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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

"There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

1 Timothy 2:5 ESV



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The Mediation of Christ: A One→Way Street

“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.”

(1 Timothy 2:5-6 ESV)

Bible words and phrases are routinely tainted by secular usage. Christians hear one thing, the unregenerate hear another. The challenge is to prevent their misunderstanding from altering our understanding. When Christians, for example, hear the word *grace*, we understand “God’s undeserved love for sinners.” The world conjures up visions of weightless ballerinas and socially polished debutants. When we hear *cross of Christ*, we think “victory” and “life.” The world hears “injustice” and “death.” We hear *Easter* and think “resurrection.” The world sees bunnies.

So it shouldn’t surprise us that the biblical concept of “Christ our Mediator” is tainted by the world’s misunderstanding of both *mediator* and *mediation*. In the world’s view, a mediator is someone who stands between two parties that are at odds, and whose job it is to come up with some sort of compromise (mediation) that is fair to both sides. Jesus is not that sort of mediator. He does not reach out to both sides (Creator God and fallen man) seeking mutual concessions and compromise. He does not seek to represent the rights of both parties, nor does He view the two parties as peers. Though He does proclaim the goodness of God to man, He does not extol the virtues of man to God. There is nothing to extol. The mediation that Jesus performs is all one-way. He carries nothing from man to God, for man has nothing to offer. He carries only Himself. He Himself *is* the good that is brought to God the Father on man’s behalf. That’s exactly what Paul was telling Timothy in the passage quoted above: “. . . *who gave himself as a ransom for all.*” In that way Jesus is not only the Mediator, He Himself is the mediation. He Himself is that which creates peace. What He then carries to fallen, helpless, powerless mankind is God’s declaration of forgiveness.

The Book of Hebrews describes Jesus as “*the mediator of a new covenant.*” (Hebrews 9:15 ESV) The Old Covenant was neither unfair nor complicated. If Israel would simply obey the will of their Creator God, their God would reward them with peace and prosperity in the land He had given them. The Jews not only broke that covenant, mankind destroyed God’s original salvation plan by our sin, which is what first created both the alienation between God and man, and the need for a Mediator. Since sinful man could do nothing to repair the animosity and division he had created, the Book of Hebrews connects *Christ our Mediator* to the new covenant. “*Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*” (Hebrews 9:15 ESV) That new covenant mirrors Jesus’ one-way mediation in that God Himself provides everything. Fallen man supplies nothing. God the Son carried His sinless life and innocent death to the Father as payment for our sin debt, and God the Father declared the payment complete and the rift mended by raising Jesus from the dead on Easter morning. Jesus Christ is therefore not just a mediator, he is the mediator *of a new covenant*.

Do not allow that precious phrase (“Christ our Mediator”) to become tainted or misunderstood in your hearing, for it represents purest, sweetest Gospel. No compromise was reached. The debt for our sin had to be paid, and it was. By Jesus. That’s what He delivered to the Father on Good Friday, and the empty tomb of Easter Sunday was God’s declaration that the payment is complete. We have been forgiven and reconciled. Peace has been restored.



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

The *Brief Statement* of 1932: A Landmark of Confessional Lutheranism

“Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.”

(1 Peter 3:15)

In the early New Testament church, identifying yourself as a “Christian” (Acts 11:26) was all you needed to say to let others know what you believed. “I am a follower of ‘the Way.’” (Acts 9:2) “We preach Christ crucified and risen.”

It was not too long before the devil began to divide the church by questioning the Word of God and presenting false doctrine. Even at the time of the Apostles, there were many “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” In the epistles of Paul, Peter, and John you can find warnings against false teachers, and also find clear, confessional statements of the truth. We are admonished, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2)

Throughout the centuries, Christians faithful to the Word of God have made a confession of their faith (“Here I Stand”) in the face of false teaching. The “universal creeds” (Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian) were all written to make a clear confession of the Christian faith when confronted with false teaching. Likewise the Lutheran confessions (The Augsburg Confession, The Formula of Concord, and others) were written to combat several false teachings that were present in the 1500’s.

In the early twentieth century, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) was engaged in doctrinal discussions with various other Lutheran church bodies, some of which later merged to become part of today’s ELCA. The Missouri theologians felt the need to present a “Here I Stand” statement on various teachings in the Bible, while also rejecting false teachings on those subjects. For this reason the *Brief Statement* was drawn up and adopted in 1932. It is a fine summary of confessional Lutheran—and thus *Christian*—teaching. For this reason, the Church of the Lutheran Confession has adopted it as one of its own confessional documents (as listed in the Constitution of the CLC).

Within the *Brief Statement* one can find “Here I Stand” statements on twenty-one different teachings of the Bible. While all of the articles state what “we teach,” most, but not all, also state what “we reject.” Some of the teachings which were being debated at the time included predestination, conversion, and “open questions.” It should not surprise us that the *Brief Statement* includes some “hard sayings” from Scripture. The Apostle Peter referred to similar issues even in the writing of Paul, “in which are some things hard to understand.” (2 Peter 3:16)

Why is the *Brief Statement* important to us eighty-eight years later? Isaiah writes of God’s Word, “The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:8) Though cultures and languages may change, God’s Word does not. The promises He made through Moses, Jeremiah, and the Apostle John are just as sure and true today as they were centuries ago.

Also, Jesus says of Holy Scripture, “These are they that testify of Me.” (John 5:39) All of Scripture and its teachings, from “the beginning” of Genesis 1:1 to the last “Amen” of Revelation 22:21, focus our attention on Jesus as man’s only Savior from sin and hope for eternal life. When someone attacks or rejects one part of God’s Word, this begins the process of chipping away at the central teaching of all Scripture—salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

May our defense of God’s unchanging Word always be grounded in the Spirit-worked desire to glorify our Savior Jesus and love our neighbor by speaking the truth of God’s Word.

*“How sweet are Your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through
Your precepts I get understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way.”* (Psalm
119:103-104)



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

[Ed: we recommend you read the *Brief Statement* for yourself. You can find it at: <http://clclutheran.org/2011/12/the-brief-statement-of-1932/>]

TLH 383

“Seek Where Ye May to Find a Way”

Hymn 383 is referenced to Acts 4:12: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Clearly, this Bible passage teaches that only Jesus saves. Numerous other Bible verses teach the same thing. However, many today strongly object to that truth. They find it offensive. They acrimoniously challenge us by asking, “Do you really think it’s fair that only Christians are saved? What about those millions of others who are just as faithful and devout in their religions as you are in yours? Or what about all those who have never even heard the Gospel? Would a just and loving God really condemn all those people to eternal hell, just because they don’t believe in Jesus?”

Yes, He would and He does. We know this because He tells us so, and “**His Word is sure**” (verse 1). After all, the only way man can know truth about God, especially the “mysteries” of the Gospel, is through God’s self-revelation. So, for example, in 1 Corinthians 2:7 we read, “*But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory.*”¹ Therefore our hymn enjoins, “**Seek where ye may / To find a way/ That leads to your salvation; / My heart is stilled, / on Christ I build, / He is the one Foundation.**” (verse 1)

Those who reject the truth that only Christians are saved usually start with false presuppositions. They begin with the idea that salvation is a result of our own good works and merit, and that God “grades on a curve,” so that “good” people go to heaven and “bad” people to hell. They think that it’s behavior, and not religion, that makes the difference. That’s why they think the exclusivity of salvation being only for Christians is unfair.

The only “unfair” thing, if you want to look at it that way, is *not* that so many will be damned; but rather than so many

are saved. After all, judging by the only true standard—God’s—*no one* deserves salvation. The “mystery” of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ, true man and also true God, has lived the perfect life that we cannot, and has suffered the punishment for all our sins. Because Jesus is true God, the magnitude of His perfect life and sacrificial death is infinite, and thus sufficient for all people; and as true man, He was perfectly obedient “under the Law” and also able to suffer death. So Galatians 4:4-5 reveals, “*But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*”

That understanding of the mystery of the Gospel is reflected also in the words of this hymn: “**Seek whom ye may / To be your stay; / None can redeem his brother. / All helpers failed, / This Man prevailed, / The God-man, and none other. / Our Servant-Lord / Did help afford; / We’re justified, / For He hath died, / The Guiltless for the guilty.**” (verse 2)

Yes, it is true indeed, only those who believe in Jesus will be saved. “**Seek Him alone, / Who did atone.**” (verse 3) Only Christ can save; none other. He alone is the proper object of our seeking for salvation, *because* He alone atoned for our sins. All religions other than Christianity posit that man must in some way earn God’s approval through good works and avoidance of sin. However, God is holy and just, so His approval is pronounced only upon those who are perfectly without sin. It is through the total *forgiveness* of our sins for the sake of the perfect life and substitutionary death of Jesus—and that alone—that any person is pronounced perfect.

When confronted with objections to the truth that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ, let us remember that “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*” (Ephesians 1:7) In Him, and in Him alone. Amen.



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

¹ As to the “mystery” of the Gospel, consider also Romans 16:25, Ephesians 1:9, Ephesians 3:8-9, and Ephesians 6:19.

Seek where ye may To find a way

Author: Georg Weissel; Translator: Arthur P. Voss

Tune: SUCH, WER DA WILL Published in 6 hymnals

Listen at: <http://lutherantacoma.com/hymns/383.mp3>

GEMS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

G O D

R E F U G E

Many seek refuge in all the wrong places. But because God is our refuge and strength, we can confidently say, “We will not fear—anything.”

Psalm 46:1-3 describes a scene of chaos and upheaval: the earth removed, mountains cast into the depths of the sea, waters roaring and troubled. This may be a cataclysmic event in nature, or the images may symbolize the chaos and upheaval of life. The phrase “*though the earth be removed*” is more literally “though the earth change.”

God’s Strength at Work in our Lives

For human beings, few things are more frightening than change. Yet, Scripture assures us that God never changes. This means that God does not love us today and hate us tomorrow. He is not for us one day and against us the next. Instead, as Psalm 46 declares, He remains “*a very present help in trouble.*”

Sadly, many people seek refuge in all the wrong places: fame, fortune, careers, even addictions. Each of these refuges is doomed to fail. But God never fails. And this is why the first word of Psalm 46 is one of its most important words: “*GOD is our refuge and strength.*”

The Hebrew word for God throughout Psalm 46 is *ELOHIM*. This is actually a plural word; not in the sense of many gods, but rather emphasizing the fullness of attributes of our triune God. Fullness of grace. Fullness of wisdom. Fullness of love, mercy, and power. And this is why, God is why, we can confidently say, “*We will not fear.*” We will not fear sickness. We will not fear death. We will not fear pandemics or terrorists or economic downturns or loneliness. We will not fear what others say about us. We will not fear anything.

God’s Personal Involvement in our Lives

If Psalm 46:1-3 assures us of God’s strength at work in

our lives, then Psalm 46:4-7 assures us of God’s personal involvement in our lives. And these two important facts—God’s power and His willingness—are addressed in Psalm 46:7, 11. In these verses God is not only called the “*LORD of armies*” but also the “*God of Jacob.*” He is God over all, but also God of the individual.

God is in our midst. God is on our side. These are the constant refrains of Scripture, and loudly heralded in Psalm 46: “*God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.*” Or as Paul wrote in Romans 8: “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” And where do we see God more in our midst and more on our side than in the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ? That Jesus died on the cross for our sins is the clear, indisputable proof that God has the power and the willingness to help us.

God is in Control

Psalm 46:8-11 comprises the last section of this great psalm. Much could be said about these verses. In an age of wars, terrorist threats, the boasts and swagger of nations and leaders, how comforting to remember that GOD IS IN CONTROL. “*HE makes wars cease to the end of the earth; HE breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two. HE burns the chariot in the fire.*”

Yet, notice particularly Psalm 46:10, where God Himself turns to us directly and says: “*Be still, and know that I am God.*” When overloaded by life’s worries, anxieties, and burdens, we need to stop, listen, and reflect on what God is saying. He’s saying, “I am God. You’re not.”



**There is no better,
no safer refuge.**

Mark Weis is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Genuine Faith

“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

James 1:26-27 ESV

Think back to some of the life-changing moments of your life. Maybe it was the day you got married or the days your children were born. Maybe it was the day you chose to go back to school, accept a new job, or move to a new city. Maybe it was a person you met who really challenged some of your long-held thoughts. Things that are life-changing should be just that: they should change the way you look at your life and live your life.

For believers, the greatest life-changing moment of our lives was when God called us to faith in Jesus as our Savior. That should, as James tell us, impact our lives not just for eternity, but also right now. As James concludes the first chapter of his epistle, he shows us some of the ways our faith should impact our lives.

First, Christian faith seeks to control the tongue. Instead of gossiping, slandering, and otherwise dragging down reputations, Christian faith speaks with kindness and gentleness, seeking to protect reputations. James says that the person who does not bridle his tongue is the sort that goes to church and imagines that he is acting like a true child of God but, really, he is deceiving himself. His lovelessness reveals who he is.

Secondly, Christian faith looks for ways to help those in need. In James’ day, there were probably no groups in more need than widows and orphans. There were no government programs to help them out. Many widows and orphans were reduced to a life of begging, stealing, or even worse to survive. Genuine religion will bear fruit such as concern and compassion for the lonely, the grieving, the destitute and the helpless.

Finally, Christian faith keeps itself from the pollution of the world. Christians make it a priority to build their values, attitudes, and desires on the Gospel, and not to let the world subvert their faith with *its* agendas and values.

This text invites us to ask ourselves how genuine our faith really is. If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that our faith often falls short of being pure and undefiled. That is why it is so comforting to look to Jesus. Look at how Jesus lived His life. He perfectly controlled His speech, always saying exactly what needed to be said. He never gave in to the temptations of the world around Him. He invested in widows, orphans, the less fortunate, and those despised by society. And He even invested in us personally. He washed us clean of all of our wrongdoing. He has clothed us with His perfection. He declares us not guilty of all charges.

We stand on God’s grace and love, and that impacts our lives. God’s love for us in Christ motivates us to show Him how much we treasure His blessings by doing whatever we can to praise Him with our lives. Will we always do this? Sadly, no. Our text, as the Law always does, reminds us of how often we fall short. We are sinners.

But we are *forgiven* sinners. May the Lord enable us to live our lives as His forgiven children, honoring the One who made us His own.



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

BEST. JOB. EVER!

Are you a young person pondering a career? Have you considered becoming a pastor or a Christian day school teacher? This twelve-part series is meant to coincide with the work of the President's Committee on Partners in the Public Ministry (CPPM). Its aim is to help you think more deeply about the great importance—and many blessings—of the public teaching and preaching ministry.

“Double Honor”



The Christian farmer on his tractor is no less a minister of the Word than the pastor in the pulpit. The only difference is that the Gospel labor of tilling the earth is a little less obvious than preaching and teaching.

Before a mixed crowd of souls from all sorts of occupations, our Lord declared, “*You are the light of the world.*” (Matthew 5:14)

After His resurrection, Jesus breathed on His disciples, bestowing the ministry of the keys upon all believers. (John 20:22-23)

Because you are justified in Christ, the grace of God transforms your most mundane labor into holy kingdom service, your personal way to “*proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*” that the unbeliever might “*by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*” (I Peter 2:9,12)

No work carried out in faith happens outside the Gospel ministry.

Yet, the Apostle Paul does highlight one vocation in particular: “*Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.*” (I Timothy 5:17)

The Lutheran church uses the phrase “public minister” to describe those roles, both in Scripture and among us today, which preach and teach “on behalf of” the church. But the German theological term “public” (öffentlich) also encompasses the “recognizable” nature of such work.

There is a hidden aspect to the royal priesthood. God ceaselessly uses every Christian to further His glory, but the life-giving power of our good works often goes unnoticed by the human eye. Thus, God calls some believers to exercise the ministry of the keys “out in the open,” so that someone

can point to the teaching of God’s Word and say with confidence, “There it is!”

There is no greater honor than the call to faith in Christ. The Savior, Who took all your sins as His own, gives you in exchange everything that is His. There is nothing greater to be had than the eternal life which is yours through Jesus’ blood and merit. The “double honor,” then, which Paul describes, is not something more a pastor or teacher receives from God, but rather the recognition a public minister receives from man.

The visible, audible nature of teaching “out in the open” brings about a joyous response from God’s people, which the public minister receives with ear and eye.

This “double honor” can be as gentle as hugs from little ones who flock about their teacher, or as firm as a handshake at the close of a service thanking the pastor for his faithful, solid Gospel proclamation. It also finds expression in the desire of the church to provide for its called workers’ daily bread as they cheerfully take part in eternal rewards.

Watch out! Receiving “double honor” begins long before a formal call into the public ministry. Perhaps after the Christmas program you’ve been told, “I could hear every word you said.” Maybe you’ve wondered why you were asked to help with VBS as soon as you were too old to participate as a pupil. Has anyone remarked how insightful your questions in Bible class are? Or, even completely outside of church, how good you are at explaining things?

Yes, it’s wise not to think too highly of yourself. But if it’s a fellow Christian who is pointing out what God has given you, don’t ignore it! Such double honor is from God.

Pursue it. Learn more. He promises to direct your steps.

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



ERROR'S ECHO

In this new series we take a look back at some of the most notorious errors and heresies that have threatened the church over the centuries, as well as the subtle (and not so subtle) ways in which those false teachings continue to haunt 21st century thought and theology.

Gnosticism

“If your only tool is a hammer, every problem will look like a nail.”

A similar thing could be said of Gnosticism. If you understand what Gnosticism is and how it works, you will see Gnosticism wherever you look.

“Gnostic,” comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means knowledge. More specifically, it refers to experiential knowledge. Gnosticism is not about hard facts or objective truths. Its knowledge is mystical and organic, found by peeling back layers to discover the divine spark within you. The Gnostic god is not knowledge. It is Self. Truth comes from within YOU.

Gnostics believe that all religions are the same, because they all point back to the same, common source. All spiritual writings, including the Bible, have value, but only when properly understood. “The written Gospels preserve teachings, not histories. As such, those who look to ancient writings for literal truth will always be disappointed, for the writers of the Gospels were not concerned with telling the literal history: they were concerned with helping others escape suffering and enter into spiritual understanding.” Translation: the Bible’s message is encrypted and must be decoded. Only you can answer the question, “Did God really say that?”

A Gnostic believes that matter is evil, but the spirit is good. Since the body is matter, Jesus could not have been God in the flesh. God could not suffer and die, nor could there be a bodily resurrection. To a Gnostic, salvation is not the forgiveness of wrongs, but unlocking the secret knowledge that will free the spirit from the body.

Gnosticism was one of the first major heresies to threaten the early church. Paul warned, “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.” (1 Timothy 6:20-21) But the error predates the first century. “Knowledge” was the bait on Satan’s trap in the Garden.

Adam and Eve could know good and evil, just as God did, by simply following the devil’s promptings. That worked on sinless people, and it is even more effective after the Fall.

Where will you find Gnosticism today? It is present in secret societies such as the Masonic Lodge, in religions that claim to have a secret understanding of the Bible (Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, and so forth), in churches that place feeling ahead of divine truth, and in cultures where morality is determined by the individual. One example of this sinful subjectivity is the statement that “Only a woman can decide whether aborting the ‘fetus’ (non-person) is right or wrong for her.”

Gnostics avoid distinctions between male and female, animals and humans, good and evil. The fact that a child is born male does not mean that he is male. The fact that you were born into a Lutheran family, does not mean that Lutheranism is right for you. You must decide for yourself. Each person must determine his own truth.

How can anyone combat the lies and blasphemies of Gnosticism? With a hammer. And nail-prints. The hammer is God’s Word. “*Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; compare Jeremiah 23:28-30) The nail-prints? The Gospel, of course—the message of God’s incredible love and forgiveness in Christ, and of the bodily resurrection that is to come.

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



Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

West Columbia, South Carolina

Volunteer commitment, Southern hospitality, and dedication to the Word of God have been hallmarks of Holy Trinity since the time of its founding in 1965. Like the rain which comes from heaven, so the Word of God has caused His goodness to spring up and bear abundant fruit. You might say that Holy Trinity is a “grass-roots ministry.”

This grass-roots effort began with groups of conscientious families who could not remain with their current churches because of the false teaching in those church bodies. Some members had discovered a new Bible curriculum being put out by the Lutheran Church of America. It stated that the Bible contained errors and myths, and it denied direct Messianic prophecies of Jesus. Lay members were led by the Spirit to search their Bibles and get back to the basic truths of Scripture for themselves.

A series of meetings and worship services was held in a member’s basement, leading to the formation of a new congregation in May of 1965. Mr. John Lindler was elected as lay leader of the congregation and was responsible for leading the congregation in Bible instruction in those early days. Property was donated, and a church building was completed almost entirely by lay member labor.

After a series of preachers, the Spirit led the congregation into contact with a CLC congregation in Winter Haven, FL. In 1967 they called Pastor Paul F. Nolting to be their pastor. He was the steady shepherd the congregation needed to guide and teach them, and to deepen the roots of the Spirit in the decade to come.

Christian education has been a major focus of Holy Trinity throughout its existence. In 1972 the investment of conscientious Christians sprouted into the starting of a Christian day school. Under the heat of the summer sun, a lay-led construction crew completed the school building in a matter of months. To this day, the school has remained a key component of the church’s ministry.

The congregation has also been blessed with dedicated teachers, including many who came from within the congregation itself. Many children have been led through the private day school and onward to ILC. The congregation supports families who want to send their children to ILC through a weekly Sunday School offering. Today Holy Trinity School has been blessed with an enrollment of thirty students.

The ladies’ group meets each month for Bible study and to discuss other ministry matters. The ladies also organize book clubs and Bible studies at members’ homes. One of the highlights of the year is the CLC Southeastern Women’s Retreat in November. It has been held in Savannah, Georgia; and also Myrtle Beach, South Carolina on the Atlantic coast. All of the church’s members are blessed to enjoy the fantastic cooking of the ladies. If you ever plan a vacation down this way, be sure to check the calendar for the next congregational meal!

Two years ago, the men started meeting monthly for an evening Bible study and meal. More recently they have shifted to an informal meeting on Saturday mornings in men’s homes. Individual laymen lead discussions on topics such as “giving,” “servanthood,” and “God in the workplace.”





Above: exterior of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church; right: ladies' group.

The men have also used this ministry to help members in difficult situations who are in need.

Holy Trinity has a very active youth group right now, covering ages 8-13. One of the recent highlights of this group has been the annual Christ Explorers Camp in August. Last year we had over thirty in attendance, including some non-members and some from other CLC congregations. This is a great time for visitors to squeeze in a late-summer vacation and plan a trip to the beach.

One of the opportunities and challenges that the congregation faces is how to keep the third generation of families "rooted" in the responsibilities of the ministry and property. Work days and volunteer efforts such as the 2019 summer re-roofing project have proven an important way to bring the young and old together in love and fellowship.

The congregation has been working to get its name out into the community. One of these efforts is our ministry to a local teen homeless shelter. The members serve meals there, offer mentoring, and invite residents to church events. The mission committee also advertises at a local Kids' Day in April where they hand out materials like "God's Questions and Answers," invitations to VBS, and, of course, freeze pops.

Because there are no other CLC churches in South Carolina, the ministry serves members all across the state and into North Carolina. One regular preaching station is in beautiful Greenville, South Carolina. At one time there were preaching stations in Hendersonville, North Carolina, and also Atlanta, Georgia. Holy Trinity's support of the Atlanta group led to the founding of a CLC mission congregation, which is now located in Loganville, Georgia.

Holy Trinity is located in West Columbia, just off of I-26, in the midst of a larger metropolis. Just a few miles to the

east and over the scenic Broad River is Columbia, the capital of South Carolina. Columbia is filled with South Carolina history relating to both the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. It is also the home of South Carolina University. Of course, others will want to be sure Clemson University is mentioned. These two schools are bitter rivals, and during the fall football season the lines are clearly drawn: are you a Gamecock or a Tiger?

Despite its nearness to the busy metropolis, the church is quite secluded, surrounded as it is by pine trees and ponds, with a small creek running through the property. It is a quiet setting for the school kids to run around in at recess, and a nice place for the called workers to live. A parsonage, teacherage, and apartment are all located on this large campus. One of the most beautiful times to visit is in late winter to early spring, when the azaleas begin to bloom.

Previous and current teachers include Marion Fitschen 1972-2009, Jan Hallauer (Davis) 1974-79, Tricia Shealy 1973-80, Joyce Ridgell 1976-77, 1988-89, Jan Stockman (Summerville) 1977-78, Beth Nolting (Kranz) 1979-80, Ross Roehl 1979-82, Lynette Roehl 1980-82, Stephen Salter 1982-87, Ann Long 1982-01, Sharon Schierenbeck 1985-95, Joe Lau 1992-95, Bob Long 1995-00, David Lundin 1995-98, Chris Fossum 1998-01, Leah Fossum 1998-01, 2012-present, Nathan Wales 2001-19, Laura Ude 2009-12, Sara Kloke 2012, Amy Osborne 2013-present, Deana Pfeiffer 2019-present, and Vanessa Wales 2019-20.

Men who have served as pastors for Holy Trinity are Paul F. Nolting 1967-79, Fred Archer 1979-80, M. Earl Eargle (vacancy pastor) 1980, John Schierenbeck 1980-95, Warren Fanning 1995, Vance Fossum 1995-2016, and David Pfeiffer 2016-present.

From the commitment of volunteers, to the hunger for Christian education, to the hospitality of the church family,

the Word of the Lord continues to cause its good purpose to sprout forth. *"For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace."* (Isaiah 55:12 ESV)



David Pfeiffer is pastor of Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in West Columbia, South Carolina.

Spiritual Distancing

It may end up becoming the 2020 phrase of the year, as it has dominated our lives over these last months. You guessed it: *social distancing*. Maintaining a safe distance from others who may be virus-infected not only helps “flatten the curve,” but also is the safest and healthiest course for ourselves and our loved ones.

But what about spiritual distancing? If by that one means isolating oneself spiritually from one’s brothers and sisters in the faith and fellowship, then God clearly warns against such spiritual distancing (Hebrews 10: 24-25; Colossians 3:16). How blessed we are that our opportunities for true fellowship have continued in creative and flexible ways during this epidemic—through online worship and classes, pastoral and personal connections, and increased family altar ministries.

If, however, by “spiritual distancing” one means separating ourselves from sin and the evil of this world as sanctified (“set apart”) Christ-believers, then many are our God’s encouragements to practice such spiritual distancing (“Flee these things . . .” 1 Timothy 6:11; “Do not love the world . . .” 1 John 2:15; “Do not be unequally yoked . . .” 2 Corinthians 6:14).

One aspect of such spiritual distancing that is ignored by most churches (including many that are Lutheran) is the separation from error. When our God and Great Physician describes false teaching in any form, it is portrayed as a spiritual microbe or cancer (2 Timothy 2:17). Like COVID-19, spiritual error grows and spreads (Galatians 5:9), wreaking havoc until it leaves in its wake a path of spiritual lies, confusion and devastation. “Stay away from it!” is your Father’s wise counsel (Romans 16:17-18; Matthew 7:15).

Consider your feelings if, at the height of the pandemic, you had left the safe confines of your home and ventured out to some large, close-contact public gathering! Who among us would have taken that risk? How much safer we were

As “social distancing” lingers, how thankful we all are for the closeness and fellowship of our earthly families and our spiritual families of faith!

at home! How much safer should we feel spiritually to have a church home where maintaining sound, healthy doctrine (including spiritual distancing) is a high priority—both for ourselves and for others.

As “social distancing” lingers, how thankful we all are for the closeness and fellowship of our earthly families and our spiritual families of faith! Both are gifts of God which, we hope, we will never take for granted.

Most importantly, no matter what

the nature or degree of our “social distancing” or even our proper “spiritual distancing,” we are not now and never will be isolated from the forgiving love, the supportive presence, or the faithful promises of our God. Never will He leave us or forsake us!

Both the COVID-19 virus and false teaching arise from the presence of sin with its capability of harming and bringing death—in the case of COVID, death to the body; in the case of false teaching, death to the soul. While we have not yet developed a vaccine for COVID (we pray it will be soon!), our Lord has created within us a spiritual immune system through His Holy Word that is both “living and powerful” (Hebrews 4:12). The creation, protection, and preservation of our faith in His Son is of utmost concern to our Father, and He guarantees it. With the Apostle we profess confidently, “I know Whom I have believed and am convinced that He is able to guard that which I have committed to Him until that day.” (2 Timothy 1:12)

We listen to, value, and heed medical advice from respected doctors about social distancing. Would that our God and Father’s wise counsel on spiritual distancing were as listened to, valued, and heeded. How much safer and

healthier would be our churches—and the faith of their members—if all would recognize and value God’s “spiritual distancing” plan.

David Schierenbeck is a retired pastor and a member of the CLC Board of Doctrine. He lives in St. Paul Park, Minnesota.



COVID-19 and Cyclone Aid Sent to Overseas Brethren

In the middle of so much earthly uncertainty, we can be certain of God's love for us all. It was God's love for sinners that led Him to send His only Son to pay for the sins of mankind. And it is that same sacrificial love that we look to for hope when so many things in this world seem to offer anything but hope.

Our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world have suffered greatly due to the coronavirus lockdowns that have been enacted to varying degrees throughout most of the world. Many of the church bodies we work with are found in impoverished and developing nations. Many of the pastors and believers in these countries support their families and ministries through day labor, where if you don't work you don't get paid. As a consequence, many of our brothers and sisters have been struggling to provide the very basic necessities of life for themselves and their families.

When the CLC Board of Missions and the Kinship Committee learned of these struggles, it was an easy decision to send to financial assistance. COVID-19 Aid was sent to our brothers and sisters in Christ in Mexico, Liberia, Togo, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, India, Nepal, Myanmar, and Bangladesh.

The support that was sent was not enough to assist everyone. However, it was received with much appreciation from church leaders, especially as it allowed them to help those who had immediate needs.



In addition to the struggles relating to coronavirus, cyclone Amphan hit the southern coast of Bangladesh in May, bringing severe destruction to several Bangladesh Lutheran Church Mission congregations. BLCM church buildings, schools, and homes have been severely damaged or destroyed. Thankfully, there was no loss of life among

the members of the BLCM, but many sustained injuries and needed medical care. Again, the decision to help was easy. Kinship disaster relief funds were sent to Bangladesh to provide for basic needs, shelter, and medical care.

If you would like to help replenish the Kinship fund so that we, as a body of believers, can be ready to

respond again when there is a need, offerings can be made through your local congregation or sent directly to the following address:

CLC Kinship Fund

501 Grover Rd

Eau Claire WI 54701

Praise be to our Savior Who loved us and offered Himself for us. It is because of His self-sacrificing love for us that we, in turn, love one another. What a privilege it is to serve Him by serving others!



"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10)

Todd Ohlmann is a full-time visiting missionary for the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JULY 2020

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Jul 1	TLH 278	Daniel 5:1-31	Unlike his predecessor, King Belshazzar refused to humble himself before the Lord. It cost him his kingdom, and his removal was a blessing to the exiles.
Jul 2	TLH 202	John 20:9-18	Mary should have known Jesus would rise, but look how gently Jesus comforts her in her sadness. With the same gentleness He comforts us.
Jul 3	WS 780 (TLH 482)	John 20:19-23	Who has the authority on earth to forgive sins? Well, you do! That’s what Jesus says.
Jul 4	TLH 577 (LSB 965)	Daniel 6:1-18	May God keep our government from ever demanding of us that we worship a false god or insisting that we must turn from the truth.
Jul 6	TLH 616	Daniel 6:19-28	Those who stand with the Lord will always emerge victorious, for even if Daniel had died in the den of lions, he would have been forever with the Lord.
Jul 7	TLH 325	2 Samuel 13:23-39	King David’s family had sinful family problems too. Here David’s son Absalom took revenge on Amnon by murdering him. How the world needs the forgiveness of Christ!
Jul 8	TLH 208 (LSB 470, 471)	John 20:24-31	Jesus brought “proof” for Thomas, but more importantly He brought him peace— the same peace you have from Jesus, too.
Jul 9	TLH 213	Daniel 7:1-14	Take note of who overcomes the four beasts in Daniel’s vision. It surely sounds like God the Father and God the Son, and it is.
Jul 10	TLH 588	Daniel 7:15-28	The four beasts are four kingdoms. The last one, the Roman Empire, did (and still does through the Roman church and the popes) great damage to the people of God. But Christ and His own will be victorious!
Jul 11	WS 735 (LSB 485)	John 21:1-14	Just as He had promised, Jesus met His disciples in Galilee. Perhaps the catch of fish was a reminder to them of how the Lord would help them catch people, too.
Jul 13	WS 738 (LSB 821)	John 21:15-25	Although Peter had once denied His Savior, He was forgiven, and Christ sent him out into the ministry.
Jul 14	WS 764 (LSB 850)	2 Samuel 14:23-33	Absalom’s return caused tension in the family when David didn’t want to see him. Again, Absalom took matters into his own hands with his fiery temper.
Jul 15	TLH 579; LSB 853	2 Samuel 15:1-12	King David’s family problems reached their height when his son Absalom resolved to take the throne away from his father.
Jul 16	TLH 269	Daniel 8:1-14	Again, Daniel receives a vision of the distant future. Kingdoms would rise and fall just as the Lord indicated, for His Word is true.
Jul 17	TLH 658 (LSB 662)	Daniel 8:15-27	Powerful kingdoms would emerge and trouble God’s holy people, but the Lord would put down these foes (v. 25b). Thus these frightening visions were not without their comfort.
Jul 18	TLH 155	Acts 5:1-11	Lying to God is hazardous to your health, both your spiritual and physical health. If you’ve tried to hide something from Him that you shouldn’t, run to Jesus and hide under His cross.
Jul 20	TLH 520 (LSB 754)	Acts 5:25-42	“Blessed are you when they . . . say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:11-12 NIV2011).
Jul 21	TLH 321	Daniel 9:1-19	The key verse in this beautiful prayer is v. 18. God’s compassion is our confidence and hope when we confess our sins before Him.
Jul 22	TLH 479	Daniel 9:20-27	The Lord comforted Daniel with another vision of the future. The vision has the same theme as the previous ones: through times of suffering and restoration, the Lord’s Church will always prevail.
Jul 23	TLH 408	2 Samuel 17:1-14	Absalom was not only plotting against his father, but also plotting against the will of the Lord. He would not win (v. 14). Neither will we when we plot against God’s will.
Jul 24	TLH 440; LSB 848	Acts 6:1-7	Dividing the church’s labors among those who had various gifts was the right call, and it helped the Word of God to spread. We follow their example in our churches, too.
Jul 25	TLH 280	2 Samuel 18:5-18, 33	When the Lord’s enemies are defeated, the Lord still grieves because He would rather that they turn from their evil ways and repent.
Jul 27	TLH 525	Daniel 10:1-11:1	Nations rise and fall, good and evil spirits oppose one another, but the people of God are reassured, “Don’t be afraid, you who are treasured by God. Peace to you; be very strong!”
Jul 28	TLH 445; LSB 751	Daniel 11:2-20	These prophecies came to pass in connection with Alexander the Great and the aftermath of his downfall. When the tumultuous days arrived, believers knew that God foresaw those days coming and was still in control.
Jul 29	TLH 444 (LSB 668)	Acts 6:8-15	The enemies of God are unable to refute His powerful Word!
Jul 30	TLH 268	Daniel 11:21-35	A time of great terror and abomination would befall the Jewish believers during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (215-154 BC) between the Old and New Testaments.
Jul 31	WS 757	2 Samuel 19:9-23, 40-43	Absalom was dead, but not everyone was eager to see David rule over Israel and Judah. David tried to improve relations between north and south, but the seeds of a divided kingdom had been sown.

Pandemic Affects Our African Contacts

We are very familiar with how the global pandemic has affected the U.S. In addition to the threat of the virus itself, other challenges include job loss, school closures, cancellation of life events, and other disruptions. The most vulnerable people in developing countries are being impacted even more directly and severely. A majority of people in Kenya and Uganda are not simply living “paycheck to paycheck,” they are living “day to day.” Many are dependent upon their ability to sell the goods that they grow or make each day, to provide a service, or provide motorbike transportation. They are in need of daily wages. For many, nationwide enforcement of a “shelter in place” order could represent a death sentence were it to go on for too long. Very few have a reserve of funds or food in order to sustain them for an extended period of time.

Iganga, Uganda: From Pastor Daniel: “All citizens are under a strict quarantine in their own homes until the end of April. All public transportation has been suspended. Those who fall ill (with the virus or anything else) out in the rural or suburban areas are even being forbidden from using public transportation such as motorcycle or taxi to get to a health centre. Those who can’t afford private transportation like that are dying. The health care workers who live at a distance from the hospitals and health centres cannot get to work. Theft has cropped up and things are worse than anyone could have imagined. I [Daniel] am stuck at home with family and eight orphans that I am caring for and they now have no other source of support.”

Kenya: The school closures here, much like the ones in America, have limited a number of children’s access to food. At Emmaus Hill School of Moi’s Bridge and St. David’s KINSHIP Academy in Etago, many students depend on the lunch program that these schools offer. Sadly, however, there is no option for schools to continue the lunch program at the current time.

The enforcement of a strict curfew (7 P.M. to 5 A.M.) and limits on public gatherings have been abused by those who wield power. People have been forced out of buses and off of ferries and beaten by police and military. The independent

group Lutherans In Africa, a translation center and seminary training facility just outside of Nairobi, has been raided by police and military several times since the announcement of the curfew. Clearly, public officials are using this opportunity to enrich themselves, and to disrupt the operation of peaceful nonprofit groups such as this. In the past, Lutherans in Africa has been very helpful to the mission work of the CLC in East Africa by providing catechisms, copies of the Book of Concord, and other resources for teaching in the native languages of several East Africa tribes, all free of charge.

The great disruption to the economy the world over also has far-reaching effects to supply lines into these countries. Panic buying and price gouging is not a strictly American issue. Many essential goods have skyrocketed in price in the last few weeks, which compounds the problems that people are already facing.

Thankfully, there are government leaders and faith communities that are advocating for those people who most severely feel the adverse effects of a curfew and lockdown. We pray that they provide solutions and assistance to those in great need.

“Both the county and national governments should devise a way of reaching the poor at the grassroots during this trying moment. It will be ironical for citizens to die of hunger instead of the coronavirus,” said Apostle Wanyonyi, Bishop of the Church of Christ, Busia County.

Those who were receiving theological training through online correspondence with the CLC have had to suspend their work for the time being while they adjust to all the sudden changes. While we in the U.S. have certainly faced hardship, it is fitting to remember our Christian brothers and sisters on the other side of the globe whose hardships, in many cases, are far more severe. Pray that they may find relief from the many troubles facing them, and that they may find refuge and strength in the Lord, their Creator and Redeemer.



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

SEEN IN PASSING

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

Fuller Theological Seminary Subject of Marriage Lawsuit.

"In a complaint filed last November and amended in January, two former students — Nathan Brittsan and Joanna Maxon — allege that Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, violated anti-discrimination laws when it expelled them from the seminary after learning they were married to people of the same sex. The outcome of the suit could significantly impact how faith-based institutions across the country apply Title IX protections to LGBTQ students in same-sex marriages. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination in federally funded education programs or activities. 'That's one of the main implications,' said Paul Southwick, the attorney representing Brittsan and Maxon. 'That would apply not only to this institution, but to other religiously affiliated institutions across the country, whether or not they have religious exemptions from Title IX.'" Molina, Alejandra. "Students expelled over same-sex marriages sue Fuller for discrimination." *News. ReligionNews.com*, 10 Jan. 2020. Web. 28 May 2020.



Why is it Big News When Someone Loses His Faith, But Not the Other Way Around?

Jon Steingard, lead singer for the Canadian Christian rock band Hawk Nelson, recently made a splash on Instagram by announcing that he no longer believes in God. The item was quickly picked up by major American news outlets, including CNN, Fox, and USA Today. Commenting on the item, Christian columnist Dr. Michael Brown wondered aloud why he never reads about celebrities who come to faith. "Why is it big news when the son of a pastor and the frontman for a not-super-famous Christian rock group renounces his faith? Could it be that the world would rather celebrate unbelief than faith? . . . To be sure, it really is sad to hear about a brother or sister losing faith. And to the extent that a person had a public platform, it is even sadder because of the potential negative impact on others. At the same time, my first question upon hearing this report was, 'Who is Jon Steingard and why is this the headline story on some major news outlets? . . . My point is that the same secular media that seems to feast on stories of people losing their faith largely

ignores stories of people coming to faith." Brown, Michael. "When the World Celebrates Unbelief Instead of Faith." *The Stand. AFA.net*, 29 May 2020. Web. 3 Jun. 2020.

Upside and Opportunitites in a Time of Turmoil.

In an April opinion piece in *The New York Times*, ethicist Peter Wehner ran down the long list of disadvantages suffered by churches during the period of social distancing, chief among which is the inability to congregate physically. There are also difficulties in providing routine pastoral care: "Consoling loved ones in the wake of death is far more difficult. Weddings and funerals are being postponed; so are the sacraments of baptism and communion." But in interviews he conducted with pastors, several upsides also emerged. One pastor said, "I feel like I'm handing out life jackets of hope in a sea of despair." Wehner said, "A few pastors told me that churches are noticing a sense of community that is in some respects greater than in the past. People are calling one another spontaneously. Individuals who had slipped through the cracks are now being contacted. In some churches, weekly 'attendance' is actually growing as a result of live-streaming. Community groups, Bible studies and Sunday school classes are being conducted via videoconferencing." Scott Dudley, senior pastor at Bellevue Presbyterian Church in Bellevue, Washington, said, "This is an enormous opportunity for Christians to show the world what we are for rather than all the many things they've heard us say that we're against." Wehner, Peter. "How Should Christians Act During a Pandemic?" *The New York Times*, 12 Apr. 2020. Print.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION POSTPONED

St. John's Lutheran Church of Okabena, Minnesota, has postponed the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the church and the 25th anniversary of the school until Sunday, July 4, 2021. —Pastor James Albrecht

CLARIFICATION In an article entitled, "Be Still and Know That I Am God" (*Spokesman*, May 2020), Dr. Daniel Schierenbeck made a passing reference to the practice of meditation. Professor Schierenbeck wishes to clarify that this was by no means meant as an endorsement of any New Age or Eastern religion. Clearly, a Christian who engages in meditation will do so only in the sense of Psalm 1:2, "his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night."

