a 10th grade student at Immanuel and live in South Hall, the girls' dormitory.

As for Gus, his enrollment as a student will unfold in a gradual way. He is scheduled to take three college courses in the fall semester and two college courses in the spring semester. His part-time load will allow him to learn the



ropes of supervising and mentoring the high-school boys under his care. His predecessor, Brian Fox, was in a similar situation as he took part-time college classes at ILC to gain CLC certification as a Christian day school teacher in our fellowship. Earlier this year, Brian accepted the divine call to serve as teacher and principal of Valley Bible Academy at St. John's Lutheran Church in Clarkston, Washington, where he will put his course work at ILC to practical use.

God willing, Gus will enter the seminary in the fall of 2019 and follow a similar path as that which Pastor Michael Eichstadt followed forty years ago. A main difference, of course, will be Gus's family status—and about twenty more years of life experience. Gus looks forward to the challenges of his dual role as student and supervisor. His motivation to be the dorm parent has much to do with the positive impact that his dorm parent had on him when he attended Immanuel Lutheran High School and lived in North Hall himself. He hopes to have a similar impact on the resident students under his care.

Four years from now he may be in a similar position as Brian, that of leaving ILC to serve elsewhere in the kingdom work of our Lord and His Church. For the outgoing and the incoming dorm parents of North Hall, we seek from our

Lord His continued blessing in the callings these men now have, and the work that they will do for Him.



Steven Sippert is president of Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

No, I Don't Want to "Shut Down an Atheist in 15 Seconds Flat!"

In a column for *Christianity Today*, author Karl Vaters warned against online media items that promise to "shut down," "school" or "humiliate" atheists and others critical of the Christian faith. "Count me out," Vaters said. "I don't want to shut down, humiliate or destroy anyone . . . Jesus gave us a better way." In a plea for apologetics that is merciful and inviting rather than adversarial and confrontational, the author said that "Jesus taught us to love our enemies, not humiliate them; to walk an extra mile with them, not slam the door in their face; to turn the other cheek, not slap them upside their head." Vaters goes on, "That's why humility should be our attitude, not smugness. An attitude of true humility is very engaging." Vaters, Karl. "No, I Don't Want to 'Shut Down an Atheist in 15 Seconds Flat!'" *Church and Culture*. ChristianityToday.com, 24 Jan. 2018. Web. 15 Mar. 2018.

The Rise of "Burger King Christianity."

A recent Pew survey asked self-identified Christians whether they "believe in God as He is described in the Bible." Nearly half said "no." That led Christian apologist Peter Heck to decry the current trend in which nominal Christians feel free to select which teachings of Scripture to accept and which to ignore. "Many of those same folks don't regularly read or study the Bible and often know very little about it. That leads to a phenomenon of Burger King Christianity where adherents literally 'have it their way,' taking out the parts of Scripture or the faith that runs afoul of their social, cultural, political, or philosophical preferences." But, says Heck, "People cannot be saved by a false Jesus, and they can't be changed by a false gospel." What's needed is a "full-throated proclamation of God's truth by unashamed, unabashed disciples of



Graduating class of 2018, Immanuel Lutheran High School, Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Christ Jesus." Heck, Peter. "The Bad Assumption We Make About People Who Believe in God." *Contributors*. TheResurgent.com, 17 May, 2018. Web. 18 May, 2018.

Multiple Studies Confirm Health Benefits of Doing Good.

Dr. Steven Post, Professor of Preventative Medicine at Stony Brook University in New York, writes about the many recent peer-reviewed studies that have established a link between ethical behavior and physical health. Among them: a group reporting few to no "feelings of hostility" showed nearly a 20% lower mortality rate by age fifty than those who reported having frequent hostile feelings. In another study, the incidence of heart attack was highly

correlated with the level of self-references ("I," "me," "my," "mine") in structured interviews. In another, subjects were given sums of money and a list of charities to which they could contribute if they wished. For those who did, functional MRI imaging revealed that the act of giving activated the mesolimbic pathway (the brain's reward center). Volunteerism is particularly healthful, studies showed—subjects who volunteered their time to help others had "less trouble sleeping, less anxiety, less helplessness and hopelessness; better friendships and social networks, and a sense of control over chronic conditions." Post, Stephen. "Is Being Good Good for You?" *Behavior, Morality*. Bigquestionsonline.com, 10 Feb. 2018. Web. 17 May 2018.