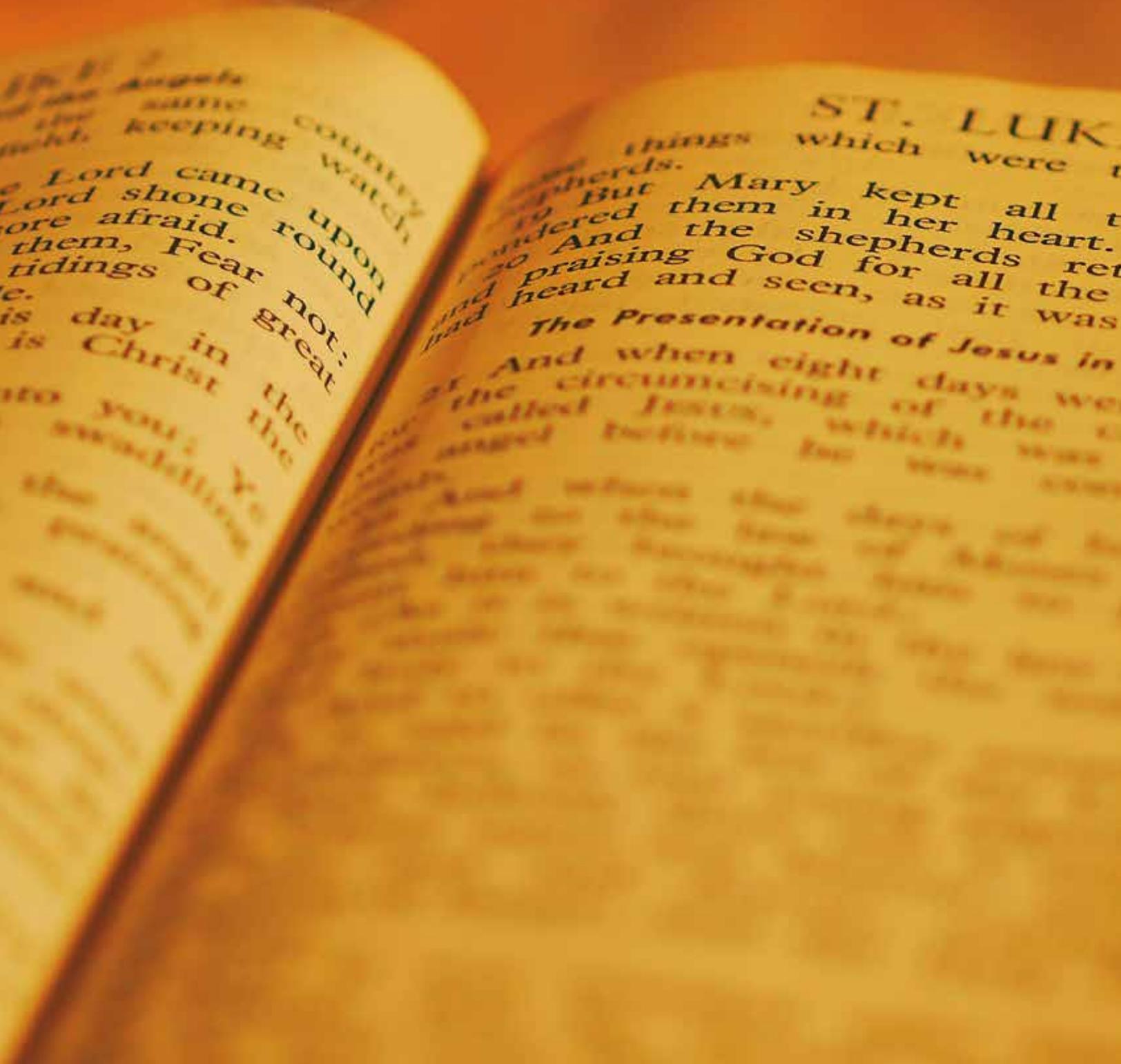
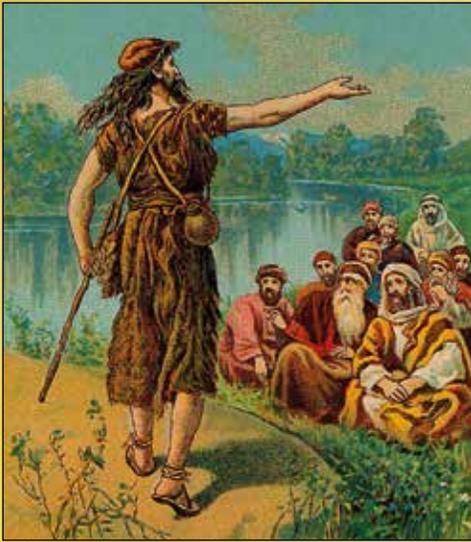


December 2018 VOL 61 NO. 6

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

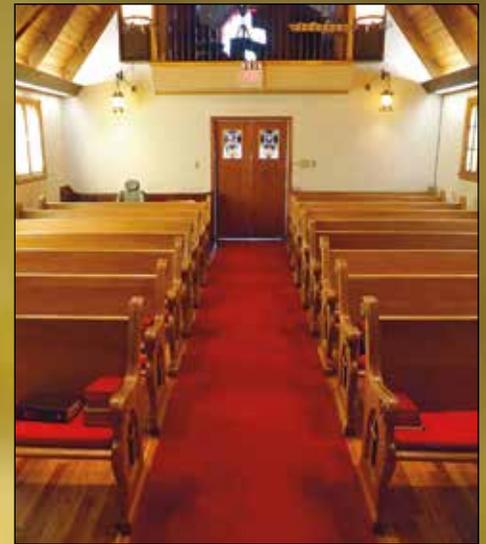




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Advent Is for Expectation

“It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas,” as the old song goes. We see it all around us: lights and decorations, Christmas songs, Christmas shopping, and the planning of Christmas events. Even without a calendar, you would know that Christmas is coming soon.

You may be surprised to know the situation was somewhat similar leading up to the first Christmas. Of course, there were no Christmas decorations or music, but Daniel had given some very specific prophecies so that people who paid attention would know that the time was coming soon. That explains why, as Luke records, *“Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, . . .”* (Luke 3:15) It also explains why there were several people who claimed to be the Messiah at that time. The people were in expectation of Messiah’s coming soon. They were looking for him and testing the various claims.

Isn’t the same true for us?

We have been given many prophecies, many signs that Christ is coming soon. We, too, should be in expectation of His coming. Therefore the Apostle Paul urges us,

“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” (Romans 13:11-14)

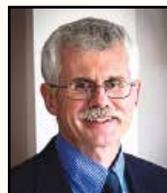
Advent reminds us that Christ is coming soon. We need to be ready. The night of this world, with its

sin and trouble, is almost over. The eternal Day of Glory in God’s visible presence is almost here. We’d better wake up and get ready!

To do so, Paul urges us to *“Cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”* No more *“revelry and drunkenness”*—don’t seek your joy and pleasure in wild parties and drinking. No more *“lewdness and lust”*—don’t let the sexual passions and perversions of the world be your secret pleasure. No more *“strife and envy”*—don’t let anger and jealousy rule your heart, but live in peace and love with all. In other words, put away all the sins of the flesh through true contrition and repentance.

Finally, Paul says, *“Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”* Our flesh is constantly trying to drag us back into the darkness, but we shouldn’t give it any opportunity to fulfill its lusts. Don’t even let it get a foot in the door. Stop it right when the desire for evil is in the very first stages.

How do we do that? Don’t trust your own good intentions, your self discipline, or your own resolve to change your heart and life. Rather *“Put on the Lord Jesus Christ,”* Paul says. We have *“put on Christ”* in baptism. (Galatians 3:27) We were completely covered with His righteousness and holiness so that we can live with God in the glorious day. Now, by faith in Him, we can put on Christ daily by genuine contrition and repentance. We put Him on by letting *“the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”* (Colossians 3:16) Clothed with Christ and His righteousness, we can *“cast off the works of darkness”* and *“make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”*



Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be ready for the dawning of the glorious Day!

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

“He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease”

Pick one of today’s more “popular” preachers with a large following. Maybe it would be Joel Osteen with his average attendance of 52,000. Or maybe it would be the “Purpose Driven” preacher, Rick Warren, with his average attendance of 22,000.

Regardless of the numerically popular preacher’s name, can you imagine him telling his followers to quit coming to his church and start following another preacher? What would ever cause a popular preacher to do such a thing? Why would a preacher voluntarily surrender followers by directing them to someone else?

Why? Ask John the Baptist.

By the time Jesus began His earthly ministry, John the Baptist was already a well-established and popular preacher. Matthew reports, “*Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him.*” (Matthew 3:5) They certainly didn’t go out to him because of his fashionable attire (camel’s hair and a leather belt) or because of his culinary choices (locusts and wild honey). They went because of his message, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*” (Matthew 3:2) These were sinners, coming to the Jordan River to be baptized for the remission of sins.

How peculiar it is then, to learn that this popular preacher directed his disciples and followers to another preacher. In fact, John’s own disciples thought this was odd. “*Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!*” (John 3:26)

John the Baptist then astonishes us as he says, “*You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.*” (John 3:28-30)

Why would a preacher voluntarily surrender followers by directing them to someone else?

What a striking picture this is of how John viewed his relationship to Jesus! John is like the best man at a wedding. The best man is not the focus of the wedding, the bride and groom are. The best man is excited that his friend is getting married.

That is the joy John had at the arrival of Jesus. John was called by God to prepare the way for the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus Christ. John was not the Christ, the Savior of the world—Jesus was. God had sent John the Baptist to get the people ready for Jesus. Once Jesus arrived, the spotlight needed to be on Him. Jesus needed to increase, and John needed to decrease.

And really, isn’t this what the Christian faith is all about?

Jesus needs to increase, and we need to decrease. Listen to how the Apostle Paul put it: “*Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*” (Philippians 3:8-9)

We need His righteousness by faith, rather than the soiled garments of our “best” works. We need His blood to cleanse us from all our sin. We need His Word and Sacrament to increase in our lives, so that our faith may be strengthened. In our congregations, our ministries, and our daily living, we, too, want the limelight to be on Jesus.

So of course John the Baptist would direct his followers to Jesus—John’s entire ministry was about Jesus. It was John the Baptist who pointed his followers to Jesus and said, “*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29) May the Lord help us also to point people to Jesus, the Savior of the World!



Nathan Pfeiffer is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Spokane, Washington.

TLH 80

“All Praise to Thee, Eternal God”

Have you ever noticed that “firsts” seem to have special interest for us? We remember them as being particularly notable. For example,

- ✦ *First humans:* Adam and Eve, created on the sixth day of Creation.
- ✦ *First President of the United States of America elected after adoption of the Constitution:* George Washington, elected February 4th, 1789.
- ✦ *First production gasoline-powered automobile:* The Benz Patent-Motorwagon, patented by Karl Benz in 1886. It had three wheels, and was powered by a one-cylinder motor producing 2/3 horsepower.
- ✦ *First powered flight:* December 17th, 1903, Orville Wright, approximately 120 feet (later that day he flew 852 feet).
- ✦ *First man to walk on the moon:* Neal Armstrong, July 21st, 1969. Little-known fact: he carried a small piece of wood from the Wright Brothers’ airplane.

Hymn 80, “All Praise to Thee, Eternal God,” also holds a spot as a notable first. It was the first Christmas hymn of the Reformation. W. Gustave Polack, in *The Handbook to The Lutheran Hymnal*, says about this hymn, “This broadsheet very likely was distributed [in Wittenberg] for Christmas of 1523. The hymn was then also included in *Eyn Enchiridion*, Erfurt, 1524. We believe we are justified in saying that this hymn is the first Christmas hymn of the Reformation and thus the first of the many Christmas hymns and carols of Protestantism that have enriched our treasury of Christian song during the past four hundred years.” Actually, the hymn itself goes all the way back to the 11th century Latin sequence for Christmas, and the first stanza was even written in German as early as 1370. At the time of the Reformation, Luther added six more stanzas of his own.

Although this hymn is *notable* as the “First Christmas Hymn of the Reformation,” it is *noteworthy* for much more. Typical of the traditional Lutheran Chorale, it has great depth; it is not mere superficial sentimentality. When we sing hymns in church, we’re sometimes so focused on

“getting the music right”—especially with the challenging melodies—that we fail to notice how rich in Biblical thought the stanzas are. Notice the depth of this hymn. It uses the literary device of contraposition (placing two contrasting things over against one another) to express profound theological truth.

The Biblical doctrine of the incarnation is noted in the first stanza, placing the eternal nature of God in contraposition to His astonishing incarnation as a true man: **“eternal God . . . clothed in garb of flesh and blood.”**

The shocking contrast of the Creator of the universe being placed in a lowly animal feed trough as a newborn baby is also expressed in the same verse: **“Dost take a manger for Thy throne,/ While worlds on worlds are thine alone.”**

The omnipresent God is nestled in the arms of a young maiden: **“Once did the skies before Thee bow;/ a virgin’s arms contain Thee now.”** (Verse 2)

God lowers Himself to raise us up: **“Forlorn and lowly is Thy birth/ That we may rise to heav’n from earth.”** (Verse 3)

Christ came to the sin-darkened world to bring man out of that darkness and into the light (John 8:12), *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”*: **“Thou comest in the darksome night/ to make us children of the light.”** (Verse 4)

“We love Him because He first loved us.” (I John 4:19): **“All this for us Thy love hath done;/ By this to Thee our love is won.”** (Verse 5)

We will never be able to take a ride with Mr. Benz in his 1886 Patent-Motorwagon, fly with the Wright brothers on their 1903 airplane, or walk on the moon with Neal Armstrong; but we rejoice that we can join in a 495-year-long procession of Reformation Christians in celebrating the First Christmas with the “First Christmas Hymn of the Reformation.” All praise to Thee, eternal God.



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

Following God with All Our Heart Begins with Repentance and Faith

In the history of the kings that followed King David, those kings are often compared to him.

Sometimes it is by contrast: “. . . [Abijam] was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.” (1 Kings 15:3)

At other times it is favorable: “Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father David.” (1 Kings 15:11)

There are also mixed reviews: “[Amaziah] did what was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like his father David. . . .” (2 Kings 14:3)

Does it surprise you that King David is held up as a favorable standard by which others are judged? Isn't this the same David whose ill-advised motivation led him to command a census of Israel? Afterward he admitted that he had sinned greatly and done foolishly (1 Chronicles 21:8).

The greatest example of how flawed and sinful David was, however, was manifested in his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah. That was no mere stumble. Spiritually speaking, David fell flat on his face. Earlier, Samuel had said that God had found David to be a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). We shudder to think that a man like that could fall so hard.

It may also strike us as a bit perplexing to read that years later God referred to David as His servant “. . . who followed Me with all his heart, to do only what was right in My eyes.” (1 Kings 14:8) Was God talking about the same David? Yes, He certainly was!

David's trust in God was displayed often in his life. His willingness to face Goliath was just one such example. David's love for God was also manifested in many of his psalms. Yet, the greatest example of his trust in God and love for Him is found in connection with his most grievous sins.

The truest worship we can offer to God in this life has repentance and faith as its foundation and source.

The central message preached by Jesus in His Galilean ministry is summarized thusly: “Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15) It is only when the Holy Spirit works repentance and faith in our hearts that we are reunited with God as His children. Only then can we offer thanks which He accepts and praise in which He delights.

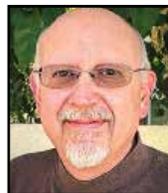
Genuine repentance doesn't always come quickly or easily. In the case of David, his repentance was a process that lasted for months and finally culminated in his confession, “I have sinned against the Lord.” (2 Samuel 12:13) The depth of his repentance is revealed in Psalm 51. Consider verses 3 and 4:

*For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.
Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge.*

No denial. No excuses. No blaming someone else. David takes full responsibility for his sins, but notice in verses 1 and 2 where he places his trust completely:

*Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.*

See how *repentance* and *faith* are the key to a close relationship with God? Only when his transgressions are blotted out, his iniquity is washed away, and he's cleansed completely from his sins, can David be seen by God as a servant “who followed Me with all his heart.” David wasn't sinless, but he repented of his sins and trusted in God and His mercy. Repentance and faith are the hallmarks of a close, everlasting relationship with God.



Delwyn Maas is pastor of Gift of God Lutheran Church in Mapleton, North Dakota.

Loving God by Loving Others

Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

(Hebrews 13:1-2 ESV)

Sometimes, at the end of the New Testament epistles, we get some parting words that can feel like a hodge-podge. It's kind of like what you might say to your kids before they head out the door for their first day of school: "Did you brush your teeth? Do you have your lunch? Listen to the teacher, and make sure that you follow the rules." The final chapter of Hebrews may feel like that, but there is a line of thought that flows throughout the chapter. These verses all deal with aspects of loving God by loving others.

In verse 1, we are exhorted to "let brotherly love continue." Let's remember that the love spoken of in Scripture is more than a mere emotion. It results in action. Take John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (ESV) The love God has for us isn't just a warm feeling, it also moved Him to action. God could have talked all He wanted about sending Jesus to save us, but if He never got around to it, we'd still be in our sins. We'd still be lost.

God urges us to love each other in the midst of attacks by the devil, the sinful world, and our own sinful flesh. And so, when we see a Christian brother or sister in need, it is Christian love that moves us to pray for that person and to help however we can.

Now, that can be hard enough for us who are prone, by nature, to look out only for ourselves and not for the needs of others. What we're told to do in verse 2, however, is even more difficult: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers." In verse 1, we have one Greek word that combines "love" and "brothers" (*philadelphia*—brotherly

You and I may not entertain angels in a literal sense, but any stranger could turn out to be a messenger of blessing to us.

love). In this verse, we have one Greek word that combines "love" and "strangers" (*philoxenia*—love for outsiders). We're called to show love not only for those we know, but also for those we don't know.

Oftentimes, we are inhospitable. Maybe it's not because we want to be inhospitable, but only because we don't take the time to practice hospitality. We have too many things on our "to-do list." We have too many things we would rather do than do something for someone else. But think about the hospitality that God showed for us, even while we were strangers—in fact, while we were God's enemies. Romans 5:8 says, "but God shows his love for us

in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (ESV) Loving by being hospitable reflects the very character of God.

Showing hospitality to strangers may benefit us as well. Verse 2 ends by mentioning that "some have entertained angels unawares." This reminds us of Genesis 18, in which Abraham showed hospitality to three strangers, not realizing that they were angels. You and I may not entertain angels in a literal sense, but any stranger could turn out to be a messenger of blessing to us. (The word "angel" sometimes means "messenger.")

Our lives are made up of relationships—with God, family, fellow Christians, and strangers. May Christ's love drive us to make the most of every opportunity to communicate His love in all of our interactions with others.



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

UNDERSTANDING THE CULTS — MORMONISM

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

The Mormons

Typically, cults are characterized by having an authoritarian individual or group that claims direct revelation from God which—they claim—is superior to the revelation of the Bible, distortion or “spinning” of Bible passages, an emphasis on conformity to a prescribed behavioral pattern, and “secret” teachings not revealed to outsiders.

Mormons fit this description.

Some historical background: according to the teaching of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), An Israelite named Lehi moved to the Americas around 600 B.C. In A.D. 33, Jesus appeared to Lehi's descendants, the Nephites. Mormon, a Nephite prophet, gave a nearly completed work to his son Moroni in A.D. 385. Moroni finished the work some thirty years later, imprinted the words (in no language known today) on gold plates, and buried them.

Joseph Smith (says the legend) received Moroni's gold plates in 1827 and translated the plates into *The Book of Mormon*—much of which is plagiarized from the Bible while other parts contradict the Bible.

After Smith was killed in a jail cell in 1844, leadership of the church fell to Brigham Young and has been successively passed down through history to today's prophet and president of the LDS.

The *Book of Mormon* is only one of four official truth sources for the LDS church, but it is considered greater than the others, including the Bible.

One of Smith's articles of faith states, “We believe that through the atonement, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” Notice how everything after “saved” contradicts the first part of the sentence, and how twisting the meaning of the word *Gospel* makes it the opposite of the Bible's Gospel of salvation by grace through faith.

Although the LDS church has worked diligently to present itself as mainstream and considers itself Christian, this is a deception. It is ultimately a non-Christian religion in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15) masquerading as a true teaching church (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Some of the more startling teachings and practices of the LDS church capture the most attention. These include polygamy (no longer taught); “holy underwear”; the axiom, “What man is, God once was. What God is, man can become”; and the two-year missionary trips (now mostly superseded by online and social media presence). While LDS members know about these things, they are not considered vital. Doctrine is not primary, experience is. Their religion is more tied to a sense of family and community, perseverance in the face of trial, and outward works.

The emphasis on “lifestyle” notwithstanding, Mormons do have inflexible doctrinal positions. Brigham Young wrote, “Every spirit that confesses that Joseph Smith is a prophet, that he lived and died a prophet, and that the Book of Mormon is true, is of God, and every spirit that does not is of Anti-Christ.” While some practices and attitudes have changed, the foundation on which Mormonism is built has not.

A man-made book that is said to be greater than the Bible, a prophet equal in honor to Jesus, a “Jesus” who is not the Son of God made flesh to redeem the world of sinners, and a salvation built upon obedience to laws and ordinances—these doctrines contradict the Bible and deny the salvation accomplished by Jesus and received through faith apart from works. They mark the LDS as being a non-Christian cult.

Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons (Mark J. Cares, Northwestern Publishing House, 1993) is a helpful resource for learning more about Mormonism and the best way to witness to Mormons.



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

“THIS WE BELIEVE”

In ongoing observation of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we are presenting a brief overview of the Book of Concord. After this month’s introduction, the series will survey the three ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran confessions.

Introduction to the Book of Concord

In the Christian church, the study of ancient Christian creeds and confessions of faith is known as *symbolics*. The term *symbol* is defined in theology as “an authoritative summary of faith and doctrine.” A commonly used synonym of *symbol* is *creed*.

Most churches that claim to be Christian subscribe at least outwardly to certain well-known confessions of faith, or symbols, including the Apostles’ Creed. Historically, those who have considered themselves Lutheran have held fast to the confessions contained in the *Book of Concord*, originally published in Germany on June 25, 1580. Unfortunately, many modern church bodies which still bear the name of *Lutheran* no longer hold to the confessions contained in the *Book of Concord*, or merely accept them “insofar as they are true” rather than “because they are true.” The Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC), however, still considers those creeds and confessions in the Book of Concord to be a clear and faithful presentation of the truths found in Holy Scripture. When CLC pastors and teachers are installed in our congregations, they publicly acknowledge that the confessions in the *Book of Concord* are their own confessions.

In the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we found it fitting to acquaint or re-acquaint our readers with the historical confessions of our church body. In this series, each creed and confession contained in the *Book of Concord* will be examined for its content and historical significance. We pray that this study will be an instructive, illuminating, and faith-affirming series. The New Testament Bereans were faithful in examining Scriptures to see if what the Apostle Paul and Silas were telling them was true. “*These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the*



Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed.” (Acts 17:11-12) Martin Luther closely examined the teachings of the Catholic Church and found parts to be in conflict with what the Bible taught. We too should be examining our confessions to see if they are faithful to Scripture.

Overview of Contents

Even though the *Book of Concord* was not published until 1580, its contents date back to the days of the early New Testament church. The three ancient creeds contained therein are the Apostles’ Creed (1st to 5th century A.D.), the Nicene Creed (A.D. 325 and 381), and the Athanasian Creed (approximately 6th to 8th century A.D.).

Luther himself penned several of the confessions found in the *Book of Concord*: Luther’s *Small Catechism* and *Large Catechism* (1529) and the *Smalcald Articles* (1536). A contemporary and scholarly friend of Luther during the early years of the Reformation, Philip Melancthon, wrote the *Augsburg Confession* (June 25, 1530), the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (1531), and the *Power and Primacy of the Pope* (1537). Several decades after Luther’s death, the *Formula of Concord* (1577) was published in an abridged version (the *Epitome*), and in an unabridged version (the *Solid Declaration*). These documents were authored by the Lutheran theologians Jacob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz, and David Chytraeus.

May God use this series of articles on the *Book of Concord* to reassure us in our faith life, and to help us walk with Him in an increasingly hostile world.

Joe Lau is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



Luther Memorial Church Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

The beginnings of Luther Memorial Church go back to events that took place even before its formal establishment in 1960. Its organization in February of that year had not been planned or undertaken in the customary process that a group of Christians follow when they get together to form a congregation. It came into being rather suddenly and spontaneously. Yet it was the work of God's Holy Spirit. For by the Spirit, faithful Christians were led to contend for the truth of God's Word at a time when it was being compromised and challenged.

In the Fond du Lac area, the pastors of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church conducted many meetings to instruct the congregation on what the Word of God directed them to do. Finally, at a meeting on February 7, 1960, the matter came before the members to determine whether they were going to continue with the Wisconsin Synod and endorse its actions, or abide by Romans 16:17, as their pastors had instructed them. The majority decided to remain with the synod. This made it clear that the two pastors, Gerhard Pieper and Waldemar Schuetze, could no longer serve the congregation.

On that February afternoon, Luther Memorial congregation was conceived. A spontaneous meeting of those who considered the two pastors their called servants of the Word met in the dining room of the St. Peter's School. That gathering included the two pastors, a teacher, and a number of voting members of St. Peter's congregation. A small operating council was appointed, plans were made to have worship services, and organization of a separate congregation was considered. The group resolved not to pursue any legal claims over against St. Peter's church property. On the very next Sunday, February 14th, 469

worshippers attended the first services, which were held in the auditorium of the Roosevelt Junior High School. Four days later, on February 18th, a voters' meeting attended by eighty-nine men was held in the Civic Room of the Retlaw Hotel. At that meeting an interim council was elected, and the group went on record as favoring the establishment of a Christian day school. They asked the two pastors and the two teachers to continue to serve the new congregation. "There was a general awareness of the common joy of true Christian fellowship uniting us all, together with the purposeful determination to go ahead under God's guidance and with His help, and do what was necessary for the orderly and successful establishment of a congregation dedicated to the full truth of God's Word."

Two pieces of property were offered to the congregation as a gift: the Fred Martin property on the west edge of town and the Frank Wollerman property on the south edge of Fond du Lac.

On February 28th the name of the congregation was chosen—Luther Memorial Church. Formal organization was completed on March 20, 1960, when eighty-five voting members adopted a constitution and elected a permanent church council, together with other necessary committees. Formal calls of vocation were extended to Pastors Waldemar Schuetze and Gerhard Pieper, and to the two teachers,

Gerhardt Mueller, and Miss Dorothy Schmolesky. On April 3rd, Pastor Egbert Schaller of Nicollet, Minnesota, conducted the service in which the workers of the church were installed.

Two pieces of property were offered to the congregation as a gift: the Fred Martin property on the west edge of town and the Frank Wollerman property on the south edge of Fond du Lac. On April 12th the voters accepted the offer of five acres from the Wollerman family. An additional strip of land along 21st Street was purchased to provide sufficient access, bringing the size of the property to seven

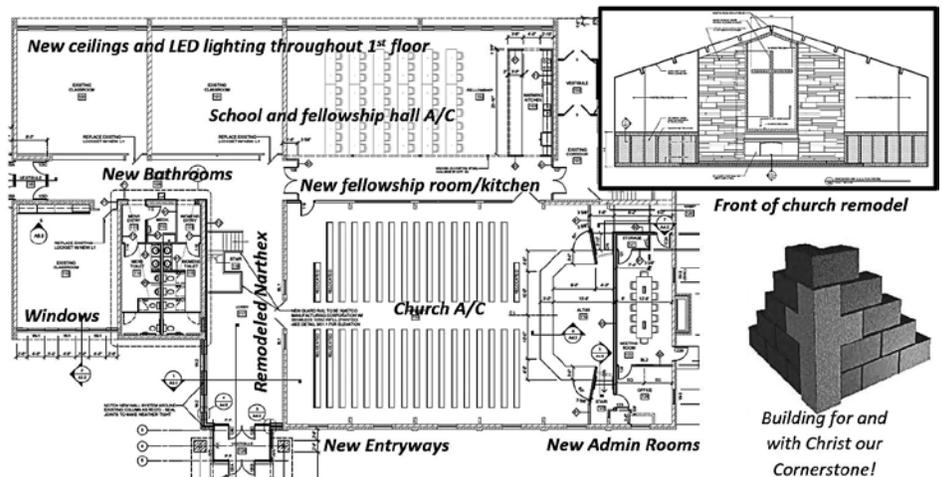


Some members of Luther Memorial in the remodeled sanctuary.

acres. On May 1st, a building fund offering was initiated. \$33,000 in cash was received, and more was promised by the members. The residence at 395 East Division Street was purchased as a parsonage for Pastor Waldemar Schuetze and his family. Pastor and Mrs. Pieper were housed in a home made available by the Wollermans at 302 East Pioneer Road. The cornerstone of the new building was laid on December 11th. A mild winter hastened the project so that on May 28th dedication services could be held for the church and the school.

Since that time, the Lord has made use of the church and school. At its height, the school had an enrollment of almost 120 students. Luther Memorial has been blessed by the leadership of its six pastors: Gerhard Pieper, Waldemar Schuetze, John Johannes, David Naumann, Neal Radichel, and its current pastor, Robert Sauers. Four principals have led the school: Gerhardt Mueller, Ross Roehl, Mark Kranz, and its current principal, David Bernthal.

On September 16, 2017, after four years of planning and nine months of construction, a dedication service was held praising the Lord following the completion of a full remodeling of the church and school facility.



The congregation continues following the Gospel of Christ as they eagerly look forward to what the Lord has planned for them in Fond du Lac. As we review the events of the past years, we are moved to sincere and humble thanks for the many evidences of His goodness. He has provided, first of all, the Gospel in the Word and Sacraments for young and old, in life and death. He has also provided pastors, teachers, lay workers, property, buildings, and material support. May His blessings continue to rest upon Luther Memorial, and also with you!

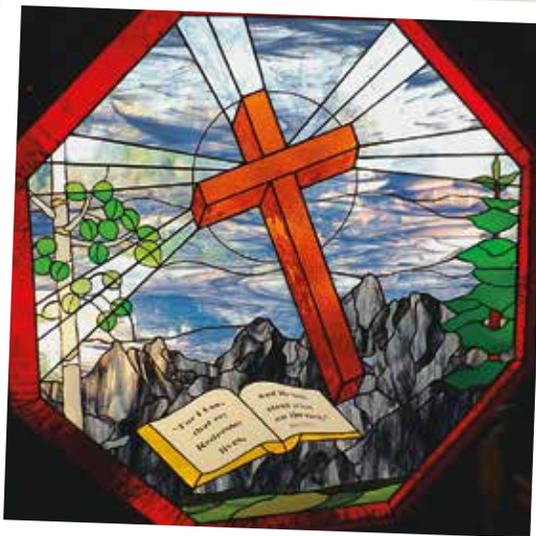


Neal Radichel is a former pastor of Luther Memorial Church of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. He currently serves Immanuel Lutheran Church of Mankato, Minnesota.

HAPPENINGS AROUND THE SYNOD



Above and right: this year's "Man Up!" retreat was held October 12-14th at Wyalusing State Park near Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. More than sixty CLC men enjoyed comradeship, Bible study, and a competition involving flying model aircraft!



Left and above: On November 4, Redeemer Lutheran Church of Cheyenne, Wyoming dedicated new pews to the service of the Lord. Also dedicated was a beautiful stained glass window, the creation of member Michael Sprengeler.



Left: members of the CLC Teachers Conference met this year at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Columbia, South Carolina. The conference theme was, "In the Eye of the Storm . . . There is Peace," based on Mark 4:39. Topics discussed ranged from curriculum choices for spelling, history and handwriting to STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) activities. Two Bible studies were presented, and teachers enjoyed field trips to the South Carolina state house, and Boone Plantation.



Left: members of the Great Lakes Pastoral Conference, which met September 25-27 at Living Hope Lutheran Church in Appleton, Wisconsin.



Above: members of the West Central Pastoral Conference inspect a pumpkin grown by a neighbor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Watertown, South Dakota. The huge pumpkin later won a statewide competition, weighing in at 1,277 pounds. The pastoral conference was held September 11-13.



Above: some members at a recent worship service in Anchorage, Alaska. Anchorage is a preaching station of Holy Truth Lutheran Church in Ketchikan, Alaska.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS DECEMBER 2018

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

Date	Verse	Reading	Comments
Dec 1	TLH 201	Acts 20:7-12	After the resurrection of Eutychus, the people were greatly comforted! Resurrections have a way of comforting us too, don't they?
Dec 3	WS 705	1 John 3:1-10	As we begin the Advent season, let's remember why the Son of God appeared—and turn away from the Devil's works ourselves.
Dec 4	TLH 65	Nehemiah 9:1-5	When the people heard the Law of the Lord they confessed their sins and also praised their God Who had been merciful to them.
Dec 5	TLH 69; LSB 342	Psalms 142	The Lord listens to the cries of the hopeless.
Dec 6	TLH 67	Songs 1:15-2:2	What a blessing when the love of a husband and wife in marriage reflects the love of God for them!
Dec 7	LSB 336	Revelation 1:1-8	He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead.
Dec 8	TLH 73	Acts 21:37-22:16	Paul testifies of his conversion, a conversion which God Himself brought about. He alone can convert the heart.
Dec 10	WS 701	1 John 5:1-12	Who is this Jesus born in Bethlehem? He is none other than the Son of God!
Dec 11	TLH 44	Nehemiah 12:27-43	Upon returning from captivity in Babylon, the Israelites gathered to give thanks. We give thanks to Christ for releasing us from the captivity of our sins.
Dec 12	TLH 41; LSB 348	Psalms 145	The ruling activity of Jesus Christ for the good of His people continues through all generations.
Dec 13	TLH 205	Acts 24:10-16	Our hope also, like Paul's, is in the resurrection of the dead. For this we would gladly stand trial and suffer.
Dec 14	WS 711	Revelation 7:9-17	Washed in the blood of the Lamb, we will rise from death to praise our God forever!
Dec 15	WS 702	2 John	Jesus Christ has truly come in the flesh and dwelt among us. May we continue now in His teaching.
Dec 17	TLH 114; LSB 356	Deuteronomy 31:1-8	Truly the Lord never leaves us or forsakes us. Remember the name given to Jesus—Immanuel, God with us.
Dec 18	TLH 55; LSB 351	Esther 2:19-3:6; 6:6-10	Haman's desire is to destroy all the Jews, but God won't let this happen for His redemptive plan hinges on Christ, the promised descendant of Abraham.
Dec 19	WS 709	Psalms 146	Our God lifts up the oppressed and the humble with His grace, mercy, and forgiveness. With Christmas approaching, compare vv. 7-9 to Luke 1:49-53.
Dec 20	TLH 81	Revelation 12:7-12	Our accuser is thrown down and defeated by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who came in the flesh to die for the sins of the world.
Dec 21	TLH 64; LSB 362	Acts 26:22-29	Jesus Christ is a light for Jews and Gentiles alike. May all be persuaded by the Gospel and find life in Him!
Dec 22	TLH 89	3 John	Let all the children of the Christ Child walk in the truth.
Dec 24	WS 707; LSB 393	Revelation 19:11-16	Christ, our Savior is born, and He shall ride in victory over all who rise up against our salvation! He is King of kings and Lord of lords!
Dec 25	WS 714;	Psalms 150	Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah!
Dec 26	WS 712 LSB 378	Jude	We remember Stephen (Acts 7) and the many others who have contended for the faith. To the only God our Savior be glory throughout all ages!
Dec 27	TLH 94	Acts 28:17-31	The message of salvation through our Savior Jesus has gone out into all the world.
Dec 28	WS 710	Revelation 21:1-7	The Lord promises us a new place to live—free from all sorrow, suffering, and evil.
Dec 29	TLH 341	Revelation 22:1-6	Christ will remove the curse of sin once and for all.
Dec 31	TLH 343; LSB 395	Revelation 22:7-21	Jesus is our bright Morning Star. May the Day of His coming dawn ever so soon. Amen!

Downsizing Christmas

Have you thought of downsizing? It might sound a little negative. Advertisers and even our own nature suggest to us that more is better. However, downsizing has become trendy. Baby boomers who no longer need a large house and a garage filled with lawn equipment and sports gear are getting rid of all their extra “stuff” and moving into a more-manageable apartment or condo. Downsizing enables them to find the things that really matter without digging through musty attics and dark closets. With less upkeep around the house, they have time for visiting the grandkids and traveling to new places. And it’s not just for seniors. Most of us, I think, would find that downsizing has a definite upside.

Have you ever thought about downsizing Christmas?

Maybe it’s time. Over the years we have accumulated all kinds of Christmas traditions—from finding the perfect Christmas tree and lighting the house inside and out to buying gifts, sending cards, and preparing special cookies and other treats. There is nothing wrong with any of those things. Many fond memories are attached to them. Still, a little downsizing might be in order so that we have the time and energy for what truly makes Christmas worth celebrating.

If your mind is in a constant state of overload trying to stay ahead of and manage all the details of Christmas traditions, it will be difficult to give thought to the Lord’s call to prepare for Christ’s birth through recognizing and repenting of our sin. Downsizing the demands we impose upon ourselves can provide some breathing room to clear out the clutter in our hearts and hear John the Baptist call, “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.” (Matthew 3:3 NIV84)

If social engagements keep us too busy or exhausted to make it to midweek Advent services, a little downsizing could provide opportunity to spend quality time with the Lord.

Who doesn’t enjoy getting together with friends during this season?

But if social engagements keep us too busy or exhausted to make it to midweek Advent services, a little downsizing could provide opportunity to spend quality time with the Lord, Who once gently reprimanded a close friend, “*Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.*” (Luke 10:41-42 NIV84)

It is an expression of love to exchange gifts with family and friends, but if the hunt for just the right gift for Uncle Bob overshadows God’s perfect gift of His Son to the world, then downsize.

Cut the size of the list or instead of purchasing a gift, write a note sharing the exciting news of God-made-man, born of a virgin and laid in the manger.

The traditions in our lives are treasured ways of observing Christmas, but they are not Christmas itself. Christmas is not about what we do, but rather all about what God has done for mankind. Over the course of four millennia, He never forgot His promise to send the Seed of the woman to crush the serpent’s head and rescue sinners from eternal death. “*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*” (Galatians 4:4-5 NIV84)

May we never forget what really matters. Let’s appreciate the traditions, but at the same time, let’s not hesitate to do some downsizing as needed. The upside is seeing the Savior all the more clearly as the source of our salvation and the reason for celebration all year long!



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

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Study Reveals Ancient Heresies Alive and Well Among American Evangelicals.

LifeWay Research and Ligonier Ministries in September released the results of a large poll taken among self-identified “evangelical Christians,” comparing popularly held beliefs with the historic teachings of the Christian church. Some results were reassuring: large majorities agreed that there is one true God in three persons (97%), that He is perfect (97%), and that he answers prayer (94%). On the other hand, 71% agreed with the statement that “Jesus was the first and greatest being created by God”; this is the ancient heresy of Arianism, and was refuted by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. 74% said that “an individual must contribute his or her own effort for personal salvation” (the Pelagian heresy). Perhaps most troubling—and least “Christian” of all—was the fact that nearly half of all evangelical Christians espoused religious pluralism, agreeing with the statement, “God accepts the worship of all religions including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.” Lindgren, Caleb. “Evangelicals’ Favorite Heresies Revisited by Researchers.” *Research*. ChristianityToday.com, 28 Sep. 2018. Web. 27 Oct. 2018.

Colorado Baker Still Under Fire.

On the same day that the US Supreme Court ruled 7-2 in favor of Boulder baker Jack Phillips’s right to decline a cake order for a same-sex “wedding,” his shop received another order, this time for a cake celebrating the customer’s coming out as transgender. The same customer had earlier attempted to order cakes with crudely sexual and satanic themes. All were declined by Phillips. Incredibly, and in apparent defiance of the Supreme Court decision, Aubrey Elenis, director of the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, said on June 28 that there was “probable cause” to believe that Phillips was violating the customer’s civil rights in declining to make the transgender-themed cake, and that the commission will investigate the charge. French, David. “Colorado Defies the Supreme Court, Renews Persecution

of a Christian Baker.” *Law and the Courts*. NationalReview.com, 15 Aug. 2018. Web. 28 Oct. 2018.

Reversal of Roles: Southern Hemisphere Now Evangelizing Europe.

For centuries, European and North American Christian denominations have been sending missionaries to third-world countries of South America, Africa, and Asia. However with the decline of organized Christianity in the northern hemisphere (especially Europe), that trend has begun to change. According to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, there is now a growing trend of “reverse mission, where younger churches in the Global South are sending missionaries to Europe,” even as the numbers being sent from the Global North were “declining significantly.” The report noted the striking fact that nearly half of the top twenty mission-sending countries in 2010 were in the Global South, including Brazil, India, the Philippines, and Mexico. Imtiaz, Saba. “A New Generation Redefines What It Means to Be a Missionary.” *Global*. TheAtlantic.com, 8 Mar. 2018. Web. 14 Aug. 2018.

Overall Divorce Rate Falling in U.S.

There was good news from a recent study by sociologists at Bowling Green State University, who found that American divorce rates declined by about eighteen percent between 2008 and 2016. Most of the improvement came from millennials, who are getting married later (at an average age of twenty-seven for women and twenty-nine for men), and are staying married. The improvement among millennials was good enough to offset the sharply higher divorce rates for older Americans: between 1995 and 2015 the rate for couples aged 55-65 doubled, while for couples over 65 it tripled. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Editorial Board, “Millennials are saving marriage.” *Opinion*. Post-Gazette.com, Oct. 8, 2018. Web. Oct. 28, 2018.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In accord with our usage and order, **Nathan Pfeiffer**, who was called by Berea Lutheran Church, Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, to be its pastor, was installed on October 21, 2018. Assisting at the service were Professor John Pfeiffer, Pastors Joseph Naumann and John Hein, and Pastors Emeritus Paul Fleischer, Dale Redlin, David Schierenbeck, Daniel Fleischer and James Sandeen.

—Pastor Em. John Schierenbeck]



Above: Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer and the clergy, active and retired, who participated in his installation at Berea Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, on October 21.

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