

August 2019 VOL 62 NO. 2

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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





Children of the CLCI orphanage in Nidubrolu, Andhra Pradesh State, India. See "Update on India" on page 15.

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Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Don't you love to ponder God's creation and His creative powers? There are multitudinous things at which we marvel that proclaim God's glory.

- Marvel at the power of God, Who simply spoke and it was done! (Genesis 1)
- Marvel at the wisdom of God, Who designed every living thing with incredible intricacy and complexity.
- Marvel at the love of God, Who made everything perfect and beautiful for our enjoyment and use.
- Marvel at the precision and care of God, Who calls the estimated one *septillion* stars by name and keeps each one in its place. (Isaiah 40:26)
- Marvel at the immensity of God, Who measures the seemingly infinite universe with the span of His hand. (Isaiah 40:12).
- Marvel at the imagination of God, to create such variety and diversity of life.
- Marvel at the personal touch of God, Who cared enough to form Adam and Eve with His own hands in His own image.

When you think of creation, however, don't think only of a past great act of God. Creation is also a present marvel that is taking place every day. Though the Bible says, "God rested on the seventh day" and that He "ceased from His works" (Hebrews 4:4, 10), it also speaks of Him creating each new person. "This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord." (Psalm 102:18) "You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the earth." (Psalm 104:30) So king David also says,

*"For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well."* (Psalm 139:13-14)



You are not just a product of nature. It is true, God created mankind and all living things with the ability to reproduce according to their kind. But more than that, God personally formed you in your mother's womb. You are His special creation.

Doesn't that give you even more reason to thank and praise God, that you are so "*fearfully and wonderfully made*"?

If everyone understood that and praised the Lord Who formed us in the womb, there would be no need for laws prohibiting abortion, for all people would treasure and cherish the life that God creates. Everyone would know that every fetus is a special work of God's hands and wouldn't dream of destroying the work of God.

King David goes on, "*Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there are none of them.*" (Psalm 139:16) A fetus is not just a growth that can be removed, it is a new individual and God already has a purpose and a plan for that life.

Such knowledge will also guard us against two other dangers.

We will not pride ourselves in our own abilities, as if we have made ourselves great. Rather, we will give glory to God Who made us and gave us all things. As Paul says, "*What do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*" (1 Corinthians 4:7)

It will also protect us from self-deprecation and envy, thinking we are no good and wishing we would be more like someone else that we admire. Instead you will know that God made you the way you are for His purpose.

You are fearfully and wonderfully made. Give all thanks and praise to God, Who created you; and consider how you can best use your life to serve Him.



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

Faithful Stewards

“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:2)

“Thus he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate.” (Genesis 39:6)

It is a strange course on which the Lord led Joseph. At home, he was living the good life. He was his father’s favorite, a dreamer in the coat of many colors. From that high position he found himself at the bottom of a cistern, thrown in there by his jealous brothers. Then he found himself sold into slavery, headed for Egypt.

Life in Egypt certainly had its ups and downs. His first stop was the home of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and a captain of the guard. Joseph was purchased by Potiphar as a slave and put to work. Yet, we don’t find Joseph grumbling about his servitude. Instead, the Lord was with Joseph and he was a faithful worker in Potiphar’s house. Potiphar took note of how faithful Joseph was and entrusted all into Joseph’s hands. Joseph was a steward—a manager of someone else’s home and possessions. And he was a faithful steward.

Like Joseph, we too have been *“bought at a price.”* (1 Corinthians 6:20) While the Bible doesn’t tell us how much Potiphar paid to take possession of Joseph, we do know what it cost God to purchase us. *“You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* (1 Peter 1:18-19) It cost Jesus everything—His very life—to purchase you for God and make you a member of His household.

Now what? Now that we have been purchased for God and made members of His household, now that we know God’s Son is preparing a place for us in the heavenly house of our Father, now what?

Like Joseph, God has put many things into our care as managers of His possessions. Our physical and mental abilities are gifts from Him. The time God has given us on this earth is a time of His grace to learn more about Him, tell others about Him, and serve one another in love.



And what about our finances? *“The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the Lord of hosts.* (Haggai 2:8) All the money of the world belongs to the One Who created it. And the great Banker of all creation has entrusted some of it to your care. Whether it is a monthly allowance, a salary check, an investment return, an inheritance, or a Social Security check, it can all be traced back to the Father of Lights. He is the One Who opened His hand and entrusted these things to your care through parents, employers and the ability to work, a favorable investment market, or the government.

Knowing from Whom every good and perfect gift comes, we want to be good stewards of those gifts, like Joseph. First, we want to give back to the Giver through our thank offerings. Knowing our Father has given us His best, even His own beloved Son, we don’t want to give Him our financial leftovers after we’ve gotten everything we wanted out of our money (actually, *His* money). Rather, confident that our Father will supply all our needs, *“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper.”* (1 Corinthians 16:2) Like Joseph, let us not grumble about this stewardship but give gladly and cheerfully, knowing that *“God loves a cheerful giver.”* (2 Corinthians 9:7)

From there the stewardship of the finances God has entrusted to us extends to the care of our family (1 Timothy 5:8), the care of our neighbor (1 John 3:17), paying our taxes (Romans 13:6-7), and, yes, even for our enjoyment (1 Timothy 6:17). In all things, may the Lord help us to be faithful managers like Joseph, remembering the high price that was paid to bring us into God’s household and make us heirs of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Nathan Pfeiffer is pastor of Berea Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.

WS 782, LSB 726

“Evening and Morning”

Our lives consist of periods of work followed by periods of rest. We finish our shift or complete our daily tasks, and then we go home to get a night’s sleep. But all the while that we are sleeping, our God is awake and active. “He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” (Psalm 121:3-4) God’s providential care for His world never ceases, not even for a moment. He upholds all of creation and keeps the cycles of days and seasons running. In this way He makes the earth fruitful and provides food for all His creatures. At all hours He hears and answers the prayers of us, His children, who call to Him in the name of Jesus. He constantly observes our lives and causes all things to work together for our good.



The hymn “Evening and Morning” teaches this ongoing, never-ceasing care of God for His children. It reminds us that the good things we enjoy are the works of God. He gives **“wealth, peace, and gladness, comfort in sadness.”** He continues to give these and other good things all our days. He watches over us and protects us whether we are awake or asleep. **“Times without number, We wake or we slumber, Your eye observes us, From danger preserves us, Shining upon us a love that is true.”**

This hymn also reminds us that God gives blessings greater than providing for the needs of the body. The author prays for the forgiveness of his sins and for freedom from guilty fear. He prays, **“Father, oh, hear me, Pardon and spare me; Calm all my terrors, Blot out my errors.”** He prays also that God would order and direct his life. He is content to commit his life into God’s **“fatherly hand,”** trusting Him to determine what is best for him.

The author expresses the confidence that through all the changing circumstances of life in this world, the believer in Jesus Christ can expect increasing joy and never-ending peace. Trusting in Christ’s atoning death and His promise of eternal life, the Christian looks forward to the end of all earthly trouble and sorrow.

**Ills that still grieve me Soon are to leave me;
Though billows tower And winds gain power,
After the storm the fair sun shows its face.
My joys increasing, My peace never ceasing,
These I shall treasure And share in full measure
When in His mansions God grants me a place.**

“Evening and Morning” is the work of Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676), the author of many of the best of our Lutheran hymns, including such treasures as “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded” (TLH 172) and “If God Himself Be for Me” (TLH 528). The cheerful confidence and humble thanksgiving expressed in Gerhardt’s hymns, including the one before us, is remarkable in view of the many trials that marked his life. During his childhood and youth he experienced the troubles of the Thirty Years War. As a pastor he was persecuted for refusing to compromise on the teachings of Scripture; at one point he was removed from his office as pastor. Disease took from him his wife and four of his children.

At the time of his sixty-ninth (and last) birthday, Gerhardt wrote a testament to his only surviving child, a young son. In spite of his difficult life as a pastor, Gerhardt urged his son to become a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to remain in this work “and not turn away from it, even if he has only few good days in it. For the good Lord knows how to handle it and how sufficiently to replace external troubles with internal happiness of the heart and joy of the spirit.”

To Paul Gerhardt, the hardest trials of earthly life were nothing when compared to the blessings of peace with God and the hope of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Through all his troubles and sorrows, he saw how God was blessing him, evening and morning, day after day.

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



“HAPPINESS-ES”

(Read Psalm 1)

If you are on the right path, God’s path, happiness will come. It cannot be otherwise.

The Hebrew word for “blessed” in Psalm 1 also means happy, whole, and full. Wherever it is used in the Old Testament, it always appears in the plural; literally, HAPPINESS-ES. When God blesses and gives happiness, He always does so in the plural—richly, abundantly, beyond measure.

God Wants You to Be Happy

When facing problems, we often conclude that God is not interested in our happiness; worse, that God is preventing our happiness. After all, if God cared about our happiness, He would give us *this* and prevent *that*. Yet, do we ever consider that God may not give us *this* or *that* precisely because He does want our happiness?

The psalmist wrote, “*Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.*” (Psalm 37:4) Does this sound as if God wants us to be miserable? No. God wants our happiness. In a sense, He wrote that message in the blood of His Son and nailed it to the cross. And the type of happiness God wants for us is not the cheap, bargain-brand happiness peddled by the world, but all the happiness, wholeness, and fullness found in the biblical word *blessed*.

God’s Promise of Happiness Is for Everyone

“I guess I was never meant to be happy.” Have you ever said this? You’re not alone. Yet, such a bleak outlook on life is not compatible with the happy wisdom of Psalm 1. The first verse of this psalm does not say “happy is the rich man” or “happy is the Harvard man,” but rather “happy” (blessed) is the man—that is, happy is EVERYONE—who turns to God and follows His Happiness Plan.

Only God’s Way Leads to Happiness

Psalm 1 describes two very different approaches to happiness: that of the godly man, verses 1-3; that of the ungodly man, verses 4-5; and in verse 6 the inevitable outcome of each way: “*For the Lord knows the way of the*

righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.” Only God’s way leads to happiness. Every other way, no matter how attractive or seemingly harmless or well-paved, will never result in happiness. If you are on the right path, God’s path, happiness will come. It cannot be otherwise.

At Times, Happiness Means Saying “No”

The world lives by the mantra, “Whatever makes you happy, man.” But Psalm 1 reminds us that saying “no” to some things is as essential as saying “yes” to others. “*Happy (blessed) is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.*” (Psalm 1:1)

Listening to bad advice, visiting bad places, and keeping bad company will never bring happiness—only harm. To think otherwise is to jeopardize our happiness and endanger our faith. “Oh, c’mon. It’s only one little step down the Ungodly Path.” Yes, but according to Psalm 1, a step can lead to walking, walking to standing, standing to sitting, sitting to staying, and staying to perishing.

Happiness Comes from a Deep, Daily Study of Scripture

Of the happy man, Psalm 1 states: “*He delights in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.*” (Psalm 1:2) The word *law* in this verse refers to all of God’s Word, not simply the commandments. And the Hebrew word translated “meditates” literally means “to study while mumbling”; that is, talking to oneself while deeply contemplating the meaning of Scripture.

The deeper we dig into Scripture, the more treasures we unearth. The more treasures we unearth, the more blessed we are. The more blessed we are, the happier we will be.



Mark Weis is pastor of St. Luke’s Lutheran Church in Lemmon, South Dakota.

No Continuing City Here

“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

(Hebrews 13:14-16)

Because the Jews came yearly to Jerusalem to celebrate God’s appointed feasts, many assumed that Jerusalem would be God’s “continuing city,” that this is how things would always be. For them, the true God’s religion was perpetually bound up in the feasts, the fasts, and the sacrifices. To follow after any other way was blasphemy.

The Hebrew Christians then faced considerable pressure to revert back to the temple worship of God’s “continuing city” of holy Jerusalem. Therefore, the inspired writer encourages them, *“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.”*

It is in the sinner’s very nature to seek a continuing city here, to make one’s heaven here on earth. Some seek a continuing city here by filling up the lusts of the flesh, thinking there’s nothing after this life anyway. Others seek a continuing city here by hoping to set up a utopia where everyone lives in perpetual peace with one another.

Confused Christians can also at times seek a continuing city here. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter wanted to set up tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Just moments before Jesus’ ascension, the disciples asked Him, *“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”* (Acts 1:6) Many who are confused by the book of Revelation think that Jesus will set up a thousand-year reign here on earth. And how often our sinful flesh tempts us to seek a continuing city of comfortable Christianity; that is, to compromise a “little truth” from God’s Word if it means casting off the pain of our crosses.

But Jesus did not come down and die for all of mankind’s



sins in order that He might set up a continuing city here on this sin-cursed world of death, pain, and suffering. Why would He? What kind of heaven could there really be on this earth? Instead, Jesus told His disciples, *“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* (John 14:3) And so, the continuing city is there where Christ has ascended, not here. This truth, then, affects how Christians will act while here.

The Jews were obligated to approach God with the blood of sacrifice and the ministrations of their high priest, but because of Jesus’ once-for-all sacrifice, we no longer bring bloody animal sacrifices. Instead, Jesus brings His holy, precious blood before God on our behalf,

and we now stand justified by faith. Since we have been freed from the curses and obligations of the Old Covenant, that means we have different sacrifices to bring. Now, we offer sacrifices of praise by word and deed.

We boldly confess our Savior’s name in the face of reproach or persecution. Since we have no continuing city here, we don’t need to live as the world does, desperately clinging to the things of this world; rather, we can gladly share our things with others.

Yes, knowing that we have no continuing city here, our eyes of faith are directed to that brilliant, shining city on the hill that will continue on forever where our Savior has gone on before us. May God grant us grace to reach it safely by His Son.



Chad Seybt is pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

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.

Church of Scientology

Imagine a world so ancient that even an evolutionist would blush. That world is trillions, perhaps quadrillions, of years old. And you, in one form or another, have been around for much of it. You may not remember your prior existences, but they left “engrams” deeply embedded in your psyche. These traumatic scars came from unpleasant experiences and are locked away in your subconscious mind. But there is a path to freedom. They can be prodded to the surface, confronted, and removed.

Welcome to the world of Scientology.

If it sounds like science fiction, it should. It originated in the mind of L. Ron Hubbard, a prolific sci-fi writer, who, with a P.T. Barnum flair for exaggeration and marketing, parlayed his imagination into a financial empire. In the 1950's he published *Dianetics, the Modern Science of Mental Health*. His claim: he had uncovered a new, unprecedented way of understanding the human mind. So groundbreaking was his work, he claimed, that it was on par with the discovery of fire. When properly used, it was more of a game-changer than the invention of the wheel. Hubbard had revealed “the single source of all man’s insanities, psychosomatic illnesses, and neuroses.”

Scientology teaches that man is “an immortal, all-powerful spirit (*thetan*) which is limited by the effects of past trauma, including past life experiences going back millions of years.” Health and happiness are achieved through “audits” (counseling sessions) using a special “e-meter.” Similar to a lie detector, an e-meter responds to electrical impulses on the skin. As the person being “audited” holds a metal tube in each hand, an indiscernible trickle of voltage is administered through the tubes. Questions are asked, and since thoughts contain “mass and current,” the delicate needle trembles and bounces in response to certain answers. In this way, previously unknown experiences are unearthed. According

to Hubbard, “The e-meter is never wrong. It sees all; it knows all. It tells everything.”

The goal of Scientology is to free the thetan (the real you) of engrams that prevent you from entering into the highest state of being. The process of becoming “clear” generates unconscionable profits for the organization. The deeper the counselor probes, the more costly the treatments become.

Scientology became a “church” when Hubbard sought First Amendment protection while feeling pressure from the FBI (for fraud), the IRS (for tax evasion), the FDA (for false claims), and the American Medical Association (for stating that auditing could cure disease). He died on a secluded California ranch in 1986. Church leaders explained that his body had become a liability to his work. He chose to leave it behind on earth in order to advance his research on another planet.

As strange as Scientology is, it demonstrates the truth of Paul’s words, “*Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious*” (Acts 17:22). The natural, human heart is a religion factory. We enter this life spiritually blind and dead, with the ability to believe anything—except for God’s plan of salvation. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit creates saving faith through the Gospel.

Leaving the cult of Scientology is a good thing, but simply leaving is not enough. People need to hear that our biggest problem is not from traumatic engrams or previous lives. Our problem is our sin. Before they die, they need to hear that “*God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them.*” (2 Corinthians 5:19) Instead of man becoming a god by reaching his full

potential, the true God became Man so that He could take our place, conquer our sin and death, and truly set us free.

James Albrecht is pastor of St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Okabena, Minnesota.



“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 Smalcald Articles

From the beginning of his dispute with Rome, Luther had asked that a council be convened to weigh his arguments fairly on the basis of Scripture. In 1520, in his *Address to the Christian Nobility*, he asked for their support of this idea, and listed twenty-seven issues to be aired. A diet in Nuremberg took up this proposal in 1524. The preface to the Augsburg Confession promised that the Lutherans would “appear and defend [their] cause in such a general, free Christian Council.” The electors Frederick, John, and John Frederick all supported the idea of a council and pressured Emperor Charles V, who in turn pressured the pope to convene such a council. But the pope was reluctant to place the issues into the hands of any council not firmly under his control.

Then, finally, in June 1536, Pope Paul III published an announcement of a council which was to convene in Mantua the next May. The German princes thought they should attend since they had promised to do so, and Luther assured Vergerio, the papal nuncio who came to Wittenberg, that he would come “with head and neck.” But everyone became less eager when they read that one goal of the council was “the utter extirpation of the poisonous pestilential Lutheran heresy.” This was not the sort of council they had wanted!

Meanwhile, Elector John Frederick assigned Luther the task of writing a confession that could be presented to this council, if they did attend. This became the Smalcald Articles. Luther had an additional reason for writing this statement: he was dying, or thought he was. Just before Christmas, he had had a fairly severe heart attack. He intended this treatise to be his spiritual last will and testament. However, his health improved enough to make it to the town of Smalcalden, where the Lutherans were

making their preparations for the proposed council. His statement was read, approved, and signed by most of the gathered princes and theologians, but it was not adopted as an official statement.



Pope Paul III (1468-1549)



John Frederick I, Elector of Saxony (1503-1554)

This may have been due to the fact that Luther was unable to attend the meetings, this time due to severe kidney stones. His colleague, Melancthon, offered a substitute statement, the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, which was adopted [for more on this treatise, see next month's *Spokesman*.]

In the end, neither statement was presented to the council, for the simple reason that the council was delayed, then delayed again, and finally canceled altogether (only one bishop actually showed up at Mantua—an exiled bishop from Uppsala, Sweden). When a council did finally convene in Trent eight years later, there were no Lutherans present. Both statements became official Lutheran confessions when they were included in the *Book of Concord* published 40 years later.

What was in Luther's Smalcald Articles? First, he reconfirmed the doctrine of the Trinity and the Apostles' Creed, over which “there is no argument.” Second, he listed certain teachings where no yielding was possible. Here he included abuses in the

mass, prayers to the saints, and the claim that the pope is head over all the church. About that, Luther bluntly states,

“The pope is the very Antichrist.” Finally, he added fifteen topics “[w]e may be able to discuss . . . with learned and reasonable people, or among ourselves.”

Norman Greve is pastor of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Iron River, Michigan.



A SLICE OF LIFE IN THE CLC

Snapshots of congregations from around the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

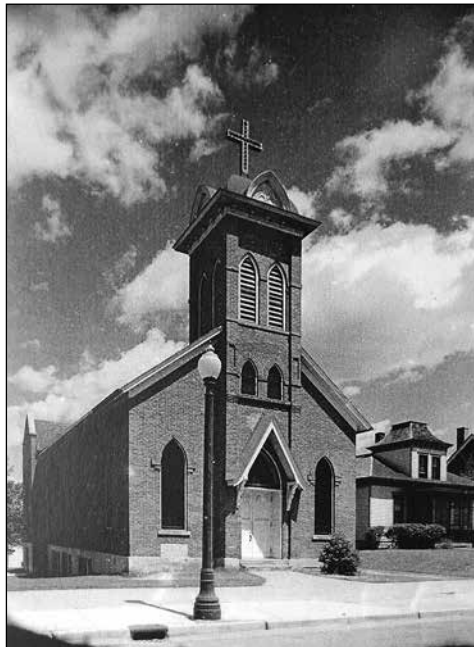
Faith Lutheran Church New Ulm MN

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

(Hebrews 11:1)

Like many congregations of the CLC, Faith Lutheran Church in New Ulm was born out of a desire to stand firm on the truth of God’s Word. It was one of six congregations along the Highway 14 corridor in southern Minnesota (within a seventy-five-mile stretch) to leave their former fellowships and become part of the fledgling Church of the Lutheran Confession. The congregation numbered 113 members when it was formed and was served by Pastor Rollin Reim. The congregation began in a rented facility until it was able to build a church/parsonage right on the main road through town. Seven years later they sold that property and purchased an older church and parsonage near the center of town. Though the people and the pastors have changed, this is the building where the members of Faith have worshiped for the past fifty years.

Faith is now the smallest of the four remaining CLC congregations on the Highway 14 corridor, with thirty-seven members. Over the years, Faith has partnered with two other congregations, forming a dual parish and sharing



a pastor. First, it was a dual parish with Faith, Nicollet from 1983-2000, until the pastor accepted a call to another congregation, and the Nicollet congregation disbanded. After a vacancy of almost two years, Faith met with Grace, Sleepy Eye, which had also become vacant, and the congregations decided to form another dual parish, a partnership which continues to the present.

Dealing with challenges

One of the challenges for Faith is that most of the younger families of the congregation live a substantial distance from New Ulm, making many regular church activities more difficult. The congregation has incorporated online

classes for the instruction of catechism students. In-person classes are conducted as well, and the combination of the two has been an effective method for dealing with this challenge.

Another challenge is maintaining a church building that was built in 1891 and a parsonage that was built in 1955. Because of the age of the church building, a great deal has been required by insurance carriers to keep the building up to the standards they require. It has tube





and knob wiring, which may have to be replaced at some future date. The exterior was also in need of work. Several years ago the congregation contracted to have the wooden portions of the exterior repainted. Although the building has a brick exterior, the trim and steeple are wood. This was a difficult project due to the sloped ground around the church and the height of the steeple. While it looks like an old building (and is!), the congregation works together to maintain it in a manner that is worthy of the God Who has redeemed us from sin and dwells among us here in His Word and Sacrament.

One of the drawbacks of a dual parish is that the pastor's time is divided between two congregations, leaving less time and opportunity for regular activities of the congregation. In many congregations, one of those things is often outreach efforts. Faith has held Vacation Bible School just once in the last fifteen years. Since then, members of Faith have joined Grace, Sleepy Eye for their VBS program. While this is a workable solution for members of the congregation, the community connection or outreach aspect is lost for Faith, New Ulm.

One of the ways that Faith has worked to incorporate community outreach is by offering yearly seminars. In the last few years, Faith has put on or hosted several seminars which have been advertised in the community. Each of these has been attended by a few visitors, in addition to members of the congregation, which has been encouraging.

The truth still matters

New Ulm is a known hub for Lutheranism. There are five other Lutheran churches in the town of thirteen thousand people. There are two ELCA congregations and one LCMS congregation, but the largest congregations are WELS congregations, and the largest of these is less than two blocks away from Faith. The WELS also has a large Christian day school and Martin Luther College in New Ulm. From an outward perspective, one might ask why another Lutheran church is necessary in a town filled with Lutheran churches. Faith is by far the smallest of these churches and it may not seem as if it has anything to offer. But this small Lutheran congregation does have something to offer, just as it did sixty years ago when it was first formed. It is here at Faith that the pure Word of the Savior is preached faithfully and where His sacraments are administered according to His command. Here at Faith, both young and old are taught to know the Savior Who has died for them and learn how they can serve Him with their lives during their time of grace. Why another Lutheran Church? Because the truth still matters and we are called, by our Savior, to proclaim it.



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A Trip to Knuckles

My first full day in Nairobi, in May of this year, was supposed to be rather simple and uneventful. It started out that way. To change money, get malaria meds, and buy local sim cards for phone and modem were all normal things. Next on the list was the purchase of catechisms. This entailed a trip to Ngong (a Maasai word meaning “knuckles”) nature preserve where the new campus of Lutherans in Africa is located. They were previously known as The Lutheran Heritage Foundation and were located in Karen. They are an independent Lutheran group that translates catechisms and various other Lutheran materials for many different parts of Africa—including translations in the many local languages of Kenya. A new facet of their work has been the training of men from different parts of East Africa for the pastoral ministry. Rather than continuing to pay rent in Karen, they bought some land in Ngong and are in the process of building classrooms, dormitories, a library, dining hall, kitchen—the whole works.

On the way to finding this place, we came upon a protest involving the majority of a primary school’s student body. Small children in school uniforms had blocked the road with stones, thorn bushes, and even their own little bodies.

Ngong is a town near the Ngong Hills along the Great Rift Valley within Kajiado County, located in the southwest of Nairobi, in southern Kenya. The word “Ngong” is a Maasai word meaning “knuckles”, referring to the 4 hill peaks of the ridge, which stands alone rising from the plain around Nairobi. The Ngong Hills, from the eastside slopes, overlook the Nairobi National Park game reserve and, off to the north, the city of Nairobi. The Ngong Hills, from the westside slopes, overlook the Great Rift Valley dropping over 4,000 feet below, where nomadic Maasai live.

The population of Ngong is 157,188, and the elevation of Ngong town is 1,961 meters in altitude, but the altitude of the hills is about 2,460 meters above sea level.

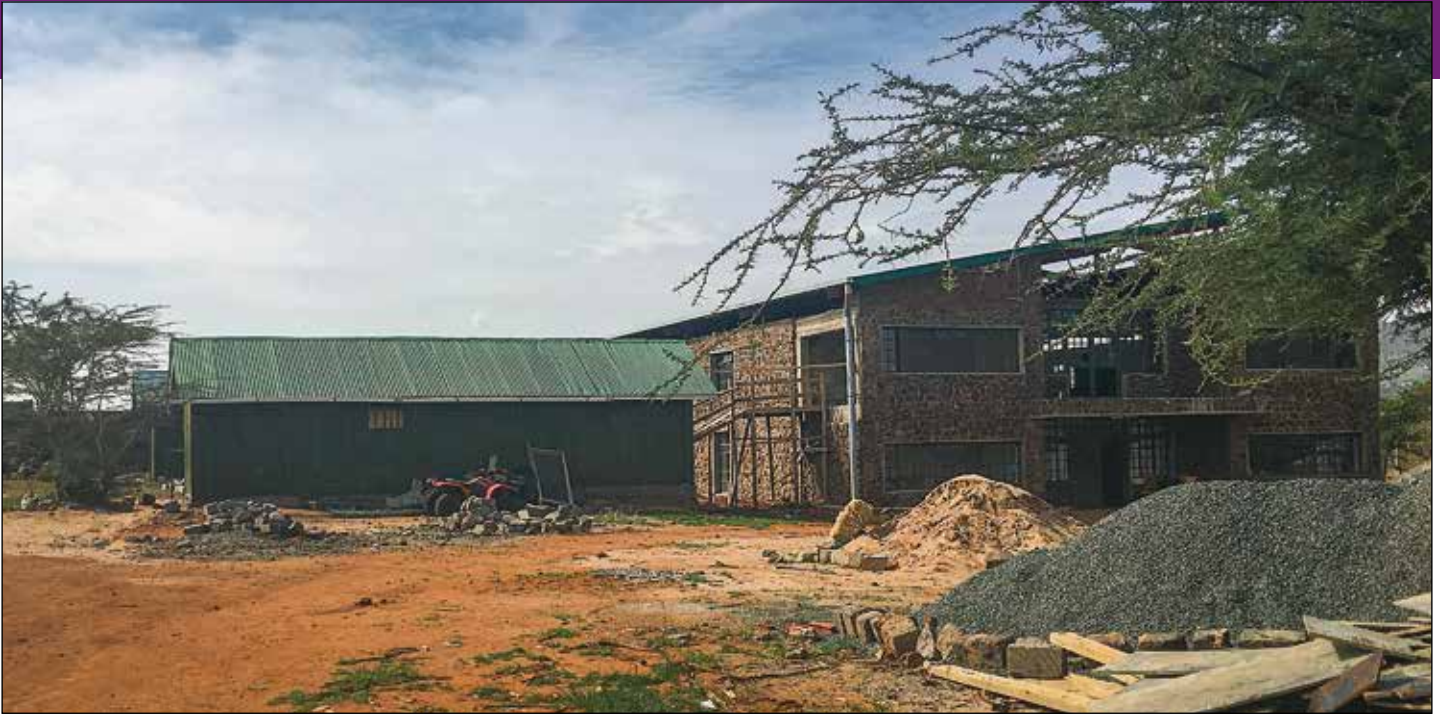
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ngong,_Kenya



Above: Kenyan soldiers dispatched to dismantle a roadblock.

We didn’t get a definitive answer as to why they were doing this, but the story told was that the road in front of their school was dangerous and more than a few people had lost their lives in vehicle crashes there. They wanted to get the attention of the local government, and the teacher of this school thought that this was the best way. So we waited—and waited. Two hours passed. Suddenly, Kenyan men in fatigues and wielding military rifles were filing past our car. A few orders barked from the man in charge forced bodies into motion and the stones were cleared away in minimal time.





Above: "Lutherans in Africa" compound, comprising classrooms, worship area, library and book storage.

Unbeknownst to me, our issues were not totally resolved. Lutherans in Africa doesn't have an address, only a Google map point. There is no signboard on the side of the road, either. We wandered a bit to no avail. Google Maps on my Kenyan phone does not work very well. We asked for directions from some locals and ended up unofficially hiring a Maasai to guide us to our destination. We went down dirt roads, gravel roads, holey roads, and roads that should not be classified as roads. An added bonus was that we wandered through a giraffe sanctuary which had a very Jurassic Park feel to it.

After only two more hours were added on to this routine trip, we found the place. Upon asking a roadside dweller if he knew where the Lutheran place was his eyes immediately lit up and he flashed an enormous smile. It turned out that he worked on the construction project there. Several people were milling around, and students were on their lunch break. I made a beeline for their book storage to get what I needed and head back, hoping for a much shorter return route. While there, I met with their chief translator (the resident pastor, with whom I'm familiar, was in the U.S. at the time.) A visiting pastor from America who was filling in to teach that week was having a hard time rounding up the students after their lunch break. The process was taking a long time (I've been there. I felt his pain.) I gathered up a bunch of Kisii-language Catechisms, Swahili Large Catechisms, and Swahili translations of the Book of Concord. A two-hour mission accomplished in just under five! That's why you should plan to accomplish only one thing each day here. Getting two things done is a real achievement!



Michael Gurath is pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Arizona, and a visiting missionary to Africa.



Left: lodging and outbuildings on the "Lutherans in Africa" compound.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS AUGUST 2019

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Aug 1	TLH 512; LSB 839	Romans 11:25-36	In His great wisdom, God sent Jesus to die for all people. So let's not adopt a condescending attitude toward others whom He wants to save.
Aug 2	TLH 440; LSB 747	Romans 12:9-21	We can't always stop others from hurting us, but we can overcome their evil with good rather than retaliating.
Aug 3	TLH 417; LSB 857	Romans 13:8-14	If you just don't know what to do, you can always love!
Aug 5	TLH 46; LSB 921	Ecclesiastes 1:1-11	If your hope and joy is only in this life, you will be disappointed; but if your hope is in the Lord and in the life to come, you will find meaning.
Aug 6	TLH 224; LSB 502	Romans 15:1-13	As you help build up another Christian, you will both benefit from the encouragement of the Scriptures and bring praise to God.
Aug 7	TLH 238; LSB 948	Romans 16:25-27	It is the Lord Who establishes us in the faith through the Gospel of Jesus Christ! All glory to Him!
Aug 8	TLH 360; LSB 533	Leviticus 27:1-13, 26-27	The Lord teaches the Israelites the important concept of redemption, preparing them to recognize Christ's redeeming work.
Aug 9	WS 787; LSB 762	Ecclesiastes 3:1-15	Times come and go, but God endures through it all.
Aug 10	WS 740	Acts 20:25-38	After Paul's departure, the elders would keep watch over the church as the Spirit had called them. The Spirit still calls church elders today to do the same.
Aug 12	TLH 507; LSB 838	Acts 21:37-22:16	As a former follower of Judaism, Paul was in a unique position to explain to the crowd how Jesus had changed him. Christ uses our experiences to serve our Gospel preaching too.
Aug 13	WS 785; LSB 725	Acts 23:12-22	The Lord works in many different ways to protect His servants. Here, He allows one of Paul's relatives to obtain knowledge of a secret plot against him.
Aug 14	TLH 358; LSB 540	Numbers 3:1-13	Only the priests and Levites could serve the LORD at the Tent of Meeting, reminding us of Jesus Who alone could go before the LORD on our behalf.
Aug 15	WS 769; LSB 837	Acts 26:19-29	The Gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing (Festus thought Paul was insane). But we keep on preaching—and praying for others to come to faith.
Aug 16	TLH 557; LSB 841	Acts 28:1-10	The Maltese people, too, learned of Christ through the preaching of Paul and the miracles which confirmed the Word He brought to them.
Aug 17	TLH 425; LSB 732	Ecclesiastes 5:8-20	God gives us earthly things to support us and to give us enjoyment, but we need to keep these things in their proper place and not love them more than we love God.
Aug 19	TLH 354; LSB 538	Colossians 1:15-23	Just think, you have been reconciled to Christ—Who is God and the ruler of all things!
Aug 20	TLH 378; LSB 690	Colossians 2:6-23	God forgave us all our sins in connection with Christ Jesus, so let's not make up sin where there isn't any (by adding human regulations to the Scriptures).
Aug 21	TLH 404; LSB 843	Colossians 3:12-24	Why do what is good? Because what we do is not done for ourselves, but for the One Who loved us even unto death.
Aug 22	TLH 395; LSB 871	Ecclesiastes 7:15-25	A wise person does not go to extremes, but respects God and follows Him faithfully and carefully.
Aug 23	TLH 399; LSB 806	Philemon	Like Paul, we are truly thankful for Christians like Philemon who trust in the Lord Jesus and love the brethren.
Aug 24	WS 767; LSB 646	Ephesians 1:1-14	When you have worries or doubts, remember that God chose you to be part of His family of believers—even before you were born.
Aug 26	TLH 384; LSB 559	Ephesians 2:1-10	God has made us alive by forgiving our sins for Jesus' sake, bringing us to faith, and leading us in a life of thankful living.
Aug 27	TLH 489	Numbers 12:1-15	Our spiritual leaders are servants of the Lord and are placed there for our good. Let us not despise them.
Aug 28	TLH 235; LSB 913	Ecclesiastes 9:13-18	It's not necessarily the person who shouts loudest who is right. Wise words are often spoken quietly. For example, take the still small voice of the Gospel, the wisest word of all.
Aug 29	TLH 236; LSB 500	Ephesians 4:7-16	It's important that the Spirit lead us to grow up and mature as Christians so that we are not easily misled by false teaching.
Aug 30	TLH 622; LSB 860	Ephesians 5:22-33	Notice how God's instructions for marriage are based on the love and forgiveness Christ has shown to us.
Aug 31	WS 768; LSB 665	Ephesians 6:10-20	The Christian is under constant attack from the devil and temptation. Only with the "armor of God" can we survive.

Every other month our CLC Board of Missions updates us with recent news from various mission fields.

Update on India

Persecution in India has been on the rise since 2014 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), rose to power. Over the last five years, India's rank as one of the worst persecutors of Christians in the world has risen from twenty-eighth to tenth. The fear is that persecution will only get worse over the next five years now that Modi and the BJP have scored a landslide victory in the recent Indian elections.

The two Indian church bodies with whom we are in fellowship, the CLCI and the BELC, have seen some of the effects of this persecution. In October of last year, a CLCI pastoral conference was attacked by a group of over sixty men with knives and rods. Six people were injured. Cell phones, wallets, a laptop, and a projector were stolen. Pastor Jyothi Benjamin, who was present during this attack, said, "In my life, I have faced many incidents, but not like this."



In January, Missionary Peter Evensen was denied reentry into India. The 2019 Mission Helper Trip was scheduled for India, but that trip was moved to East Africa. Pastors Tim Daub and David Pfeiffer planned to take a three-week trip to India. Pastor Daub's visa application was denied. Fortunately, Pastor Pfeiffer's visa application was approved, and he was willing to make the trip by himself.

Pastor Pfeiffer arrived in India on June 22nd. He traveled to the CLCI and was able to participate in the CLCI graduation ceremony where seventeen men graduated from seminary. He then traveled to the BELC for a leadership conference in which he taught on the book of Romans. The rest of his trip was spent teaching throughout the districts of the BELC. The members of the CLCI and BELC were encouraged by Pastor Pfeiffer's visit especially since it was the first visit by someone from the CLC in a little over a year.

It is uncertain what opportunities we will have in the near future to send men to teach and encourage our fellow saints in India. Persecution seems likely to continue and increase. However, we take comfort in the fact that all of this is in the Lord's hands. History demonstrates that the church not only survives but thrives during times of persecution. Please continue to keep our fellow Christians in India in your prayers.



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



Top: District chairmen of the BELC (l-r): Pastor Victor, Pastor Rajamani, Pastor Moses, Pastor Bhaskar, Pastor Sampath, and Pastor D. Paul. These leaders supervise more than 700 pastors serving 1700 congregations and preaching stations in southeast India.

Middle: Pastor David Pfeiffer with Pastor Jyothi Benjamin, chairman of the CLCI

Bottom: BELC seminary building.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

UK Nurse Fired for Praying With Patients.

"A British nurse named Sarah Kuteh was fired from the hospital where she had worked for nearly a decade because she spoke with patients about her faith, passed out Bibles, and sang hymns on the job. In May, a UK court rejected Kuteh's most recent appeal: 'What was considered to be inappropriate was for the Claimant [Kuteh] to initiate discussions about religion and for her to disobey a lawful instruction given to her by management.' Kuteh is the latest in a string of cases of Christian medical workers in the UK who faced punishment for sharing their faith at work." Jackson, Griffin Paul. "Praying for Patients Is Common, But Comes With Legal Risk." *International ChristianityToday.com*. 14 June 2019. Web. 22 June 2019.

But We Knew This Already.

A new report titled "*The Ties That Bind: Is Faith a Global Force for Good or Ill in the Family?*" from the Institute for Family Studies and the Wheatley Institution finds that religious couples are, by far, the happiest. For example, women who are practicing Christians report being up to 50% happier in their relationships – both in the emotional and physical aspects – than women in couples that are non-practicing or secular. The main finding is that "families with clear, strongly

held values tend to be happiest. The research is highly credible, given the authors' affiliation with the University of Virginia and the large sample size of 16,000." Interestingly, the study found that committed secular relationships were second-strongest, though trailing religious couples by a wide margin. Markowicz, Karol. "What makes happy marriages, left and right." *Opinion. Nypost.com*. 27 May 2019. Web. 22 June 2019.

What's A Billion Years Between Friends?

Evolutionary science is always presented as "settled"—until it's not. Another example surfaced recently. For years, astrophysicists have insisted that the so-called "Big Bang" occurred 13.8 billion years ago, thus establishing the age of the known universe. This number was considered "settled science," especially after it seemed to be confirmed by observations of the Large Magellanic Cloud, as carried out by the European Planck telescope in 2013. As reported by NBCNews.com, however, new research suggests that this number may be slightly off – *by over a billion years*. "A team led by Nobel laureate Adam Riess of the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, set out to make those observations. Instead of confirming Planck's measurements, they started getting a distinctly different result. He estimates that his results, taken at face value, indicate a universe that is only 12.5 billion years old." That created a "tension" between the two numbers, a tension that cannot be resolved using current scientific models. Along with dark matter, neutrinos and dark energy, these conflicting observations add another mystery to the long list of cosmological phenomena that scientists are currently unable to explain. "Given the stakes, everyone involved is checking and rechecking their results for possible sources of error. Increasingly, though, it looks like the

problem lies not with the observations but with the theories of cosmology that underpin them." Powell, Corey S. "The universe may be a billion years younger than we thought. Scientists are scrambling to figure out why." *Space. NBCNews.com*, 18 May 2019. Web. 22 June 2019.

Authors Predict the World May Run Out of People.

For generations now people have accepted the idea of a continuing population explosion. Currently the United Nations predicts an increase in the earth's population from 7.5 billion to over 11 billion by the year 2100. However, in their recently-published book "*Empty Planet*," authors John Ibbotson and Darrell Bricker come to a drastically different prediction for the future of the human species. "In roughly three decades, the global population will begin to decline," they write. "Once that decline begins, *it will never end*." The big change that previous predictions have failed to take into account, say the authors, is increased *information*, especially about birth control, and especially on the part of women. To illustrate, Bricker tells of attending a focus group of poor urban women in India. "And I kept seeing this faint glow light up under their saris. I didn't know what it was. And then I saw one woman reach in and pull out a smartphone, look at it, and put it back. And I realized, here we are in a slum in Delhi, and all these women have smartphones. Who can read. Who have data packages. And I was thinking, they have all of human knowledge in their hands now. What's the impact of that going to be?" The authors think they know—population decline. "We polled 26 countries asking women how many kids they want, and no matter where you go the answer tends to be around two. The external forces that used to dictate people having bigger families are disappearing everywhere. And that's happening fastest in developing countries." Molteni, Megan. "The World Might Actually Run Out of People." *Science. Wired.com*, 4 Feb. 2019. Web. 22 June 2019.



Large Magellanic Cloud, one of the nearest galaxies to our own Milky Way, as seen from the Hubble telescope.