

June 2019 VOL 61 NO. 12

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



*"And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh."*

JOEL 2:28



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501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701



Postmaster: Periodicals postage paid at Eau Claire WI 54701 and additional offices (825-580). ISSN#0024-7537. Send address corrections (Form 3579) to Lutheran Spokesman, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701.

The Lutheran Spokesman is published monthly by the Church of the Lutheran Confession, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701, and is an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Website address: www.clclutheran.org.

Editor: Paul Naumann, 3732 Claymore Lane, Eau Claire, WI, 54701, E-mail to paul.naumann@ilc.edu; Assistant Editor: Craig Owings; Art Director, Graphic Designer, Print Production: Matthew Schaser; Proofreaders: David Lau and Paula Naumann; Staff: James Albrecht, David Bernthal, Timothy Daub, Wayne Eichstadt, David Fuerstenau, Frank Gantt, Norman Greve, Mark Gullerud, John Klatt, Ross Kok, Joseph Lau, Delwyn Maas, Bruce Naumann, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Sam Rodebaugh, Michael Roehl, Robert Sauer, Thomas Schuetze, Chad Seybt, Mark Weis.

Material submitted for publication should be sent to Editor Paul Naumann three months before date of publication. Announcements and other short notices should also be sent to Editor Naumann.

Business Manager: Rev. James Sandeen, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701. E-mail to jim.sandeen@ilc.edu. Individual subscriptions (foreign-U.S. currency only): \$18.00 (\$36.00) for one year; \$34.00 (\$50.00) for two years; \$50.00 (\$72.00) for three years; sent in bulk to congregations: \$15.00.

Send address or payment question requests to: lutheranspokesman@ilc.edu

Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org

Printed in U.S.A.

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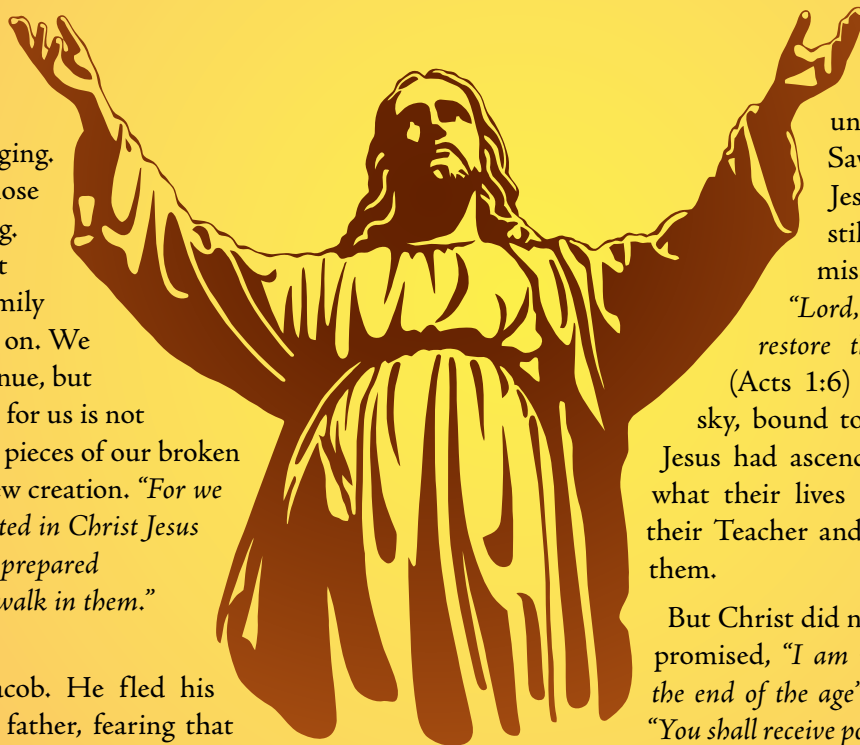
God Has a Plan for You

Our lives are constantly changing. Occasionally, those changes feel life-shattering. We move, change jobs, get sick, or lose a friend or family member; the list could go on. We wonder how we can continue, but God knows that His plan for us is not broken. God picks up the pieces of our broken lives and makes us His new creation. *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:10)

Consider the life of Jacob. He fled his home after deceiving his father, fearing that Esau would kill him. He saw firsthand the kind of healing that God is capable of when he returned to his homeland and was met by his brother’s embrace (Genesis 33:4). He had faced adversity of many kinds and had been blessed by God with twelve sons; then he was told that his beloved son Joseph was dead. *“And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, ‘For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning.’ Thus his father wept for him.”* (Genesis 37:35) His life was broken in a way that no human comfort could mend.

God’s plan was bigger than Jacob understood. He used Joseph to help prepare for a seven-year famine. But God didn’t care only about the big picture. He knew the pain that Jacob was living with and healed him by reuniting him with his son. *“Then Israel said, ‘It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.’”* (Genesis 45:28)

Jesus’ disciples faced confusion that only God could solve for them. Until Pentecost, they lacked the full



understanding of their Savior’s work. Even at Jesus’ ascension, they still misunderstood His mission on earth, asking, *“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”* (Acts 1:6) They stared up at the sky, bound to the earth from which Jesus had ascended. They were unsure what their lives would be like without their Teacher and Friend walking beside them.

But Christ did not leave them alone. He promised, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20), and *“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8) On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on them, and they shared their full understanding of Christ’s work. God cleared the confusion that troubled them.

We know that the evils of the world are caused by sin, but we often cannot understand why God allows them to happen. We cannot see God’s full plan in our lives, but when we see God’s hand in the lives of Jacob, Joseph, the disciples, and others throughout history, we can take comfort that He does have a plan for us. Not all things will be easy, but God never leaves us alone in the ashes of grief or hopelessness. He supplies the spiritual strength for our lives and sets a path before us. Let us take comfort in God’s plan for us, putting aside our distress in adversity and praying, *“Thy will be done.”*



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Our Father’s Day

How difficult is it to get a national holiday started? If one were to look at the history behind Father’s Day, the conclusion would be—quite difficult.

It seems as far back as the Middle Ages, Catholic Europe held a Father’s Day of sorts on the Feast of St. Joseph. However, the practice just didn’t seem to catch on. Several cities in the U.S. attempted to get something going with parades and speeches in the early 1900’s, but still—nothing doing. Most attempts to get a Father’s Day going were seen as collusion between the promoters and manufacturers of ties, tobacco pipes and other traditional father-type gifts. Congress rejected no fewer than three bills attempting to establish the holiday, even with the backing of several presidents. Finally, dads got their day when Richard Nixon made the holiday permanent in 1972.

In the beginning, Father’s Day was received with cynical and sarcastic attacks and jokes. Not much has changed. Watch any TV program or movie and look at how the father is being portrayed. Fathers are often viewed as dimwitted knuckle draggers outsmarted by their wives and offspring. In most presentations, these narrow-minded men need their opinions changed, or at least need to be taught a lesson.

Take a look at your father (or yourself, if you are one). Take a hard look and you will see we really are a flawed bunch of creatures. Don’t get me wrong. You love and respect your father, and that is great. However, if your father is worth his salt, he will admit his own shortcomings. It is difficult for a man to put the needs of his family before his own as he ought to do. Every father can look back with regret on missed teaching moments, heavy-handed discipline (or a lack of discipline), and a host of other broken promises and failed attempts to be a great dad.

If we are willing to admit it, we are all “dead-beat dads.” Should there even be a day set aside to honor us? In a word, yes.

Christians know that in God, our heavenly Father, we have the ultimate example of what a loving father is to be. Yet, our Father isn’t content to be just an example. He put His love into action for us. Our Father devised His plan of salvation before time began. His Son took on our sins and shortcomings. Jesus’ blood wiped out the accusations against us and submerged our sins in the depths of the sea forever. We sometimes mishandle or pervert justice, but Jesus always judges fairly. We spend time away from our family, but Jesus never leaves the side of His loved ones. We selfishly put ourselves ahead of our family’s needs, but Jesus puts us first. For us He was willing to live a life of sorrow. For us He was willing to humble Himself unto death—even death on the cross.

And all of this work of Jesus is now credited to us! His righteousness covers our many failures! Oh, it is true we still have room for improvement and growth as fathers, but we no longer have to look back at the past with hand-wringing and guilt.

If you wish you were a better dad, then start today. Look to Christian fathers you respect for advice and counsel. If your children are raised, help guide the young fathers in your congregation. Take advantage of opportunities to study God’s Word with other fathers, and enjoy their fellowship at events such as the *Man Up!* retreat, held annually. But, above all, look to our Father above for the guidance and help you need. It is in His Word that you will see the purpose and plans He has for you and your family.



David W. Bernthal is the principal of Luther Memorial School in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

TLH 233

“Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest”

“The King of kings, and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.”

1 Timothy 6:15-16

Because God dwells in inapproachable light, the only source of man’s *genuine* knowledge of God—including even what we refer to as the “natural knowledge of God”—is God’s self-revelation. However, the “natural knowledge of God”—that which is derived from observation of nature (Romans 1:20) and from God’s Law written our hearts (Romans 2:14-15)—cannot lead man to salvation. Salvation comes only through faith in Christ, and that saving faith requires the action of the Holy Spirit working through the Means of Grace, the inspired Word of God.

Our present season of the church year, Pentecost, is a time in which we especially direct our devotional consideration to the person and work of the Holy Spirit, Who creates and sustains saving faith. At the first Pentecost festival after the ascension of Christ into heaven, it was the Holy Spirit Who—by moving the apostles to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and by miraculously enabling them to do so in the native languages of all who heard—was responsible for the creation of saving faith in the hearts of approximately three thousand Jews dwelling in Jerusalem. We regard that event as the birth of the Christian Church. However, creating and sustaining saving faith is not the only work of the Holy Spirit which Scripture reveals, and during the season of Pentecost we contemplate the Holy Spirit and *all* His works.

The medieval hymn *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, “Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest,” is a prayer of praise and petition to the Holy Spirit for His manifold blessings. Among those blessings is the comfort He gives us in times of difficulty—for the Holy Ghost is the Comforter promised by Jesus before His ascension into heaven (John 14:26, John 15:26, John 16:7). So we sing in Verse 2 of this hymn, “**To Thee, the Comforter, we cry,/ To Thee, the Gift of God Most High,/ The Fount of life, the Fire of love,/ The soul’s Anointing from above.**”

The next verse speaks of “The sevenfold gifts” of the Spirit: “**The sev’n-fold gifts of grace are Thine,/ O Finger of the Hand Divine;/ True Promise of the Father Thou,/ Who dost the tongue with speech endow.**” These seven “gifts of the spirit” are not specifically listed as such in any one place in the Bible, but there most certainly is biblical justification for referring to them in this way—especially since it is the Holy Spirit Who mediates *all* spiritual gifts to us, and the number seven, in biblical numerology, is considered a symbol of perfection or completeness. The biblical validation for referring to these sevenfold gifts can be found in Isaiah 11:2-3 (*wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of the LORD, and delight*) as well as in Revelation 5:6, “*And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*” We praise the Holy Spirit for bestowing these gifts upon the Church.

Apart from the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit through the Word, man cannot understand spiritual truth (1 Corinthians 2:14). So we sing in Verse 4, “**Thy light to every thought impart/ And shed Thy love in every heart;/ The weakness of our mortal state/ With deathless might invigorate.**” Indeed, the “natural knowledge of God” cannot inform us even of such fundamental divine truth as the Triune nature of God, but in this hymn we pray, “**Make Thou to us the Father known,/ Teach us the eternal Son to own/ And Thee, whose name we ever bless,/ Of both the Spirit, to confess. Praise we the Father and the Son/ And Holy Spirit, with them One;/ And may the Son on us bestow/ The gifts that from the Spirit flow!**” (Verses 6 & 7)



May this be our Pentecost prayer.

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

Praying in the Darkness

Many prayers in the Psalms are offered by people going through difficult times; but most of them express a measure of confidence and end on a note of hope. That is not the case in Psalm 88. The psalmist feels as if he's adrift among the dead and in the depths of darkness. It seems that he has been hit with wave after wave of affliction, been terrorized from his youth, and lost all his loved ones and friends. There's sadness throughout, and it even ends with the word *darkness*. Why is a psalm like this even in the Bible?

"O LORD, God of my salvation . . ." (Psalm 88:1)

This is what the psalmist believes, and on this basis he prays to God. He holds onto that even though his emotions are running amok. This psalm contains a sobering lineup of troubles. Outwardly the circumstances of his life are dark, and inwardly he's experiencing darkness also.

There are occasions when Christians can face dark times and still remain calm and at peace; but that's not always the case. This psalmist, for example, feels intensely that he has been abandoned by God. From a distance we can objectively consider his situation and conclude that what he is feeling isn't true. God never abandons and rejects His children. Deep down, the psalmist knows that, too; but that's not how he feels.

The Bible deals with reality—with life as we experience it. Dark times can and do come into the lives of Christians regardless of how devout they are and how well they know the Bible. Nevertheless, many believers have shared that it was through the darkest times that they really came to understand and appreciate God's mercy and grace.

The psalmist is so overwhelmed with disappointment and grief that he's getting many of the facts wrong. For example, it seems to him that God doesn't love him anymore. That cannot be true; but God knows His children well and

Dark times can and do come into the lives of Christians regardless of how devout they are and how well they know the Bible.

understands how vulnerable they are to feeling like that when grief colors their reason. The weaknesses of His children, however, never push Him away from them. He will abide with them and take care of them even when they're crushed by grief and making little sense, because He is and ever remains a God of grace.

Many believers will face severe trials that last for years, some even for a lifetime; but our life on earth is relatively brief and its sufferings not worth comparing with the glory and joy that God has in store for us in eternity. (Romans 8:18) God has such glory and joy waiting for us because there was Someone who actually did endure what the psalmist wrote about.

The psalmist didn't really suffer God's terrors and wasn't really in the depths of the pit. God's face was not, in truth, hidden from him.

For Jesus, however, the darkness *was* deep and real, God *did* turn His face away from Him, and the sufferings of Jesus *were* to the uttermost. When Jesus was on the cross, darkness *was* His only companion. God's wrath truly *did* engulf Him.

Jesus experienced all of that to take away our sins; and, thanks to Jesus, we *are* spared God's wrath, God's face *will* always be toward us, and our darkness *is* turned to light. The grace of God always *overrides* our misguided feelings and fears.

In verse 10 the psalmist asked, "Shall the dead arise and praise You?"

Thanks to Jesus, the answer is, "Yes! Yes, we will!"

"And all the people said, 'Amen!' and praised the Lord." (1 Chronicles 13:36)

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

No Substitute

“Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.”

(Hebrews 13:9-10)

For decades, the car manufacturer Porsche used the slogan “There Is No Substitute” for its cars. With that slogan, Porsche wanted people to believe that while there were other sports car manufacturers out there, there was nothing quite like a Porsche. In our text, the writer to the Hebrews wants to drive home the point that there is no substitute for the grace of God.

It is striking how many warnings there are in the New Testament against being deceived by false doctrine. Jesus warned His disciples in Matthew 24 not to be deceived by false christs and false prophets. The Apostle Paul includes warnings against being led astray by false teaching in his letters to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Thessalonians, and to Timothy. These repeated warnings emphasize the fact that there are many false teachings out there, and people will be enticed to follow them.

The book of Hebrews was written to Christians who were being enticed to go back to the ways of Judaism because of the persecution they faced. This whole letter is written to convince these Christians of the absolute supremacy of Jesus Christ and that going back to Judaism would be worse than futile. It’s no surprise, then, that as the writer concludes this letter, he gives one final warning about being carried away by various and strange doctrines.

We are not specifically told what these “various and strange doctrines” were. With the mention of “foods,” it is likely that these false teachings had something to do with the promotion of Jewish rituals at the expense of Christianity. Whatever these teachings were, they were

apparently meant to satisfy some spiritual need but failed to do so.

There are many false doctrines floating around promising to satisfy our needs. We rub shoulders every day with teachings and philosophies that seem as though they’ll give us the support we need, but in the end serve only to weaken our faith and turn us away from the Lord.



We do, of course, have to be on the lookout for the false teachings of other denominations. But perhaps even more enticing are the false teachings of the world that tell us that one’s body can be shared with anyone, or that lying and cheating is nothing more than shrewd business. These philosophies promise to make us feel good—to give us the

satisfaction that we need in life. And, for a time, we do feel satisfaction from these things. That’s what makes them so enticing—and so dangerous.

So the writer to the Hebrews focuses us on that which gives true, lasting satisfaction. He says that “it is good that the heart be established by grace.” It is God’s grace that truly satisfies us as it is only by the grace of God that we are made heirs of the hope of eternal life. By God’s grace “we have an altar. . . .” That altar is our Savior’s cross where Jesus suffered and died to pay for every one of our sins. That is the revelation of God’s grace. That is how God demonstrated His great love for us.



There is no substitute for what our Savior has done for us. May God keep our hearts firmly established by His grace.

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UNDERSTANDING THE CULTS

In this twelve-part series we are taking 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.

Unitarian Universalism

*Come, return to your place in the pews,
And hear our heretical views:
You were not born in sin so lift up your chin,
You have only your dogmas to lose.*

—Leonard Mason, Unitarian Universalist minister

Unitarianism, with its denial of the Trinity, was present in America as early as 1784, but it really took hold when William Channing (1780-1842) preached his “Baltimore Sermon” at the ordination of Jared Sparks in 1819. That sermon was published and reprinted seven times and became the bedrock of defense for the Unitarians. Under Channing’s influence, the American Unitarian Association was founded in May of 1825. At that time, Unitarians still held a high regard for Scripture along with their heretical teachings, but this would soon change.

When the Unitarians came under the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and other Transcendentalists, the so-called “biblical phase” of the Unitarians came to an end. Intuition replaced Scripture, and any semblance of Christianity was replaced by non-Christian philosophy and assimilation of all major world religions. Channing and the “classic Unitarians” tried to stand against the new wave, but to no avail. The highest value in the minds and hearts of Unitarians became the “complete realization of human personality and the quest for the good life here and now.”

The development of the Universalist church took place at the same time as Unitarian growth in America. Universalist churches taught that everyone would ultimately receive salvation. By the time these churches organizationally became the Universalist Church of America in 1942, “universalism” had changed from universal salvation to universal religion—a blend of various global faiths.

The two streams—the Universalist Church of America and the American Unitarian Association—came to a confluence in 1961 and formed the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). In its 1985 General Assembly, the UUA declared that it was no longer a Christian denomination but an interfaith association.



Today, many Unitarian Universalists completely deny the existence of a god. Those who do admit a god are anti-Trinitarian, deny Jesus’ divinity, and some even dispute that Jesus was a good example and moral teacher.

Unitarian Universalists believe that all human beings are inherently good with no sin or guilt. They don’t believe in a bodily resurrection, and most deny any kind of life after death. To the Unitarian Universalist, “salvation” is making this world a better place, and “hell” is the trouble one experiences on earth.

The Unitarian Universalist Association regards the Bible as a non-inspired book written by erring human authors. UUA’s guiding principles are drawn from six non-biblical sources: 1) direct experience, 2) words and deeds of prophetic women and men, 3) wisdom from the world’s religions, 4) Jewish and Christian teachings, 5) humanist teachings, and 6) spiritual teachings of earth-centered traditions.

This sect’s errors are blatantly obvious but spiritually dangerous nonetheless. Unitarians offer “something for everybody.” They are a one-stop shop for whatever spiritual or humanistic view you’d like to hold and foster. Their “gospel” is that they give a safe haven in which you can pursue your personal version of truth from whatever tradition you’ve come and whatever you wish to believe.

Unitarian Universalist history demonstrates that simply holding a high regard for Scripture does not automatically lead to soul-saving truth. God and His Word must have preeminence over human reason. Then the sinner is ready to humbly listen to the voice of his Good Shepherd (John 10:27-28) and treasure His words (Luke 11:28).

The sad reality is that Unitarian Universalism will welcome anything except the one thing needful—the Scriptures and the One Whom they proclaim.



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 those confessional documents that make up the *Book of Concord*.

The Augsburg Confession

“I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, And will not be ashamed.” (Psalm 119:46)

If asked, most Lutherans would be able to tell you what happened on October 31, 1517. That is the day that Luther nailed the Ninety-Five Theses to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany, igniting the Reformation. How about June 25, 1530? Does that date ring a bell? Perhaps it should.

On that Saturday afternoon, Dr. Christian Beyer boldly read in the German tongue a confession in front of Emperor Charles V at an Imperial Diet in Augsburg, Germany. This confession clearly stated the doctrines adhered to by Lutherans of that day. In its preface it states, “We offer and present a confession of our pastors’ and preachers’ teaching and of our own faith, setting forth how and in what manner, on the basis of Holy Scriptures, these things are preached, taught, communicated, and embraced in our lands, principalities, dominions, cities, and territories.” Upon completion of the reading, Dr. Gregory Brueck handed written copies in Latin and German to the emperor and said, “Most gracious Emperor, this is a confession that will even prevail against the gates of hell, with the grace and help of God.”

Background

Just nine years earlier, Martin Luther had been declared an outlaw at the Diet of Worms by this same emperor because he had refused to recant his writings that opposed the Catholic Church unless someone could convince him from Scripture that he was in error. With the help of Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony, Luther went into hiding.

Over the next several years, support for Luther’s teachings continued to grow, especially among the northern German states. What the pope had once considered a local problem involving a rebellious monk could no longer be ignored.

The primary reason for Charles V calling a meeting in Augsburg was the hope of ending religious disputes within Christendom so the country could present a unified front in opposing the invading Turks from the East. Charles told the Lutheran princes to prepare a statement of their beliefs. Luther, Philip Melancthon, and Justus Jonas prepared such a statement, called the Torgau Articles, for

their prince, John the Steadfast. Because Luther was yet a declared outlaw, he did not attend the diet himself, but he corresponded regularly with those who did.

Meanwhile, Luther’s enemies, most notably his old nemesis John Eck, were working to stamp out Lutheranism. Eck published a scathing and slanderous book identifying what he claimed were over four hundred “errors” in Luther’s teaching, including many things taught by other reformers. Eck hoped to lump Lutherans in with the most radical reformers, including the followers of Ulrich Zwingli, and the Anabaptists.

To address Eck’s false charges, Melancthon had to expand the Torgau Articles. So what became known as the Augsburg Confession not only dealt with topics on which there was controversy, but also outlined the basic tenets of the Christian faith, proving that the Lutherans were not heretics, but rather were teachers and confessors of the ancient apostolic teaching.

Many German princes and city leaders risked their lives and territory by signing their names to the document. After its reading, Charles V demanded that the Catholics respond with a document pointing out errors in the Augsburg Confession. Eck and others then wrote a “Confutation” document and presented it to Charles a few weeks later. Charles found it bulky and bungling and returned it for revision. After five revisions it was finally read publicly on August 3, 1530. It was never published or given to the Lutherans for further inspection. Luther later referred to it as a “flimsy rebuttal . . . [that] a woman, a child, a layman, a peasant, are fully able to refute with good arguments taken from the Scriptures, the Word of Truth.”

The Augsburg Confession remains today a document that plainly sets forth the truths of the Bible. Mark June 25 on your calendar and use it as an occasion to read this important part of your Lutheran heritage!



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Story of Bhoglal Gharti, Rolpa

The following is a report from Pastor Raju Bithrakoti, in his own words, about current activities in the Dang Province of Nepal. The report is lightly edited for clarity.

This is a story of Bhoglal Gharti from Rolpa district in western Nepal. in province number five. Bhoglal was born on December 18, 1956. He was raised in a Hindu family and when he grew up he became a Hindu priest. He used to worship a number of gods and goddesses. He had organized some Hindu text reading conferences and meetings. He was a well-known Hindu leader and had influence on local people. He was also involved in witchcraft and would sacrifice roosters and goats. He started to get drunk and use marijuana and other drugs.



He got married in Hindu culture. He moved to a town called Tulsipur in Dang. He was a constructor as a profession and would build houses and was involved in politics, too. He used to be a member of the National Democratic Party, which is basically a Hindu nationalist party.

He has five daughters and two sons. In his family they didn't have any peace. Every day he would come home drunk and quarrelling and fighting. Nobody in his family was happy. They were very depressed and sad.

Sometime later his daughters and sons received the Gospel from Pastor Nawaraj Dangi. This pastor would visit his children and preach the Gospel. The children of Bhoglal started going to church. Bhoglal was against the conversion and he would make difficulties for them as they were going to church in Tulsipur. The district of Dang is well known for its anti-Christian movement. He was a conservative Hindu, so he would start to persecute and say bad about the church, pastor and his children. Every day he would create problems in his family.

When his children got baptized and became faithful Christians, they started praying for their father. After praying and telling something about Jesus, a few years later the Lord worked in his heart and in his heart he was feeling some good for Christ. He asked for a Bible, and started reading through it. As he was reading the Bible he was moved by the Lord and he started going to church. At the age of 50 he was growing in faith. He threw away the idols and images of false gods that he used to worship. He believed in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." He repented of all his sins. He was baptized at Immanuel Church in Dang by Pastor Nawaraj Dangi. As

Most of Rolpa is rugged highlands populated by the indigenous Kham Magar nationality.

Irrigated ricefields along the Madi Khola are of limited extent because it has a narrow inner gorge. In any case the Kham Magar live about a thousand meters upslope where little rice can be grown. Upland harvests of maize, millet and barley are invariably insufficient and so Rolpa has chronic food deficits. As long as marijuana and charas (hashish) were legal in Nepal they were grown and processed in Rolpa and sent to Kathmandu to be sold in government monopoly stores. In 1976 the government gave in to international pressure and stopped buying these products, causing the district to lose an important source of cash income. Kham also make money by selling their labor. They work as agricultural laborers in other districts, as porters, as soldiers and as general laborers, but their input is devalued by Rolpa's underdeveloped education infrastructure. There is no post-secondary education in the district, and students who speak more Magar bhasha than Nepali are disadvantaged in primary and secondary education because Nepali is the medium of instruction and the national examination system selects against students who are not proficient in it. Without educational credentials Kham lack access to the more desirable jobs. From Wikipedia





they grow in faith together, his family is feeling blessed and also happy with each other. The broken relationships with his children are better now.

Eternal Life Christian Church

After baptism and some years at church, the Lord led him to witness in his own village where there are many people who do not know of the true Savior. He left his politics and started a small house fellowship at his home, and Pastor Nawaraj would go there sometimes to encourage the small church. Now they named the church Eternal Life Christian Church. Seeing the transformation in him, the villagers are impressed and they do hear the Gospel. As he preaches and gives testimony, people listen to him and are amazed at the work of God in changing his life. The church is growing, and more people are coming to the church. There are now forty-five members at the church.

He gave his land to the church to build a building. They gathered the locally available resources to build a church. The Himalayan Church of the Lutheran Confession in Nepal (HCLCN) was able to provide a roof for their newly built church. They appreciate the assistance and are glad to have a church nearby. The church is growing and the Lord is blessing it with more members.

They have started a house fellowship on Wednesdays. They also plan to reach out to other people in the neighborhood.

At the request of Pastors Nawaraj and Bhoglal, the HCLCN has now begun a Bible institute in Dang. There is a need of education and training so they can equip themselves to go to their churches with courage and proclaim the truth of the Word. The HCLCN passed their request on to the CLC and they are supporting the new training in Dang.

Now Bhoglal and his younger son Narayan are receiving training through the Himalayan Bible Institute in Dang (HBI-Dang). Bhoglal is one of the most diligent students at the training. He has completed his first year of the training and has one more year to complete it. He receives the training and learns enthusiastically. He wants to complete the course at the Bible institute and go to other villages with the Gospel of our Savior.

He thanks God for this transformation and thanks the local pastor, the HCLCN and the CLC that has supported and encouraged him in his work in the area where Christianity is not well received.



Now he requests prayers for the church he is serving and for his preaching of the Gospel in surrounding villages and districts.

Raju Bithrakoti is a pastor and missionary in the HCLCN. His home is in Nepal.

Faith Lutheran Church of West St. Louis County, Manchester, Missouri

The numbers are grim. 24% consider themselves Protestant. Of these, only 0.9% say that the Bible is the Word of God. This is the state of things in Germany today—a country from which God raised up many faithful servants who proclaimed the pure Gospel and confessed before the pope and all others what God's Word says about sin and grace. For centuries Germany and a number of the surrounding countries were fertile ground for the growth of Lutheranism. But we see that today most have strayed from the truth because they love the world.

There was a time when St. Louis, Missouri was synonymous with sound Biblical teaching. Germans fleeing the unionism of the Prussian Union emigrated to the area and established what would one day be known as the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Anyone who wishes to learn more about what God says in His Word owes a great debt of gratitude to the servants God raised up over the years in that synod. But by the middle of the twentieth century, some in that fellowship had begun to stray from that Word. Soon St. Louis was no longer a center for biblical and Lutheran orthodoxy.

In 1948, the Holy Spirit led twenty-five souls in St. Louis to recognize the leaven of false teaching working in the dough of the Missouri Synod. Six years later these saints formed an independent congregation called The Orthodox Lutheran Church of St. Louis, Missouri. They initially rented a room at the American Legion hall in Maplewood,

Missouri. Worship was led by Mr. Herman Strumpler until a full-time pastor could be called.

Julius B. Erhart was installed as the first shepherd of the flock on November 14, 1954. He served the congregation for eleven years. During this time the church was actively seeking a like-minded church with which to practice

fellowship, but decided to avoid the WELS and ELS because of their continued fellowship with the Missouri Synod after the latter had been recognized as a false teaching church.

The first church property was purchased in the summer of 1955. It was a stone church originally occupied by a Pentecostal congregation. This was no small purchase, but the Lord moved the hearts of His saints to mortgage houses, sell cars and land, and deplete savings accounts. Selfless generosity was shown in response to the selfless generosity of their Savior!

Though this small congregation established itself among a multitude of churches which had *Lutheran* in their names, they found that they were quite alone in their adherence to the whole testimony of God. But by God's grace they became aware that a number of previously LCMS, WELS, and ELS congregations had left their church bodies to avoid false teaching. In 1960, The Orthodox Lutheran Church of Webster Groves made formal application to join the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Later, in 1968, they would change their name to *Faith Lutheran Church* as a public confession that salvation is found through faith in Christ alone.

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In August of 1968, Faith sold its property in Webster Groves and bought property in Manchester, Missouri. This is where the church and parsonage, built in 1971, stand today. The first service in the current sanctuary was held on October 1, 1972.



Faith has been served by ten Pastors: Julius B. Erhart (1954-65), Roland A. Gurgel (vacancy—1965), Leonard Bernthal (1965-69), Norman Harms (1969-71), Michael Sydow (1971-78), Vance Fossum (1978-89), Mark Gullerud (1989-95), Jerome Barthels (1996-98), Todd Ohlmann (1998-2016), and Stefan Sonnenfeld (2017-present).

Today Faith is composed of about seventy-five members, who, though they are close to one another in fellowship and godly love, are not all close to one another in geography. Many of the members are scattered around the St. Louis metropolitan area, including some on the Illinois side. The Holy Spirit moves these souls who thirst for the true living water to put substantial mileage on their vehicles to be at church once, and even twice a week. The congregation also serves some at a much greater distance, with members in Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana and New Mexico.

The typical week at Faith starts with adult Bible study and Sunday School on Sunday morning. Carol Benter and Debbie Vallely serve as our Sunday School teachers. After that, we all join to worship the Lord. On Wednesdays

we have another opportunity to hear the Word together in a midweek Bible class. Confirmation class takes place on Fridays.

One might wonder how a small church in a metro area of nearly three million can have any sort of impact at all. The Missouri Synod is still the big Lutheran presence in the area.

St. Louis is also on the edge of “Bible Belt” territory. We are surrounded by mega-churches. And yet, we receive a steady stream of visitors to our modest sanctuary. When we speak with these people, we often hear that they are fed up with false teaching in their churches (which are often Lutheran). A good percentage of our current members came from other church backgrounds—including Roman Catholic and Baptist—yet we are all united in the truth of God’s Word. We can make no greater impact than to preach the Law and Gospel in their purity. The truth sets people free by converting sinners into saints through faith in Jesus, Who sacrificed Himself to forgive our sins.

We all thank God that He still preserves a small seedbed of pure Biblical teaching in a city known for Lutheranism.

With the help of God, we seek to boldly proclaim the truth that salvation is not found in having the name *Lutheran* or having a historical heritage in the Lutheran church, but through faith in Christ alone.



Stefan Sonnenfeld is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church of Manchester, Missouri.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JUNE 2019

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Jun 1	TLH 456; LSB 545	James 5:7-16	Patience and prayer go well together.
Jun 3	TLH 156; LSB 530	Acts 15:1-21	Having considered the Word of God, the council recognized that the Gentiles were also saved by grace through faith in Jesus.
Jun 4	TLH 355 (LSB 526)	Galatians 1:6-12	The Gospel message is not man-made; it has been revealed to us from God Himself.
Jun 5	TLH 529 LSB 719	Proverbs 16:1-9	Let the Lord have the last word in your life. Let His plans be your plans.
Jun 6	TLH 324 LSB 609	Galatians 2:1-16	You can't justify yourself before God by doing better at keeping His rules.
Jun 7	TLH 390; LSB 597	Galatians 3:1-14	Beware that you don't ever substitute the Law for the Gospel as the Galatians were doing.
Jun 8	TLH 369 LSB 562	Galatians 3:26-4:7	You are a child of God—with all the freedoms (“full rights of sons”) that come from being a member of God's spiritual family.
Jun 10	TLH 626; WS 790	Proverbs 17:1-6	Keeping one's family in the way of the Lord is of utmost importance, and God-fearing families are a gift from Him.
Jun 11	TLH 439; LSB 691	Galatians 5:13-26	Although we Christians are free from the Law, we ought not abuse that freedom by indulging our sinful natures, rather we live by the Spirit.
Jun 12	TLH 175 LSB 425	Galatians 6:11-18	We do not boast in our own good deeds, but we boast in Christ, Who laid down His life for us.
Jun 13	TLH 54; WS 792	Exodus 40:33-38	The Israelites were not alone, but the Lord their God was with them.
Jun 14	TLH 492; WS 780	Acts 18:1-11	The Lord reassured the Apostle Paul that He would be with him as he carried out his ministry—even as He is with us in ours.
Jun 15	TLH 523 LSB 756	1 Thessalonians 1:1-10	In spite of their suffering, the Thessalonians found joy in the Gospel, courtesy of the Holy Spirit.
Jun 17	TLH 293; LSB 836	1 Thessalonians 2:13-20	The Spirit led the Thessalonians to accept the Word of God as it really was: the message to them from heaven.
Jun 18	TLH 402 LSB 731	Proverbs 19:11-20	It is hard for us to accept instruction and correction because we'd like to think we already know it all.
Jun 19	TLH 481; LSB 854	1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11	Seek to encourage one another and build each other up with the Gospel as the Last Day approaches.
Jun 20	TLH 37;	Thessalonians 2:13-17	He chose us!
Jun 21	TLH 451 LSB 660	Acts 19:11-20	In Ephesus we see the power of the risen Lord working through Paul so that the Word of the Lord could spread widely.
Jun 22	TLH 397; LSB 558	Proverbs 20:15-20	Our mouths can speak good or evil. Let them speak good.
Jun 24	TLH 207 LSB 548	1 Corinthians 1:18-25	The message of cross is treated as foolish by those who do not believe, but don't let that discourage you, for the cross is your salvation!
Jun 25	TLH 230; LSB 501	1 Corinthians 2:6-13	It is the Holy Spirit Who reveals the Gospel to us, a Gospel prepared by God Himself.
Jun 26	TLH 416; LSB 695	1 Corinthians 3:1-9	Jealousy and quarreling can tear a congregation apart. It is not fitting for godly Christians.
Jun 27	TLH 298; WS 751	Proverbs 21:1-12	Beware of sins in the heart, for the Lord sees those too.
Jun 28	TLH 629; WS 747	Proverbs 22:6-16	It is wise to train your children in the ways of the Lord. They won't follow His paths naturally because none of us do.
Jun 29	TLH 491 LSB 681	1 Corinthians 4:6-17	We should not pridefully despise the spiritual leaders whom God has placed over us.

A New Field for Missionary Evensen

Imagine traveling to a foreign country, getting through immigration, and arriving at your hotel at the beginning of what you expect to be an extended stay. Then imagine being picked up by immigration eight hours later, taken back to the airport, told your visa has been canceled, and placed in a locked holding room for eight hours while arrangements are made to send you back home. Most of us probably couldn't imagine such a scenario, but that's exactly what happened to Missionary Peter Evensen at the beginning of February.

As he was returning to the US from India last June, Missionary Evensen was heavily questioned by Indian immigration as to what he was doing there. He believed they suspected him of doing mission work, which the pro-Hindu Indian government is trying to stop. As a result, the Board of Missions delayed Missionary Evensen's return to India and discussed different visa options which would potentially make it easier for him to return. Ultimately, it was determined that applying for a different visa was not likely to work, so the decision was made to try to send him back on his tourist visa. At first, it looked as if he would be able to continue his work in India as he initially made it through immigration. Ultimately, however, he was sent back to the U.S.

The Board of Missions was then faced with the question of where to send Missionary Evensen. At a meeting in February of this year, it was determined the he would be sent to Togo, which is located in West Africa. One of the reasons for this decision is that Missionary Evensen speaks French, the official language of Togo. His main work will be with the Mount Horeb Lutheran Bible Institute working as an administrator and instructor. He will help Pastor Kossi with his translation work and with developing the pastoral training curriculum. He will also preach weekly at various congregations and preaching stations.



Above left: Missionary Evensen and Pastor Kossi beneath the flag of Togo. Right: the missionary embarking for Africa.

He will take up correspondence courses with contacts in Senegal, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and other areas where French is the official language. He will also assist Missionary Ohlmann as he continues to develop the Online Theological Studies website. It is also the hope of the Board of Missions that Missionary Evensen eventually will be able to make annual visits to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria.



Missionary Evensen arrived safely in Togo in early May. We pray that the Lord will bless his time in this new field.

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

Lutheran Spokesman

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SEEN IN PASSING

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

Pastors' Housing Allowance Safe for Now.

On March 15 the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals overturned a lower court ruling that said that the clergy housing allowance violated the First Amendment of the Constitution. Offered only to clergy, this allowance lets ministers exclude the fair rental value of a home from income tax (though not from social security tax). For many pastors – especially of smaller churches – this exclusion is a significant component of their compensation. The lawsuit, brought by the atheist Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF), had earlier been heard before Wisconsin district judge Barbara Crabb, who ruled in favor of the FFRF. That ruling has now been reversed. Circuit court judge Michael Brennan wrote, “FFRF claims Section 107(2) renders unto God that which is Caesar’s. But this tax provision falls into the play between the joints of the Free Exercise Clause and the Establishment Clause: neither commanded by the former, nor proscribed by the latter.” Weber, Jeremy. “Court Overturns Atheist Victory Against Pastors’ Best Benefit.” *Gleanings*. ChristianityToday.com, 15 Mar. 2019. Web. 9 Apr. 2019.

Millennial Christians Have Startling Views on Evangelism.

“Millennials used to be the group that churches and ministries were angling to evangelize. Now, all grown up and poised to overtake Baby Boomers as the largest generation, they’re the ones doing the evangelizing. But new research from Barna Group and the creators of the Alpha course offers some disappointing news regarding the 20-somethings and 30-somethings now on deck to carry on the faith: nearly half (47%) of practicing Christian millennials—churchgoers who consider religion an important part of their lives—believe that evangelism is wrong. . . . Barna president David Kinnaman points to the rising

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The General Pastoral Conference of the CLC

Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin — June 18-20, 2019

Agenda:

- Old Testament Exegesis: Amos 1:1ff.—Pastor John Hein
- New Testament Exegesis: 2 Thess. 1:1ff. —Pastor David Ude
- An Analysis of the Joint Statement, Including a Study of *skopein*—CLC Board Of Doctrine
- Is Agreement on Historical Perspective Necessary for God-pleasing Fellowship? —Pastor Paul Tiefel
- Report on “*In Statu Confessionis*” In Light of the Inter-synod Discussions—Pastor Paul Nolting
- Response of ELS/WELS to Questions of CLC Clergy Regarding the Joint Statement
- Conference Speaker—Pastor Samuel Rodebaugh
- Service Liturgist—Pastor Stefan Sonnenfeld
- Chaplain—Pastor Theodore Barthels
- Music Coordinator—Pastor David Ude
- Pastor Michael Eichstadt, CLC President



Great Lakes Delegate Conference

Peace Thru Christ Lutheran Church, Middleton, Wisconsin — June 3-4, 2019

Agenda:

- Consideration of the Coordinating Council Report
- A Congregational Program to Provide Motivation and Materials for Personal and Family Devotions—Pastor Matthew Ude
- Three Approaches to Apologetics & Why It Matters—Mr. James Arndt
- How Might We Encourage Greater Use of the Large Catechism Among Our Members?—Pastor Terrel Kesterson
- Chaplain—Pastor Andrew Schaller
- Speaker—Pastor Michael Eichstadt
- Pastor Michael Wilke

cultural expectation against judging personal choices. Practicing Christian millennials were twice as likely as Gen X and four times as likely as Boomers and Elders to agree with the statement, “If someone disagrees with you, it means they’re

judging you.” Shellnutt, Kate. “Half of Millennial Christians Say It’s Wrong to Evangelize.” *Research*. ChristianityToday.com, 6 Feb. 2019. Web. 9 Mar. 2019.