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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

“He has made
from one blood
every nation of
men to dwell on
all the face of
the earth.”

Acts 17:26a



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God Called Me by the Gospel

I certainly believe that the Lord works conversions, I just don't think my actions always show it. If you're like me, you find it comfortable—even exciting—to share God's Word with those you find agreeable. If they look like me, share similar interests, and carry a friendly demeanor, the light bulb goes off: "I should encourage this person to come to church! I think he'd be receptive." But if a person doesn't meet those standards, the conclusion is, "I think I'd be wasting my time." This mindset is a shameful denial of the converting power of the Holy Spirit. To be converted means to be changed from one state to another entirely. It's not a side-shimmy into faith as my subconscious prerequisites imply.

Consider the Apostle Paul's trip to Athens (Acts 17:16-34). Exploring the marketplace and likely marveling at the wide range of exotic goods, he was soon overwhelmed by the presence of rampant idolatry—statues and shrines dedicated to every god that man could invent. He even found an altar dedicated "To the Unknown God." I'm quite certain if I had been there that day, I would have kept a low profile. "I'm clearly an outsider here. They won't believe anyway."

Paul didn't think that. He went to the local synagogue and reasoned with the Jews and believing Greeks concerning Jesus and the resurrection. A group of philosophers was present and, hearing these new ideas, invited Paul to share his teachings at the Aereopagus, the hill outside the city that served as a debate floor. "Thanks for the invitation, but I'd actually better get going." That might have been my response to the unbelieving Athenians, but Paul leapt at the opportunity.

During his discourse, Paul revealed an important truth about both his audience and every person to whom you have opportunity to witness. Speaking about every individual, Paul revealed that God "*has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should*

seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him." (Acts 17:26-27) This is an important truth to bear in mind. Every citizen of this world is born with a knowledge that God exists.

The problem is, left to their own devices, people cannot find God. They can only invent gods created in man's image. The Greek gods, for example, were imagined to be far off and unconcerned about mankind, which existed to serve them. If they left Mount Olympus, it was to seek petty vengeance. How different man's gods are from the God revealed in the Bible! Paul declared that God was "*not far from each one of us,*" and that "*He's not worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything.*" (Acts 17:25; 27) Instead of punishing every slight, God overlooked the times of ignorance, "*but now commands all men everywhere to repent.*" (Act 17:30)

Indeed, God has come near. He entered humanity as our stand-in and has come near again through His saving Word. He does not need our service, rather He came "*to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.*" (Matthew 20:28) He does not immediately respond to our arrogant failures with vengeance; instead, He calls us to repentance so He can satisfy our guilty consciences with His healing forgiveness. Praise be to God for revealing these truths to us! For we were not born Christian; we were on the fast track to hell. We were each entirely opposed to God's will, and yet He now calls us His saints through Christ. That is total change!

Contrary to any pre-determinations I might have made about the Athenians, some came to faith that day. It is not our job to analyze whether a person might believe the Gospel. The power to convert does not lie in a person's "receptivity," for then none of us would believe. God alone is the one who saves.



Samuel Rodebaugh is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida.

The Christian's Professional Development

Teachers get a great deal of mail for professional development opportunities. I'm sure other professions do, too. Books, seminars, and subscription services all make their case for offering essential knowledge. Continued learning opportunities are an important part of doing a job well, but the decision must be made whether each opportunity is worth the time and money that it costs. Thankfully, we don't have to make any financial decisions or calculate the return on investment when it comes to the worship of our Savior.

Just as professional development is an important part of a career, worship is an important part of our faith life. We need to feed our faith the Bread of Life so that it thrives and grows. Our sinful nature would have it otherwise. It's all too easy to let our faith waste away from negligence and unconcern. But spending time with God's Word is more than an opportunity; it's a need. Isaiah compares God's Word to a force of nature that will bring change: *"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."* (Isaiah 55:10-11)

Chapters 12-15 of Romans provide guidance for Christian living. In the beginning of chapter 12, Paul calls Christian living our "reasonable service." A careful and honest analysis of our lives paints a bleak picture in comparison to God's expectations. Romans 12:14 says, *"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse,"* yet we often fail

to show love even to our fellow Christians. Romans 13:1 begins, *"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities,"* yet we complain about and disobey governments that are far less unjust and oppressive than was the Roman Empire.

Thankfully, Christian worship isn't about what we can do for God.

Yes, we are called to be servants of the Almighty, but we are not slaves in the service of a spiteful master. Christ loves us as He commands us to love one another and has freed us from the slavery of sin. Christian worship is not about tallying up some good works or setting a good example for the next generation. Nor is it a comfortable routine that we practice on Sunday mornings. Christian worship allows us to spend time in God's

Word. It is His invitation to drink from a fountain that never stops flowing. God spiritually revives, builds, and nourishes us in our worship. The Christian life is a natural response of thanksgiving to God's boundless mercy.

Christian worship is so much more than weekly church attendance. The Apostle Paul described an entire life filled with worship, as he said to the Philippians, *"For to me, to live is Christ."* (1:21) Spending time with God's Word is not a sacrifice that we make, but rather a necessary component of a living faith. The ability to read God's actual words and the invitation to speak to God personally in prayer are immeasurable gifts. We may not always feel like attending church or opening our Bible, but God promises that the Word will benefit us. No earthly professional development course can guarantee that!



Ross Kok is a teacher at Holy Cross Lutheran School in Phoenix, Arizona.

Spending time with God's Word is more than an opportunity; it's a need.

WS 742, LSB 793

“Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven”

The most famous hymn Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1874) ever wrote was *Abide with Me! Fast Falls the Eventide*, but not far behind is *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*. With this poem, Lyte gave the world a text that not only praises God with high alleluias but also recounts His loving mercy toward us in phrases filled with comfort.

This hymn appears most frequently in hymnals under the heading *Worship and Praise*. The hymn writer understood both. Christian worship is more than just praise. In fact, our praises to God come second. Before we are able to praise our Lord, we must first be the recipients of His divine grace. This is the greater part of our worship services too: God’s coming to us and serving us with the Gospel. First He gives us gifts that are worthy of praise, and then we proclaim the wonders He has done.

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven; / To His feet your tribute bring. But why bring such tribute? What moves us to lay our best before the Lord and praise Him as our King? It is answered: **Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.** Could there be four words together that better describe what God has done for us? Could there be four words that better call forth an everlasting outpouring of praise from our hearts? We are *ransomed* from sin, death, and hell by the cross and empty tomb of Jesus (Mark 10:45; Romans 4:25). We are *healed* because Christ took our weaknesses and infirmities on Himself (Isaiah 53:4). We are *restored* to life forever (John 10:10). We are *forgiven* (Roman 4:7), for our sins have been lifted up and carried away. **Alleluia, alleluia! / Praise the everlasting King.**

The hymn’s second stanza highlights God’s readiness to help us in our days of distress. Psalm 50:15 is where we find that famous invitation, “*Call upon me in the day of trouble;*



I will deliver you, and you will honor me.” (NIV84) It seems as if Henry Lyte had that very passage in mind when he wrote, **Praise Him for His grace and favor / To His people in distress; / Praise Him still the same as ever, / Slow to chide, and swift to bless . . . Glorious in His faithfulness.**

God’s mercy toward us is the subject of stanza three. If the Lord were to turn away from us, we would not last a moment. We are ever so weak and ever so frail, but a bruised reed He does not break and a faintly burning wick He does not snuff out! **Fatherlike He tends and spares us; / Well our feeble frame He knows; / In His hand He gently bears us, / Rescues us from all our foes.**

Finally, God’s mercy and love toward us is unchanging. The closing stanza echoes one of the beloved themes from *Abide with Me!* (“O Thou, who changest not . . .”). Never will our Lord fail us! **Alleluia! Frail as summer’s flow’r we flourish, / Blows the wind and it is gone; / But while mortals rise and perish / God endures unchanging on.**

Such a mighty text of worship and praise deserves an equally mighty hymn tune. The organist at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, John Goss (1800-1880), does not disappoint us. In 1868 he wrote a melody called *LAUDA ANIMA* to go with these verses. It has been called one of the finest tunes ever to come out of the Victorian era. A musical reviewer in 1869 wrote, “It is at once the most beautiful and dignified hymn tune which has lately come under our notice.” When you hear it, you will find it hard to disagree even 150 years later.



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PORTION

חֵלֶק

The Hebrew word for *portion* occurs frequently in the Old Testament. The concept behind the word is that of division. Certain possessions may be divided up, with portions being given to various people (for example, Genesis 14:24). Or, someone may divide off a piece of land and give a portion to someone else. It is the last of these thoughts on which we focus our attention.

When God established the Old Covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai, the matter of tribal inheritance became an essential part of their lives (consider Numbers 1). As bearers of the Promise, the heritage of the twelve sons of Jacob was linked to the Messiah.

The physical heritage was in the land of Canaan. In the days of Joshua, Canaan was divided by lot among the twelve tribes (Numbers 26:52 and following). Each tribe received its portion. The maintenance of these tribal territories was provided for by law (Numbers 36:6-7). In fact, every fifty years, land that was sold to a different tribe was to return to the original tribe (Leviticus 25). Each tribe was supposed to retain its portion. Within that portion, the integrity of the tribal identity remained constant.

The purpose of this reached far beyond the nation of Israel. It was not merely a matter of tribal pride. God had declared that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. God had declared that He would be a descendant of David. The eyes of the faithful were fixed on Judah and on David's home town of Bethlehem (see Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4; Matthew 2:4-6). Even the great disruption caused by the Babylonian exile would not disrupt God's purpose. After the return from exile, it was the tribe of Judah that reestablished its portion in the Promised Land. All of this and more would have become obscured if the allotted portions of the tribes (especially Judah) had not been maintained.

The outcome is seen in the arrival of the Promised One. His identity as the Messiah was verified, in part, by His lineage. Consider Matthew 1, which presents the legal lineage of Jesus through Joseph, and Luke 3:23 and following, which presents Jesus' biological lineage through Mary.

However, we live in the year 2020 and we are the chosen Israel (see Galatians 3:7-9) under the New Covenant. Everything about this Israel is spiritual, including our portion. Since we are "*joint heirs with Christ*" (Romans 8:16-18), our portion is His portion. Although He was the rightful heir to the throne of David, He claimed no portion in this world (John 18:36). His thoughts are revealed in prophecy: "*O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance.*" (Psalm 16:5-6) As He faced death, Jesus knew that He had nothing in this world. His portion, the inheritance plotted out to Him by measuring lines, was Jehovah. Rising from the dead, Jesus secured that inheritance for us.

Even so, we do not maintain a perpetual, earthly plot of land. Our citizenship and our portion is with God. Therefore, we join Christ in His confidence (see Psalm 73:26; 142:5; Lamentations 3:24). His portion is our portion, for He has redeemed us and made us His own. Truly, the measuring lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, for we have a good inheritance, eternal in the heavens.

"I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (Psalm 73:24-26)



John Pfeiffer is retired from the pastoral and teaching ministry. He is a former president of Immanuel Lutheran College.

Christ-Like Love Is Impartial

“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool,’ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”

(James 2:1-4)

When we gather around the Word and sacraments with fellow Christians or with visitors, how do we regard and treat each other? What about those who have a big bank account compared to those who have little money to their name? Does it make a difference if they are of a different race or nationality than we are? How about their reputation, whether it be good or bad? Because of our fleshly mind, are we not tempted to show favoritism toward those who are of high standing and well-groomed, as opposed to those who are of a low station in life and are shabbily dressed? This can color how we speak to one another, worship in God’s house, and carry out work in the kingdom of God.

Partiality is completely foreign to the way God deals with us and all our fellow humans. God has never “played favorites,” nor will He ever do so. In eternity, when the heavenly Father planned out the salvation of mankind, He didn’t show partiality toward one group of people as opposed to another. The Lord Jesus clearly revealed God’s impartial redeeming love toward sinful mankind as He spoke these well-known words: *“For God so loved the world [not just some of the world!] that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16)

At the early beginnings of the New Testament church, we find the Apostle Peter being sent by the Lord to share the Gospel with a Gentile centurion named Cornelius, and we hear the apostle saying to this Gentile, with whom unbelieving Jews and misguided Christians would have nothing to do, *“In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.”* (Acts 10:34)

During the course of Jesus’ public ministry, the Lord was faulted by the Pharisees for associating with and even eating with “sinners.” On His journey through Jericho, Jesus encountered Zacchaeus, a tax collector. The Jews looked down on Zacchaeus and believed he had no hope of going to heaven. When they saw that Jesus would go and stay at the house of this “lowlife,” they complained, saying, *“He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.”* (Luke 19:7) In response to their objections, Jesus said of Zacchaeus, *“Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* (Luke 19:9-10) Like His Father in heaven, Jesus showed no partiality, whether in His ministry or in carrying out His redemptive work.

Thank God that neither our Father in heaven nor our Savior Jesus Christ was partial, but rather carried out their gracious mission with unconditional love. Had they been minded to show favoritism, we would all be facing eternal condemnation, because there is nothing in any of us meriting God’s favor.

The Lord redeemed us not only for the sake of our everlasting salvation, but also, as His dear children, to reflect His impartial love toward all others. When we have a Christ-like love, it won’t matter to us what others possess, or how they look. They are all precious in the sight of God and therefore are to be spoken to and treated with unconditional love.

May God have mercy upon us and forgive us whenever we “play favorites.” And may He fill our hearts with a Christ-like, impartial love!



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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.

The Most Responsibility



To point out the heavy responsibility that comes with the public ministry might, at first, seem to accomplish the opposite of our goal in this series. After all, who wants more responsibility? With responsibility comes much agonizing, wrestling, and often conflict. No pastor or Christian teacher who seeks to serve the Lord faithfully is unfamiliar with sleepless nights or a guilty conscience precisely because we all know that we, like the Apostles, are insufficient to carry out perfectly the responsibilities to which we are called (see 2 Corinthians 2:16).

It has been said, quite accurately, that a pastor or Christian teacher must wear many hats. Called servants of Christ often find themselves needing to handle minor building repairs, provide taxi services, learn and apply new technologies, maintain lawns, recognize both health and mental disorders, and wear a myriad of other “hats” in the course of their work—all of which add more responsibility. Some of these might sound appealing to you, and you may be tempted to think that the ministry sounds enjoyable and so you should pursue it. A word of caution is in order, though: the public ministry is not for the enjoyment of those in it. It is rather for the purpose of “equipping the saints for the work of ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12), “to care for the Church of God which He obtained with His own blood” (Acts 20:28), and to “watch out for your (individual believers’) souls as those who will have to give an account” (Hebrews 13:17). This is the true responsibility of the called servant, and it is the most responsibility anyone can have.

There are, of course, others who also have that same responsibility—parents immediately come to mind. So

when we say that those in the public ministry have the most responsibility, we aren’t comparing their responsibility to a father’s responsibility to instruct and train up his children in the fear of the Lord or to a mother’s responsibility to nurture and, from childhood, to make known to her children the Holy Scriptures which are able to make them wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Instead, all we mean is that there is no higher responsibility than to provide for the spiritual instruction, discipline, and care of Jesus’ saints.

This heavy responsibility is fulfilled in one way only, which is by teaching and preaching the Word of Jesus. It is fulfilled by exposing sin through the right teaching of the Law and by proclaiming also the Gospel of God’s grace and forgiveness through Christ to those who repent. In that sense, it is a simple responsibility—but simple does not mean easy or light. It is still a heavy responsibility that the Lord desires we take seriously for the sake of those to whom we minister. Paul reminds us pointedly, “*It is required of stewards that they be found faithful.*” (1 Cor. 4:2)

It is the corruption of sin at work in us that would lead us to shirk such a responsibility. This is a constant danger and a constant temptation for all of us in the ministry. This is why the pastor and Christian teacher also have to apply that Law and Gospel to themselves. And when we fail and then repent of our irresponsible behavior or attitudes, we find a forgiving Savior Who, as He did with Peter, encourages us again, “*Feed My sheep*” (John 21:17), and assures us that in doing so we will save both ourselves and our hearers (see 1 Timothy 4:16).



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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.

The Ebionite Error

Humanly speaking, the perfect union of God and man in Christ Jesus is an unbelievable truth, because it defies our limited reason and normal expectations. Yet, this truth is fully revealed in Scripture. For example, Paul wrote, *“in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”* (Colossians 2:9)

The Ebionite error was foremost a denial of Jesus’ divinity, but also a clinging to Old Testament Law.

Ebionite is derived from a Hebrew word which means “needy, poor.” There are several explanations for this name, but the Ebionites were, in fact, often poor.

Ebionism arose uniquely within Jewish Christianity, included very few Gentiles, and was largely found in Palestine and the surrounding regions, but did extend even as far as Rome.

Its earliest beginnings were among the Judaizers, whose deceptive work began to pull the Galatian Christians back to the Law for salvation. This prompted Paul to write, *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel. . . . If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”* (Galatians 1:6, 2:21)

The Judaizers’ error of Paul’s time (1st century) blossomed into full Ebionism by the early 2nd century. At that time Justin Martyr (100-165) wrote that there were those among the Jewish Christians who confessed that Jesus was Christ, but maintained that He had two human parents. Hippolytus of Rome (170-235) explained that the Ebionites believed that Jesus *became* Christ by practicing the Law. Ebionism continued into the fourth century but then disappeared.

The Ebionites believed that the Law of Moses was universal, forever valid, and therefore binding on all Christians. This is true of God’s moral law (the Ten Commandments), but the ceremonial law was no longer binding once Jesus fulfilled it. The Ebionites denounced the Apostle Paul as a heretic whose epistles should be discarded because he proclaimed the liberty that is ours through Christ (Colossians 2:16).

Ebionites believed that Jesus was the Messiah—a human,

Law-oriented, and earthly messiah—not the incarnate Son of God and Deliverer from sin Whom God had promised. They further believed that Christ would return to begin a glorious messianic millennial reign in Jerusalem.

Ebionism is gone, but its false teachings remain and are just as deadly to souls today. Naturally, non-Christians deny the divinity of Jesus, but the Ebionite voices of error also echo within Christendom.

Many Christian churches—even Lutheran churches—have succumbed to the temptation of raising human reason above God’s truth and now deny the virgin birth just as the Ebionites did. If there is no virgin birth, Jesus is a son of two sinful human beings, only man, not the Son of God, and completely unable to save sinners. If this is true, the Gospel is gone, and there is no good news for sinners.

The Ebionites’ practice of mixing Mosaic Law into the Gospel created a false view of the Messiah. Their messiah was merely a wise prophet, an excellent teacher, and a perfect example of how to live according to the Law. Sadly, Christianity today is frequently made into a similar message, and messianic hopes are diluted to make Jesus only a super-example of love, community kindness, and good works.

We sinners need a Savior, not merely an example. We need the God-Man Who could be placed under God’s Law and keep it perfectly, Who could lay down a life so perfect that it would atone for the sins of all sinners. We need to stand in *His* righteousness on the Last Day so that we hear, *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”* (Matthew 25:34)

We need the true Jesus. We need Him Whose Word drowns out the echoes of false teaching and gives genuine hope and eternal life. *“There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*

(Acts 4:12)

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Resurrection Lutheran Church Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Our gracious God has been with and remains with Resurrection Lutheran Church in Calgary. Calgary is a city of 1.5 million people (1950 population—133,073). It is the fourth-largest city in Canada, lying some two hundred miles north of the Canadian border with Montana.

Calgary is the oil and natural gas center of Canada, with many head offices downtown. Over the last few years, this sector of the economy has been affected by low prices and lack of pipeline capacity. Agriculture and the fact of Calgary's being a major rail center also play an important part in the economic life of the city and province.

Calgary hosted the 1988 Winter Olympics. It is home to the Calgary Stampede, a famous rodeo and festival which normally takes place every year in early July, though this year it had to be cancelled due to COVID-19.

Calgary is located some 80 miles east of Banff and 115 miles from Lake Louise (both in Alberta), which are some of God's most beautiful sites in the Canadian Rockies.

Many of the founding members of Resurrection came from German-speaking parts of Romania and eastern Europe. One of the men, whom our Lord called home some years ago, served in the Second World War on a German destroyer which was sunk by the Allies early in the war. He spent the remainder of the conflict in a French concentration camp. After the war ended he and his family came to Canada in search of a better life.



Resurrection Lutheran started out as a German-speaking congregation. Worship, Bible class, and Sunday school were held in German. Later, English services and other English activities were begun. At more recent Christmas Eve worship services, we had the lessons read in German, Swedish, and English by laymen. Pastor Steven Karp served at Resurrection for many years.

Over the years at Resurrection, one of the major emphases has been to build up the church library. There are Bible commentaries, devotional books, books on creation/evolution, children's books, books on the Reformation, and so on. We also have added DVD's on many different Christian topics, and CD's of Christian music. We still have material on cassette tapes that see good use. This has served as a great blessing to the members and friends



of the congregation, enriching their Christian knowledge and strengthening their faith in Christ Jesus. This has also helped members feel more confident in speaking to others about Christ and what He means to them. It also helps them offer Christian support and encouragement to one another, as well as to family and friends. During this present time with COVID-19, the library has been especially well used. We have dropped off material at the homes of members and friends, and they have found that a real blessing.

We also make available to members and friends of the congregation tracts, booklets, and pamphlets, along with weekly devotions.

Over the years, Resurrection has held Saturday school, Sunday school, "Christmas for Kids," and "Easter for Kids." We have hosted grief seminars as well as other seminars and workshops on various Christian topics. These have given us many opportunities to speak of the love of God in Christ Jesus, to answer questions which people have about the Christian faith, and to introduce young and old to Him Who died and rose for them.

For many years we have distributed flyers in various neighborhoods around the church, telling of upcoming events. Canvassing efforts have given us opportunities to tell of Christ, and to invite people to the activities at Resurrection.

Our website, designed and maintained by Ben Reim, posts the weekly sermon and other information. In addition, weekly devotions and other materials are emailed or mailed to people in Florida, Georgia, Arizona, and Tennessee in

the United States, as well as to people in other parts of Alberta and in the province of Ontario, Canada.

What are our plans for the future? As Calgary is a large city with many new neighborhoods, we would like to begin Bible Studies in these areas. Our plan is to canvass an area in an effort to gather a group that would be interested in such a study. We continue to pray that God the Holy Spirit would open hearts and homes to hear His Word of life.

I also have the call to serve Grace Lutheran Church in Live Oak, Florida. Currently we alternate, serving about three months at each location.

In both congregations we have dedicated laymen who lead the services when I am serving the other congregation. We thank God for these men and indeed for all the members of the two congregations who are willing to be served in this way. Yes, God continues to bless the preaching of His Word so that people are brought to faith in Christ and continue to confess Him as their Savior and Lord. We are also thankful to our gracious God for Pastor David Reim of St. Paul, Vernon, British Columbia, for helping at Resurrection on occasion when I am in Florida.

Thank you for this opportunity to tell you a little about God's work at Resurrection Lutheran in Calgary, Alberta. Please remember the congregations at Resurrection in Calgary, and Grace in Live Oak, in your prayers. Also pray that our Lord would continue to send forth laborers into His harvest.



Douglas Priestap is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Live Oak, Florida, and Resurrection Lutheran Church in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Meet Pastor Monotosh Banarjee and the Bangladesh Lutheran Church Mission

With President Eichstadt's recent declaration of fellowship between the CLC and the Bangladesh Lutheran Church Mission (BLCM), I would like to introduce Pastor Monotosh Banarjee to you, and describe our Savior's work in uniting us in God-pleasing fellowship and partnership in spreading the Gospel.

Bangladesh is a relatively small country in South Asia with a very large population. It ranks as the eighth-most-populated country in the world, with a population of over 161 million. In terms of landmass, it ranks ninety-second. With much of the southern portions of the country being made up of uninhabitable lowlands, river delta areas, the world's largest mangrove forest, and the Bay of Bengal, this makes Bangladesh one of the world's most densely populated countries.

Islam, adhered to by nearly 90% of the population, is the officially designated state religion of Bangladesh. Hinduism and Buddhism make up approximately 9% of the population. Christianity and tribal religions make up the other 1%, with Christianity representing only .03%.

It is in this predominantly Muslim nation that the Lord has opened a door of opportunity for us to assist in proclaiming the truths of His saving Word!

In 2016 Pastor Monotosh Banarjee found the Church of the Lutheran Confession on the internet. His initial email to President Eichstadt indicated that he was looking for fellowship and additional training in God's Word. At President Eichstadt's request, I began correspondence with an email requesting more information about his background, affiliations with other church groups or organizations, and his reasons for seeking a relationship with the CLC. Three years of regular correspondence took us through studies of basic Christian theology and the doctrine of the CLC. We agreed that it was necessary to be united in doctrine before beginning work together in God's kingdom.

In early 2019, Board of Missions Chairman Joel Krafft and I made a trip to Bangladesh to visit Pastor Banarjee, and to



Above, Pastor Banarjee and family; right, Board of Missions Chairman Joel Krafft receives a child's gift; top right, Pastor David Reim and ladies of the BLCM.

see firsthand the work that he was doing. The visit went well, and encouraging reports were sent to President Eichstadt. With the president's approval, correspondence and online theological studies continued. In January of 2020, Pastor David Reim, having been appointed by President Eichstadt to represent the CLC for a colloquy, accompanied me for a second visit to Bangladesh. Following the colloquy and visit, both Pastor Reim and I gave favorable reports to President Eichstadt, recommending a declaration of fellowship.

Our Savior was active in Pastor Banarjee's life long before anyone in the CLC knew of him. He was born into a Hindu family and was raised to worship idols. That is, until a seventh-grade classmate first told him about Jesus. He was intrigued but didn't quite know what to think or how to find out more. After he was given a New Testament by his classmate, he hid it from his family and began to read it whenever he could find a private place where he would not be discovered. As he read and learned the stories of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, he was impressed. But he was also very confused, because what this Bible said about Jesus was nothing like the idolatry that he had been taught. It wasn't until a few years later that the Holy Spirit worked



to bear; but God used these earthly struggles to work a strong desire in him to serve the Lord. It was love for Jesus, and for his own family who were lost in unbelief, that sharpened his desire to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He eventually enrolled in a non-denominational Bible school. It was there that he was introduced to the teachings of Martin Luther and the Reformation. While he was exposed to the teachings of many different denominations, it was Lutheran theology that rang true and that agreed with what he was reading in Scripture. He became convinced that Luther's theology was Biblical theology. He

began to look for a Lutheran church to join but wasn't able to find one. In 2009 he received a Bachelor of Theology degree from the Bangladesh College of Theology in Dhaka and started the Bangladesh Lutheran Church Mission.

The BLCM has grown to fourteen congregations and six schools in eight districts. Most of the fourteen-hundred BLCM believers are converted from Hinduism. Pastor Banarjee spends most of his time traveling throughout Bangladesh to visit and provide the Gospel in Word and sacrament to the congregations of the BLCM. Recently he began gathering the elders and school teachers in the various districts to provide Bible training. Having translated many of the CLC online theological studies that he has completed, he is using these lessons to train more faithful preachers and teachers of God's saving Word.

With prayers of thanksgiving to our Lord for the proclamation of the Gospel in Bangladesh, and for the privilege of sharing in this work, we ask for the Lord's blessings on our fellowship with Pastor Banarjee and our brothers and sisters in Christ of the BLCM.

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



faith in his heart. This saving faith led him to repent of his sins and trust in Jesus Christ alone for forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life.

In Bangladesh, those who convert to another religion are required by law to file an affidavit with the district judicial court stating that they were not coerced or bribed to convert. After Banarjee filed the required affidavit, he was forced to leave his home and family. With nothing but a few coins in his pocket, he made his way to the big capital city of Dhaka, where he lived on the streets for three months with very little food or other provision. In 1999 he was taken in by a Christian family and was baptized. That same year he married a Christian girl named Elizabeth. The Lord continued to strengthen his faith over the next year, and in 2000, he and his wife began taking classes at a Bible School. In 2003 he heard from his family for the first time in many years. His brothers had sent word that his mother was very sick and he should come to visit. When he arrived he found out that his mother was fine. The message had been a ploy to try to get him to reject Christianity. When he refused, his brothers beat him, locked him in a small building, and denied him food and water. Finally, after three days, his mother intervened, but he was not allowed to stay.

The persecution that he endured from his family, along with many other hardships during these years, was difficult

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS AUGUST 2020

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
Aug 1	WS 795	Daniel 12:1-13	What comfort we have in the promise of our resurrections! “You will rest, and then at the end of days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”
Aug 3	TLH 508	Acts 16:6-15	The Holy Spirit takes an active role in the spreading of the Gospel.
Aug 4	TLH 382	2 Samuel 20:1-13	Although Joab was loyal to King David, he was also ruthless and vindictive toward his enemies (or those he perceived as his enemies), as seen here in the murder of Amasa. David would not forget.
Aug 5	TLH 359 (LSB 873)	2 Samuel 20:14-26	Again Joab went too far and planned to destroy a whole city to take one man. He was finally stopped by a wise woman’s counsel. Do we ever go too far under the guise of “righteousness”?
Aug 6	TLH 392; LSB 712	2 Samuel 22:1-20	How could David say God “delighted” in him? The same way we can: on account of Jesus Christ and His rescue of us from our sins.
Aug 7	TLH 391	Acts 16:16-34	The jailer was “filled with joy” that he and his family had come to faith in Christ. That’s what the Gospel does! It gives us joy!
Aug 8	TLH 394 (LSB 702)	2 Samuel 22:21-37	David showed he had faith in God by walking in His ways, and God helped him as He helps all His faithful children.
Aug 10	WS 746 (LSB 504)	2 Samuel 22:38-51	It was the Lord who gave David his victories, using them to accomplish His purposes. David knew too that the victories were not his, but the Lord’s. Isn’t it the same with our victories too?
Aug 11	TLH 13; LSB 738	2 Samuel 23:1-7	David’s last words acknowledge that God is the author of the Bible and that God’s Gospel promises to us are everlasting and certain.
Aug 12	WS 771 (LSB 833)	Acts 17:1-15	Like a sower scattering his seed, Paul kept spreading the Gospel whether his audiences received it or not.
Aug 13	TLH 308; LSB 620	2 Samuel 24:1-10	David’s last words were admirable, but some of his last works were not. With sinful pride he ordered a review of his army’s strength (even Joab questioned it). In faith, however, he repented and sought the Lord.
Aug 14	WS 782 (LSB 726)	2 Samuel 24:11-17	David wisely allowed the Lord to manage the consequences of his sin, thus resting his hope on the Lord’s mercy—a good place to rest our hope too.
Aug 15	TLH 438	2 Samuel 24:18-25	David insisted on giving to the Lord from his own wealth rather than offering someone else’s donation on his behalf. Doesn’t that just seem like the way an offering to the Lord should be?
Aug 17	TLH 193 (LSB 469)	Acts 17:16-34	Some consider the resurrection of Jesus an impossibility, but for us it is the foundation of our faith and the basis of all of our teaching.
Aug 18	TLH 514 (LSB 765)	1 Kings 1:5-27	As David neared death, another struggle for his throne erupted. The Lord used His prophet Nathan to ensure that Solomon would reign in David’s place rather than Adonijah.
Aug 19	WS 701 (LSB 343)	1 Kings 1:28-40	One Christian writer remarked, “The anointing of Solomon is a type of the anointing of that greater Son of David, Jesus Christ, whom the Lord has set as His King on His holy hill Zion.”
Aug 20	TLH 232; LSB 501	Acts 18:19-28	After Priscilla and Aquila gave some supplementary training to Apollos, he went out to do important work in Achaia, preaching from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.
Aug 21	TLH 18; LSB 337	1 Kings 2:13-46	Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei were put to death for their evil deeds against the Lord’s chosen kings, and Solomon’s rule was firmly established.
Aug 22	TLH 358	1 Kings 3:1-15	What is greater than wealth? We learn here that wisdom is a higher treasure. Of great importance too is to note that Solomon’s wisdom was from the Lord, not from himself.
Aug 24	TLH 513	Acts 20:1-3	The Gospel is a message of encouragement.
Aug 25	TLH 38 (LSB 794)	1 Kings 4:20-34	The Lord brought peace and prosperity to both king and people during Solomon’s reign. This gave the Israelites an opportunity to direct their hearts toward God and delight His mercy.
Aug 26	TLH 580	1 Kings 5:1-18	We see an example of Solomon’s wisdom in action when he promoted peaceful relations with Israel’s neighbors. At the same time he would build the Lord’s temple. What a fine king!
Aug 27	TLH 99	Acts 22:1-21	Paul showed that he wasn’t a troublemaker out to destroy the religion of the Jews, but by the Lord’s grace he had come to understand that Christ was the fulfillment of everything their Scriptures taught.
Aug 28	TLH 639	1 Kings 6:1-38	While our church buildings are not as extravagant as Solomon’s, there is something to be said for putting our best efforts into our houses of worship. Don’t we love the place where His glory dwells?
Aug 29	TLH 1 (LSB 901)	1 Kings 8:1-21	Solomon dedicated the temple by praising the Lord’s leadership, His choices, and His faithfulness to His promises.
Aug 31	TLH 466 (LSB 909)	1 Kings 8:22-61	Solomon’s beautiful prayer can be summarized like this: “Oh Lord, keep on being our Lord!”

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

ILC Gets a New Professor

In March, Pastor Mark Weis accepted the call to serve as a professor at Immanuel. The Spokesman caught up with him earlier this month as he was preparing to move to Eau Claire and take up his new duties.

LS: You're a Florida native. Tell us about your background, family, and your introduction to the CLC.

MW: I was born in Tampa, Florida and grew up in Winter Haven, where I attended Immanuel Lutheran Church and its Christian day school. My family left the Missouri Synod in 1951, and in 1957, along with a few others, became founding members of Immanuel Lutheran in Winter Haven. When Immanuel congregation joined the CLC in 1960, I was only seven. So, I've grown up in the CLC.

LS: You attended ILC yourself in the 1970's. What do you remember about those days, and how does that experience color your thinking as you prepare to return to ILC as a professor?

MW: I attended ILC from 1968 to 1978. Looking back, those were among the best years of my life. Not simply because of the long-time friends I made, but also because of the second-to-none education I received: a quality education grounded in the Word of God. I have such wonderful memories of professors, classes, basketball, choir and tour choir, field day, and playing my guitar at banquet . . . when I couldn't quite manage to sing the final high note of a song. For me, returning to ILC is like going full circle. And I am truly honored to give back to the school that gave me so much.

LS: What parishes did you serve following your graduation from Immanuel Lutheran Seminary? How did those places—and your pastoral ministry—leave their mark on you?

MW: My first congregations were in Minnesota—at Mt. Olive Lutheran and St. Paul Lutheran in Detroit Lakes and Ponsford, respectively. Next I pastored St. Stephen Lutheran in Hayward, California. After nine years, I left the ministry and spent the next twenty or so years in corporate America, working in marketing and marketing communications. After three downsizings, I moved back to my home-state of Florida in 2010, where I was asked to temporarily pastor a small CLC congregation in North Port. Eventually, I



realized that God, in His grace, was calling me back into the public ministry, which had always been my first love. I continued to pastor the south Florida congregation until 2017, when I was called to serve St. Luke's Lutheran in Lemmon, South Dakota. In every congregation I've served, from first to last,

I've met dear Christian people whose faith has encouraged me, and whose understanding of the Scriptures has helped to enhance my own understanding. I'm grateful to God for allowing me to serve them all.

LS: What skills and insights from your secular career do you bring to your new calling as a teacher?

MW: As mentioned above, I worked primarily in the field of marketing for various companies, some quite large like Time Warner. In this capacity, I learned multiple software programs, honed commercial writing and design skills, and managed large departments and budgets. Time, budgetary, and people management are important skills in any environment. And working in the secular world gave me deeper insight into the type of problems people face on a daily basis. I also spent three years in the Florida Public School System, working with special needs students—a tremendously rewarding experience.

LS: The call to serve as an instructor at ILC is challenging enough, but you've also accepted the position of Dean of Students. What are your thoughts about a position which, more than any other, involves such a constant and personal interaction with the students?

MW: I realized the Dean of Students role would be challenging in itself, especially when transitioning to a teaching role and learning new curricula. But I accepted the position because I truly care about ILC and its students. I want to be there for them and, with God's help, make a difference in their lives. Nothing would please me more than to help students have the same happy, meaningful experience I did as a student at ILC.

SEEN IN PASSING

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

The Genocide No One Talks About.

Since the last change in government in 2015, a wave of violence has swept Nigeria, particularly in its northern regions, and particularly directed against the Christian minority. Yet the appalling atrocities have gone almost unreported in western media. According to the organization Genocide Watch, "350 Nigerian Christians were massacred in the first two months of 2020. Over 11,500 Christians have been murdered since June 2015. Four to five million Christians are displaced. 2000 churches were destroyed. Nigeria has become a killing field of defenseless Christians. Reliable sources show that between 11,500 and 12,000 Christians have been massacred since June 2015 when the Buhari Government of Nigeria came to power. Jihadist Fulani Herdsmen accounted for 7,400 murders of Christians. Boko Haram committed 4,000 killings of Christians. 'Highway Bandits' who separated Christians from Muslims on buses and then killed the Christians committed over 200 murders." Umeagbalasi, Emeka. "Nigeria Is A Killing Field Of Defenseless Christians." *Alerts*. GenocideWatch.com, 13 Apr. 2020. Web. 10 Jun. 2020.

80-Yr-Old Former Nun Serves Seventeen Months After Nuclear Protest.

Elizabeth McAlister, a former nun with the Catholic order The Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, was sentenced in June to time served over a protest action against the Kings Bay Naval Base in St. Marys, Georgia. In April of 2018, McAlister and six others broke into the base, which houses nuclear submarines. They poured blood on a Navy insignia affixed to a wall, spray painted anti-war slogans on the walkway, and damaged a nuclear arms statuery with hammers. The seven were charged with conspiracy, destruction of property, depredation of property, and trespassing. McAlister refused bail and remained in jail for

seventeen months. She will be on probation for three years. Additionally, she and the others must pay monthly restitution until the estimated \$33,500 damage is recouped. Shimron,

Jonat. "Judge sentences 80-year-old Catholic activist for breaking into nuclear submarine base." *News*. ReligionNews.com, 8 Jun. 2020. Web. 10 Jun. 2020.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Left to right: Pastors Paul Krause and Cory Drehle, Pastors Emeritus John Klatt and Mark Gurath, congregational president Chris Sumej.

INSTALLATION

In accord with our usage and order, Cory Drehle, who was called by Berea Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, to be its pastor, was ordained and installed on June 14, 2020. Also participating in the service were Pastors Emeritus John Klatt and Mark Gurath, and congregational president Chris Sumej.

—Pastor Paul Krause.

TEACHERS' CONFERENCE POSTPONED

It is our prayer that this message finds everyone in good health and spirits while enjoying a little of summer break. The challenges and uncertainties brought upon by Covid-19 this spring coupled with the need for making and setting plans for fall, and after consultation with Messiah's Church Council and the conference's Chairman Kok, it has been decided to postpone the Fall 2020 CLC Teachers' Conference until October 20-22, 2021, at Messiah Lutheran School, Hales Corners.

—Teacher Ted Quade