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# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



*For You formed my inward parts;  
You knitted me together  
in my mother's womb.*

*—Psalm 139:13 (ESV)*



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# The Fundamental Value of Human Life

*“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.”*  
(Psalms 127:3-5)

Society values human life; examples are everywhere. Perplexing, then, isn't it, that while so much effort is spent protecting life, millions of unborn babies have been killed intentionally by abortion? How can this be?

Yes, how can this be happening in a country where laws limiting abortion were in place by 1860, and where by the 1900's abortion, with some exceptions, was illegal in every state? A greater question would be this: Since God has commanded, *“You shall not murder,”* (Exodus 20:13) how can abortion be considered a right or an option?

The Supreme Court, in the 1973 case of *Roe v. Wade*, declared abortion to be a constitutional right, guaranteeing federal protection for abortion. A 2022 Supreme Court ruling overturned *Roe v. Wade*, making each state responsible for its own abortion laws. Twenty-one states continue to protect abortion access.

Some people support abortion when it's performed in the early stages of pregnancy, thinking a certain level of development has to be reached before there's life or “humanness” that warrants protection. But the Bible says, *“Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.”* (Psalm 139:16 NIV) In Jeremiah 1:5 we read, *“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you.”* Life begins at conception. Dr. Tommy Mitchell in *The New Answers Book 2* writes: “These milestones in zygote, blastocyst, embryonic, and fetal development are simply descriptions of anatomy, not hurdles met in the test of humanness.”

Again, how can society value human life, but not the life of an unborn baby? In Mark 12:30, Jesus tells us, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”* We love God with “all our mind” when we think thoughts that are true, noble and just, pure, lovely, virtuous, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

Modern day intellectual Thomas Sowell made this statement—not as a compliment, but as a criticism: “The ability of the human mind to rationalize is phenomenal.” We rationalize to get what we want.



Witness these rationalizations: In the Garden of Eden, the devil tempted Eve. Instead of loving God with all her mind, Eve questioned His command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We are shown how she rationalized: *“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food . . . and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.”* (Genesis 3:6) Later in the Old Testament, God commanded King Saul to attack Amalek and *“utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them.”* (1

Samuel 15:3) But Saul and the Israelites did not love God with “all their mind.” Instead, they rationalized that it would be better to save the finer sheep and oxen and sacrifice them to the Lord.

It's easy to understand “You shall not murder,” but sadly, the human mind can rationalize and reject that command of God just as easily as “Do not eat of the tree,” and, “Destroy all that they have.”

So, that is how it happens. Instead of loving God and promoting the health of both the mother and the baby during the entire pregnancy and delivery, we hear a list of rationalized “priorities” such as “a woman's health issue,” “reproductive rights,” “reproductive freedom,” “procreative autonomy,” “personal reproductive decisions,” “pro-choice,” and “reproductive decision making.” Don't be deceived by these noble-sounding expressions when they are being used as euphemisms to allow for the killing of unborn babies.

*Dear Heavenly Father, we have not loved You with all our heart, soul, mind, and might. We have sinned as individuals and as a nation by disobeying Your commands. We have rationalized in order to do the things our sinful flesh prefers. But we are sorry for our sins. Please forgive us for Jesus' sake. Help us use our intellect to serve You. Move our nation and all of the states to adopt a pro-life stance, protecting the unborn. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.*



**Karl Olmanson** is a retired teacher. He lives in Kasota, Minnesota.

# The Most Important Gift

“We three kings of Orient are . . .” is the opening line of a beloved Epiphany carol from the mid-nineteenth century. The problem is, we aren’t sure how many wise men there were, nor do we know if they had royal status, nor that they were present at Jesus’ manger.



We do know that they were from the east. I’m not just bursting bubbles here. We know it is important in matters of faith to separate fact from fiction, and even fact from speculation. We are told the accounts recorded in Scriptures are for our learning and understanding (Romans 15:4). So we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us through the journey of the wise men.

Who were these men who journeyed hundreds, if not thousands of miles to worship our Savior and deliver priceless gifts? The account of the wise men is recorded only in the Gospel of Matthew, but we need to go further back than this to find their origins. The earliest Greek translations of Daniel use the same term to describe Daniel as is used of our gentlemen from the east—the term *magi*. Daniel was made chief of the *magi*, or wise men, during the Babylonian captivity, due to his God-given ability to interpret dreams. Others among the *magi* were astrologers, soothsayers, and masters of various arts.

We also know that Daniel and his friends were not shy about proclaiming their faith in the true God of Israel. The kings Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius—as well as the other wise men—heard from Daniel that it was the Lord Who gave the abilities he possessed. It is even possible that our “wise men” from Matthew are the heirs of Daniel’s faithfulness to God and His Word several generations later. These men knew that the star they had observed would lead them to their Savior.

We don’t know what planning was required to undertake such a trip. How many beasts of burden, servants, and/or guards were required is unknown. What is known is that the wise men created a great stir when they arrived in the capital city of Jerusalem. “All Jerusalem” was troubled along with

King Herod when the Magi stated they had come to worship the king of the Jews Who had recently been born. The Bible scholars were able to point the Gentile visitors in the right direction, to Bethlehem.

There has been much speculation about the three gifts of the

wise men. Gold is thought of as a gift fit for a king. A very fitting gift to Jesus, the King of Kings! Frankincense was prescribed by God to be burned in the temple. The rising aroma represented the people’s prayers to God. It is felt that this gift points to Jesus’ deity. Myrrh was used in the burial process. This gift appears to look ahead to Jesus’ suffering and death to pay for the sins of all mankind. These were gifts of great value, very helpful for a family soon to be on the run in a foreign land.

However, the first and most important gift of the wise men should not be overlooked. “*And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him.*” (Matthew 2:11 ESV) What an act of faith! To fall to their knees and worship this young child! This was not simply a famous individual or future leader; this was their Lord God and Savior. The planning, the traveling, the expense, all became worthwhile as they met their Savior face to face.

What gift does God desire from you? Your heart is the gift that Christ requires. The broken and contrite heart will never be despised by the Savior (Psalm 51:17). The trinkets which we give as offerings are mere expressions of our love and appreciation of all that He has done for us.

Seek Him while He may be found and spare no expense to keep Him the center of your heart.



**David W. Bernthal** is a retired teacher. He lives in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

## HYMN OF THE WEEK PLAN

The Lutheran church enjoys a long tradition of identifying one “Hymn of the Week” for every Sunday of the church year. Such a hymn should reflect the unifying theme of the service, and is intended to be sung on that Sunday every year. In this series, Pastor Nathanael Mayhew gives us a brief overview of the Hymns of the Week for the coming month.

# INTRODUCING THE *Hymn of the Week*

## January (Christmas and Epiphany)

**T**he Season of Christmas (continued) Although the month of December has ended, the season of Christmas continues. Christmas is not just a one-day celebration.

- ♦ **January 1** The ancient church gathered on the first day of the year, not to celebrate a new year, but to continue the celebration of Christmas with the Festival of the Circumcision and Naming of the Christ-Child. This service is still full of meaning for us today as it focuses on the meaning of the name *Jesus* and that He was placed under the Law for sinners. The hymn for this festival is “**Jesus! Name of Wondrous Love**” (TLH 114; LSB 900), which reviews why the name *Jesus* was given to the Christ-Child, and how He accomplished salvation for fallen humanity.
- ♦ **January 5** At first it might seem strange to sing a Reformation hymn during Christmas. But when we realize that the Second Sunday after Christmas focuses on God’s protection of His Son, and those who are His children by faith, the connection becomes more clear. “**Thine Honor Save, O Christ, Our Lord**” (TLH 265) is a prayer to our Savior to defend His church from its spiritual enemies.

**The Season of Epiphany** *Epiphany* is a Greek word which means “to show, reveal, or make manifest.” During the season of Epiphany, we celebrate the revelation of Jesus as true God. Epiphany focuses on the Baby in Bethlehem Who reveals Himself as the Savior of the world, Who comes with power and loving concern for sinners, a Savior Who is both true God and true Man, made under the Law for us.

- ♦ **January 6** The Festival of Epiphany is celebrated on the twelfth day of Christmas, January 6th. On this day we contemplate the journey of the Wise Men to visit the Savior of all people. In Nicolai’s hymn “**How Lovely Shines the Morning Star**” (TLH 343; LSB 395), we confess Jesus as the God-Man and Savior of all. Take note

of the constant imagery of light, which reminds us of the star and reinforces one of the major themes of Epiphany.

- ♦ **January 12** On the First Sunday after Epiphany, we reflect on Jesus, the Son of God, as He appears in His Father’s house as a twelve-year-old boy. Although He was “*found in appearance as a man,*” (Philippians 2:8) yet God’s glory was manifested in Him. The hymn for this Sunday is “**Within the Father’s House**” (TLH 133; LSB 410), which reminds us that there are things hidden from mankind which can only be known through the revelation of God in His Word.
- ♦ **January 19** The revelation of God’s glory in Jesus through His first miracle is the focus of the Second Sunday after Epiphany. The miracles of Jesus remind us of God’s love for us and assure us of His power over every trial we might face in this life. Wordsworth’s “**Songs of Thankfulness and Praise**” (TLH 134; LSB 394) reviews the entire season of Epiphany and concludes by looking ahead to Christ’s ultimate revelation on Judgment Day. What joy is ours through Christ’s powerful work for sinners!
- ♦ **January 26** Jesus demonstrates His great love for us in our need and suffering. On the Third Sunday after Epiphany, we contemplate other miracles which Jesus performed, such as His healing of the sick. Yet Jesus was not the Savior of the body alone. He came to save both our body and soul for eternity. In our hymn of the week, “**All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above**” (TLH 19; LSB 819), we praise the Triune God for His love and power with the confidence that He hears our prayers and delivers us in our time of need!



Nathanael Mayhew is a pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota.

# Growth in Spiritual Fruitfulness

***“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.” (2 Peter 1:5-9)***

**D**uring the course of our physical life from infancy to adulthood, we experience a gradual, steady growth physically and mentally. If for some reason our growth is impeded, we have medical professionals check us over in order to discover the problem and have a solution prescribed.

Similarly, our life in Christ Jesus grows from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. If this is not taking place, one may become barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter states in our reading above, *“he who lacks these things [the Christian virtues that are listed here] is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”* (verse 9)

God’s Law is not the solution for this spiritual blindness. The Law commands us to love God and our neighbor. It has no power to produce the sort of Christian virtues that Peter calls upon us to develop. The moral Law serves to expose, convict and condemn us for our failings.

No! It is the use of the powerful Gospel of Christ that motivates us to produce spiritual fruits in ever-increasing measure. The redeeming love of Christ instills love in our hearts so that with God’s help we ever strive to grow in fruitfulness. Our gracious Lord and God not only blesses us with Christian love, but also helps us to grow to Christian maturity.

Let us briefly consider what the Christian virtues Peter lists consist of.

- + **Virtue**—It is being Christ-like in treating others with goodness. The Gospel record abounds in examples of Jesus’ goodness toward those around Him.
- + **Knowledge**—This is a specialized knowledge and interest of Christians in having a good understanding of and special

**It is the use of the powerful Gospel of Christ that motivates us to produce spiritual fruits in ever-increasing measure.**

interest in others.

- + **Self-control**—It is the ability to exercise restraint in holding our fleshly desires in check. Unlike the unbelieving world which gives free reign to their sinful impulses, we want to live a God-pleasing life.
- + **Perseverance**—This is the exercise of patient endurance and steadfastness when we are faced with the trials and tribulations of life.
- + **Godliness**—It is living a life that is in accordance with God’s holy will, and producing good works.

- + **Brotherly kindness**—The transliteration for the Greek word translated here as “brotherly kindness” is *philadelphia*. Jesus said to his disciples on Maundy Thursday concerning brotherly kindness, *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”* (John 13:35)
- + **Love**—This is the *agape* love that we hear so much about in the Gospel of Christ. It is the highest form of love that we are to have and show others. *Agape* love is a self-giving, sacrificial kind of love.

May God in His rich grace keep us from becoming spiritually stunted. Instead, may His redeeming love move us to continue to grow unto spiritual maturity.



**Mark Gullerud** is retired from the pastoral ministry. He lives in Sunnyvale, California.

# Remember the Amalekites?

***“Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.” (Deuteronomy 25:17-19)***

**I**t is imperative that in our preaching, the Gospel must predominate. God is love, after all (1 John 4:8), and He pleads with all to repent and believe on His Son for eternal life (Acts 17:26-27). He would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). But in preaching the whole counsel of God with proper emphasis on the Gospel, we may wrongly neglect to preach God’s wrath and justice as Scripture reveals it to us.

The concern, I’d guess, is that we might frighten someone by our description of God. Yes, to those who oppose the Lord and His will, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Just ask the people of Amalek, who harassed the children of Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 17:8-13). Oh, wait—you can’t. The Lord commanded Israel to blot out their memory, and they did (1 Samuel 15:1-9, 32-33).

How terrible is God’s judgment upon His enemies! But God’s judgment has also declared us, who were God’s enemies by sinful nature, to be completely innocent and holy through Jesus’ saving blood and merit. Yes, God is loving and tender to those who call to Him in repentance. At the same time, He is the Defender (Psalm 5:11), the Avenger (Joel 3:21), and the mighty Victor (Psalm 45:4) of His people over every other power. This is your God: a perfect and patient heavenly Father full of grace and promises for us, while simultaneously being an all-consuming storm of destruction upon any who would stand against Him and His people.

Both aspects of God bring us hope, for He delivers us from enemies within and without. Paul asks in Romans 7:24 (ESV), *“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”* And he immediately answers in

verse 25, *“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”* David asks in Psalm 108:10 (ESV), *“Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?”* And answers in verse 13, *“With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes.”* The mighty Lord God, Who has delivered us from the sin and death that dwelt within us, will also deliver us from the Amalekites of this age so that all the enemies of God who reject His grace and resist His might will, at the Last Day, kneel in defeat. And then we, who have received God’s mercy for Jesus’ sake, will be raised to new life with Him in glory!

## Prayer:

*O mighty and most merciful God, we praise and thank you for delivering us from our enemies: sin, death, and the devil. As you have valiantly won for us the Victor’s crown of everlasting life, so also triumph over every enemy that would stand against You and Your Word to silence us, Your people. May You reign supreme over all Your creation just as surely as we will reign with you in eternity. In Jesus’ Name, Amen!*



**Drew Naumann** is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Spokane, Washington.

## KNOW YOUR BIBLE BOOKS – THE LETTERS OF SAINT PAUL

In this new series we offer brief introductions to the books of the Bible, including background, authorship, content, and application to the lives of today's Christians.

# I Corinthians

## For the Christian Living in a Corrupt Society

**Human Authorship:** St. Paul, who founded the church in Corinth in A.D. 51-53 (see Acts 18:1-9)

**Time of Writing:** A.D. 57 (or perhaps 55), written from Ephesus to the Corinthian congregation

**Major Theme:** The Church's unity, service, and hope is based solely upon Jesus Christ

When you hear “What happens in \_\_\_\_\_ stays in \_\_\_\_\_,” your mind probably fills in the blanks with Vegas. That slogan was created in 2003 by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority to promote Las Vegas as a destination where—by implication—anything goes, with no accountability when you leave. That ethos is also why Las Vegas is often referred to as “Sin City.”

If that advertising slogan had been around in the 1st Century Roman Empire, the place name in the blanks would have been *Corinth*.

From antiquity, Corinth had been a large and important Greek city state. However, the Roman Empire destroyed Greek Corinth in 146 B.C., and Julius Caesar built a Roman colony there a century later. By Paul's day, many of Corinth's inhabitants were veterans from the Roman armies, former slaves, merchants, and a significant number of Jews. The Edict of Claudius sometime around A.D. 49 had expelled all Jews from Rome, and many—such as Aquila and Priscilla—had emigrated to Corinth (Acts 18:1-2). Jews, therefore, made up just one of the many cultures in Corinth.

Situated on the Isthmus of Corinth, the city had two prosperous harbors, one on the eastern sea and one on the west. Commerce from all areas of the Roman world resulted in many different cultural influences. A variety of languages, religions, and customs were influential; and Corinthian society therefore had no social consensus about morality, religious beliefs, or worldview. Composed of people originally from many different nationalities, belief systems, and civilizations, Corinthian society was widely permissive of all types of behavior.

Although most of the larger cities of the Roman Empire were places of general immorality, Corinth was particularly known for its depravity. In the Roman Empire, to call someone a *Corinthian* was an insult, meaning that he was a degenerate. The verb *corinthianize* was slang that meant to patronize a prostitute. The Temple of Aphrodite was in Corinth, and allegedly had a thousand female slaves who served as prostitutes. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Romans from Corinth, and Romans 1:22-32 could very well be used to describe the pervasive immorality he witnessed in Corinth.



It was in this environment that God used Paul to establish a Christian congregation. Paul successfully worked among the Corinthians, both Jews and Gentiles, for a year and a half before leaving to continue his missionary work elsewhere. After his departure, however, errorists in their midst—as well as the pervasive influence of Corinthian society—adversely affected the congregation. Especially troublesome was the divisiveness and disunity among the members. Luther writes, “[Errorists] broke up the unity of the doctrine and caused division among the believers. One claimed to belong to Paul, the other to Apollos; one to Peter, the other to Christ. One wanted circumcision, the other not; one wanted marriage, the other not; one wanted to eat food offered to idols, the other not. Some wanted to be outwardly free . . . and so on. They went so far that one man abused his liberty and married his father's wife, some did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and some thought lightly of the sacrament. . . . Meanwhile they let the main thing drop—namely, that Christ is our salvation, righteousness, and redemption.”

Today we see many of the ungodly characteristics of ancient Corinth here in America. Our society in general cares little for God and His precepts. The upholding of truth and righteousness is mocked and scorned. Even some Christian denominations (thankfully, not the CLC) are permissive or indifferent in both doctrine and practice instead of faithfully proclaiming and practicing the whole counsel of God.

May our gracious God grant that in our “Corinthian America,” we uncompromisingly proclaim His Word alone, and may He strengthen in us unity and hope based solely on Jesus Christ, His son, our Savior. Amen.



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





Professor C. M. Gullerud  
1908-1995

*In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor Emeritus James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Professor C. M. Gullerud (1908-1995) was a former president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod before leaving to help in the formation of the CLC. He served congregations in South Dakota and Minnesota, then was called to his professorship at Immanuel Lutheran College. This article is from the Lutheran Spokesman of September 1960. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.*

## The Clarity of Scripture

*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Psalm 119: 105)*

Our church body has selected the name, “Church of the Lutheran Confession.” Those who joined in the selection of this name were united in the conviction that this shall not be an empty symbol, but shall be an open declaration of steadfast adherence to the principle that Scripture alone is the rule and guide for doctrine and life. This has been and will be the strength of true Lutheranism. The doctrine and practice of a church body, true to the Lutheran confession, is not determined by the resolutions of a synod nor is it established by theological opinions handed down by a seminary faculty. Churches which have become spiritually bankrupt resort, indeed, to various stratagems in order to hold the line in an attempt to maintain at least an outward display of unity.

When God’s Word, as the clear standard and rule, has been sidetracked, there is nothing left but the vain and empty attempts of men to hold together that which has already been rent asunder. In the process, those who accuse others of legalism have themselves become the crassest legalists. Faith in the Gospel as the only unifying force has been lost, while man-made laws and experts’ evaluations become the object of a man’s trust and hope for the future of the church. Under such conditions it is little wonder that organizational strength is held in such high honor that the number one assignment becomes the preservation of the federation.

A departure from God’s Word as a clear guide becomes evident when questions concerning doctrine are shifted from one committee to another, from one forum to another, while the simple “yes” or “no” answer is not forthcoming. A denial of the clearness of Scripture is shown when the refrain is heard, “This Scripture passage does not apply.” And so, while lip service is paid

to sound statements, unscriptural practices are permitted without rebuke or discipline. It is nothing short of an insult to the Holy Name of God! This may be a shocking statement, but it is true.

The Lord God in His goodness and wisdom has given us His Holy Word in order that we might know what we are to believe and what we are to do. To say that this Word is not clear enough for us to know the direction we are to take in a given instance is to accuse God of not being able to cause His Word to be expressed clearly enough for us to follow. God has not only caused His will and counsel to be expressed clearly in every instance, but He has expressed it so that we might know it, believe it, and follow it. It is no mere academic thing when the Apostle Peter, under inspiration of God, says, “*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.*” (2 Peter 1:19)

“We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with (all) teachers, should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament alone, as it is written: *Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*” (Psalm 119:105) (*The Formula of Concord. Epitome. Trig. p. 777.*) God’s Word lights the way for us so that we may clearly see the goal. God’s Word lights the way for us so that the way of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord may not be obscured but may ever stand in the halo of light where shadows shall not fall. God’s Word lights the way for us so that our feet may walk the way of His commandments. “*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*” (1 John 1:5b)

*In this series, those involved with CLC foreign missions profile one aspect of our overseas endeavors.*

# Comfort During Crises

## *An Update from Nepal*

**[Editor: The following is a report about current activities in the Himalayan Church of the Lutheran Confession in Nepal (HCLCN). It is written, in his own words, by the indigenous pastor who is our main contact in Nepal. Names of people and places are being withheld because of the risk of persecution. The report is lightly edited for clarity.]**

**D**ear brothers and sisters in Christ, greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I would like to share about Nepal, and a crisis during last monsoon season. As you know, Nepal is located in the southern part of Asia between the two giant countries China and India. The country's geography is mostly mountainous. Mighty mountains of the Himalayan range run through Nepal. Because of this, the country is physically difficult to traverse. For example, to travel one hundred miles it takes over six hours, which is an average of 16.7 miles an hour. This 16.7 miles per hour is possible when weather conditions and everything is good. During bad weather it gets worse. Poverty and lack of infrastructure makes the living difficult in the country. The country still has a lot to do to provide the basic human rights and basic human needs to its population. As

a citizen of Nepal, I can tell you that there are many areas where people find themselves hopeless, disappointed, and dissatisfied with the government, their decisions, and the administration.

In 2024 Nepal got devastating rain and floods. Kathmandu, the capital of the country, was hit hard. Hundreds of people died in the flood. Every "highway" to Kathmandu was blocked by mud slides. There were a number of Christians who died in the flood as well. The members of the HCLC churches also reported loss of homes, property, cattle, crops, and land by the flood. The churches reported that people were facing need of food and basic supplies for their families. This year's monsoon in Nepal was especially tragic in that the whole country was in crisis, and suffered from floods and landslides almost everywhere. We also heard that in the United States there was a devastating hurricane, Milton, that



Damaged structures and erosion caused by 2024 floods in Nepal



Widespread landslides resulted from the flooding



High-rise apartments threatened by the flooding



A flooded street in Kathmandu, Nepal

caused flooding affecting millions of people.

In different parts of the world, we hear of wars, fights, difficulties, challenges, and danger. The world is not a safe place. In the world people are suffering from hunger, pain, diseases, and death. People are having physical and mental trauma and a lot of cases of depression and anxiety. There are governments and leaders who do not tolerate the Truth. When we look around the world, we see chaos and crisis and we cannot find peace and comfort at all. There is no point to be happy and content. We know the real cause of all these things. It began when the first humans Adam and Eve committed sin at the Garden of Eden.

During the time of crisis, people need more care, comfort and consolation, and company. Even the pastors and leaders in Nepal that are to preach and share the Word of peace and comfort from the Lord had hard times, and several of them shared their stories with us.

Everywhere in the world people are in great need of love, care, and support. We can tell that there is no peace and security in the world, that we cannot rely on the things and materials that humans have created and built. But there is a hope that the Lord provides which has an everlasting effect. Lasting peace, comfort and security are only to be found in the Lord and in His Word. The love that we find in the Lord is the greatest; He cares for us from the time of our conception in the mother's womb. He comforts us with His Word, and He gives us the hope of salvation and

frees from all the sorrows. We thank the Lord Who gave Himself to die on the cross for all the people in the world. His blood has paid the price of sin and its consequences for us. Now the people in Nepal can have this joy too.

As we read in Revelation 21:3-4 “. . . and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (ESV)

This is our hope. We believe that there is eternal peace, comfort, and joy in the Lord, Who is the creator of heavens and earth, Who became a man and lived among us and experienced everything that a man experiences. In the month of December, we celebrate the birth of our Savior with great joy. He is our comforter and our refuge. As Isaiah 12:1 reads, “I will, give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me.” (ESV)

The world is not our home. We are here for short time. In this time, we need love, care, and comfort; and the only sure source of comfort is our Lord Whom we trust.

In this season of celebration, we pray that a great number of Nepali people and more people from all countries may come to know their true Savior. Only in Him we find comfort during crises. Have a blessed Christmas and New Year everyone!

# Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

## *Rapid City, South Dakota*

**W**e preach Christ crucified. Okay, that isn't new. Christ crucified has always been what we've preached here, but we are trying to make that clearer to the world. The most obvious way we've tried to make this clear is by adding our new cross on the exterior of the church. The Lord provided abundant funding that allowed us to do stone work on the front exterior of the church and install a giant metal backlit cross. This is to show our respect and love for our glorious God and His house. It also ensures that people can see that cross all the way in Nebraska (slight exaggeration). What are we? We are a church, and we preach that Christ was slain for the sins of the world, and we want people to know it.

Of course, there are many so-called churches that have beautiful buildings and large crosses, yet Christ crucified is seldom, if ever, really preached in them. While our new backlit cross is the most visible way we are showing our community that we preach Christ crucified, the more important way is by actually preaching Christ crucified. We want the community to see that our church is not just a building with a cross, but a place where Christ's sacrifice is continually preached. Along with our usual Sunday service, we have hosted many seminars over the last couple of years. We pick a topic our members are interested in (and that we think people in the community would be interested in) such as anger management, end-of-life planning, prayer, or getting rid of bitterness. We have advertised these events with flyers and on Facebook. We have encouraged members to invite friends and neighbors. Through these seminars, we've not only provided practical help, but also shared the truth that sets us free—that Christ came into the world to save sinners, among whom we are included.





Sadly, we have not had any walk-in visitors, but our members have greatly appreciated these seminars. We also routinely get friends and family of our members to come to these events. It has been a blessing to be able to share the Law and Gospel with them. We know it is our job to plant and water, but God gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:7). God give us courage and wisdom to find more opportunities to plant and water, while we entrust the increase to Him.

Ellsworth Air Force Base, located just outside Rapid City, is scheduled to receive the next-generation nuclear bomber, the B-21 Raider. Because of this, around ten thousand more service members and their families will be moving to the area in the next few years. Rapid City is already the hottest housing market in the Midwest. Because of this, there are—and will continue to be—many people moving to the

A view from our parking lot of Black Elk Peak, the highest point in the Black Hills. I intend to climb it one day to see if our cross is visible from there.

area. We are looking for more ways to preach Christ crucified to our growing community. We're excited for people to recognize us as a church, but our greatest joy will come when they recognize Christ crucified for their salvation. Christ's death and resurrection offer salvation to all. In every sermon, every teaching, and every outreach effort, this message remains at the heart of who we are and what we are about.



**Aaron Ude** is pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Rapid City, South Dakota.

# “BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JANUARY 2025

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
January 1	TLH 523 / LSB 756	1 Peter 1	Though we endure suffering in this life, we have joy and hope by faith in Jesus Christ. We are called to live lives of holiness.
January 2	TLH 319	Isaiah 57	Isaiah exposes the futility of the idolatry of Israel. At the same time, Isaiah proclaims comfort for the contrite.
January 3	TLH 39 / LSB 790	Isaiah 58	Isaiah condemns the hypocritical fasting of those who continue to live in wickedness. Isaiah promises blessing to those who fast in faithfulness and sincerity.
January 4	TLH 15 / LSB 816	Isaiah 59	Sin has created a barrier between God and man. The Lord will judge His people in righteousness. The good news is that the Lord will provide a Redeemer.
January 6	TLH 498	Isaiah 60	Israel will be glorified in the coming of the Redeemer, and the Lord will be glorified in the righteousness of His people.
January 7	TLH 204 / LSB 487	Exodus 1	Over three hundred years after Israel and his descendants settle in Egypt, a new king rises to power over Egypt. Afraid of the numerous Hebrews, he afflicts them with heavy labor and commands that every male child of the Hebrews be killed.
January 8	TLH 23 / LSB 822	Exodus 2	Moses is born to Hebrew parents, but his life is spared by a shrewd plan. The daughter of Pharaoh raises Moses as her own child. As an adult, Moses kills an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew. Pharaoh plans to kill Moses, and Moses flees for his life to Midian. Moses marries Zipporah, and they have a son.
January 9	TLH 40 / LSB 798	Exodus 3	The Lord appears to Moses in a burning bush and appoints him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan.
January 10	TLH 467 / LSB 645	Haggai 1	The Judean exiles have returned home from Babylon and have rebuilt their houses. Through Haggai the Lord commands them to rebuild the temple. The people obey the Lord and rebuild the temple.
January 11	WS 705 / LSB 338	Haggai 2	The glory of the rebuilt temple cannot compare to the former glory of the temple of Solomon. The Lord promises to provide a temple that will be more glorious than that of Solomon.
January 13	TLH 417 / LSB 703	Colossians 1	Paul thanks God for the faith of the Colossians and prays for the Colossians. In the words of a hymn, Paul presents Jesus Christ as Creator and Redeemer. We are reconciled to God through the death of Christ. Paul endures suffering for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel.
January 14	TLH 192 / LSB 467	Colossians 2	Paul encourages the Colossians in the faith that they have received through Baptism. Believers in Christ are free from the ceremonial law of the Old Testament and free from human traditions and commands.
January 15	TLH 540 / LSB 869	Colossians 3	Paul exhorts the Colossians to set their minds on heavenly things, putting away all sin, and living in holiness. Paul gives special instructions to wives, husbands, children, fathers, and slaves.
January 16	TLH 496 / LSB 826	Colossians 4	Paul gives special instructions to masters. Paul gives final instructions for all believers before closing his letter with final greetings.
January 17	TLH 125	Amos 8	The Lord threatens terrible judgment on those who reject Him and live in wickedness.
January 18	TLH 32 / WS 779	Amos 9	The judgment of the Lord will be inescapable. However, the Lord will restore Israel.
January 20	TLH 153 / LSB 451	Habakkuk 1	Habakkuk bemoans the lack of justice in Judah. The Lord reveals His plan for avenging evil. Habakkuk complains again that the Lord appears to be unconcerned while the wicked thrive.
January 21	TLH 4 / LSB 907	Habakkuk 2	Habakkuk awaits a response from the Lord. The Lord answers that He will judge the wicked in His own good time. Woe to the arrogant and woe to the oppressor.
January 22	TLH 572	Habakkuk 3	In the words of a psalm, Habakkuk submits to the Lord and rejoices in the Lord.
January 23	TLH 528 / LSB 724	Exodus 7	Moses and Aaron appear before Pharaoh and command him to allow the people of Israel to leave Egypt. When Pharaoh refuses, Moses strikes the water of the Nile with his staff, and the water of the Nile turns into blood.
January 24	TLH 28	Exodus 8	As Pharaoh continues to refuse to let the people of Israel go, the Lord plagues Egypt with frogs, with gnats, and with flies.
January 25	TLH 74 / LSB 333	Luke 4	The devil tempts Jesus in the wilderness for forty days. Jesus begins His ministry, teaching in the synagogues of Galilee. The people of Nazareth reject Jesus. Jesus drives a demon out of a man and heals many people of various diseases.
January 27	TLH 21	Exodus 9	As Pharaoh continues to refuse to let the people of Israel go, the Lord plagues Egypt with the death of Egyptian livestock, with boils, and with hail.
January 28	LSB 355	Exodus 10	As Pharaoh continues to refuse to let the people of Israel go, the Lord plagues Egypt with locusts and with darkness.
January 29	TLH 296 / LSB 589	Exodus 11	The Lord threatens to kill every firstborn of Egypt. The Lord hardens the heart of Pharaoh, and Pharaoh continues to refuse to release the children of Israel.
January 30	TLH 205 / LSB 478	Exodus 12	The Lord instructs His people to celebrate the Passover. At midnight the Lord strikes down every firstborn of Egypt. The children of Israel leave from Egypt.
January 31	WS 729 / LSB 462	Matthew 12	Jesus proclaims Himself Lord of the Sabbath and heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. Many people follow Jesus, and He heals their diseases. Accused of casting out demons by demonic power, Jesus warns of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Jesus gives the sign of Jonah.

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.

# Wisconsin State Champions

For the first time in Immanuel Lutheran High School history, we have won a state championship in a team sport. On November 9, the Lancers volleyball team, coached by Professor Joe Lau and assisted by Megan Johnston, defeated the Columbus Catholic Dons to take home the Wisconsin



Interscholastic Athletic Association's (WIAA) ultimate trophy for their sport: The Golden Ball. The Lancers also became part of history since they were the Division V champion in the first year of five divisions for volleyball.

The WIAA Championship topped off what was a dominating year for the Lancer volleyball team, who ended their regular season with 38 wins and 4 losses. The team easily won the Dairyland Conference title, sweeping through the conference season without even losing a set. They also competed in several tournaments in which they faced and defeated much larger public schools such as Altoona, Hudson, and Eau Claire Memorial; and very competitive private schools, including local rivals Regis and McDonnell as well as Columbus Catholic and Newman Catholic. Such a rigorous tournament schedule (including participating in the Kettle-Moraine Lasers Tournament for the first time) definitely helped prepare the Lancers for more difficult competition once they entered the postseason tournament.

In the postseason, the Lancers continued the domination that characterized their regular season play. In the regional round they breezed past Flambeau and Siren and won convincingly against Prairie Farm and Prentice in the sectionals. In fact, they did not lose a set in the postseason until they reached the first round of state, when they took on Sheboygan Christian. After winning that match in four sets, they went on to defeat the Dons, also in four sets.

Beyond the championship itself, a number of things made this season special. Being able to participate at state on the big stage under the bright lights of the Resch Center in Green

Bay was especially exciting, since the Lancers' last trip to state in 2020 was held at Little Chute High School instead because of COVID protocols. The larger arena at the Resch also provided the opportunity for the Lancer army of fans to show up. Generous donations from the Immanuel Athletic Boosters provided

financial support for the team's travel expenses and ensured that the student fans and the pep band had transportation to the match and also paid their admission. It was exhilarating to hear our pep band playing while seeing the stands packed with Lancer fans.

Two moments, however, especially stood out to me on the day we won state. One was when one of the people working security on the floor gave our Athletic Director, Professor Rodebaugh, a hug. She did so after expressing how much she appreciated the positive cheers and good behavior from our student section. Another moment was shortly after the team had emerged from the building and began mingling with their friends and family. Slowly and gradually, the ILC family gathered there and began singing the Alma Mater. It was quite moving to hear the words of that song, and to be reminded how we are connected not only through our school, but also through our faith in our true Immanuel.

We are thankful that the Lord provided safe travel for all who participated in the tournament as fans, band members, players, and coaches. We are also grateful for the spotlight of the state tournament being placed on our school, so that we had the opportunity to let the light of our faith shine and to be reminded that all we do is for the glory of God.



Dr. Daniel Schierenbeck is President of Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

## SEEN IN PASSING

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

**New Bible Design Offers Help for Dyslexics.** “The lines land with slightly thicker strokes and dashes at the bottom. The letters leave little spaces inside as they curve up, like a stencil. This new typeface, a curly variation of a slab serif font, is called Grace—made especially for millions of Christians who struggle to read Scripture due to dyslexia. Major Bible publishers partnered with a specialty design firm to develop the Grace typeface and are now releasing Bibles using the new lettering. Lifeway Christian Resources has made two dyslexia-friendly versions of its Christian Standard Bible (CSB): CSB Grace Bible for Kids, out now, and the CSB Grace Bible, coming in February. Crossway Publishing, which prints the English Standard Version (ESV), plans to release the ESV Holy Bible: Dyslexia-Friendly Edition in January. Graphic design company 2K/Denmark specializes in typesetting and production of complex texts like Bibles and spent years developing the typeface.” Pfeiffer, Rachel. “And the Word Became Accessible: Publishers Release Dyslexia-Friendly Bibles.” News. ChristianityToday.com, 13 Nov., 2024. Web. 8 Dec., 2024.

**Silent Prayer Now a Crime in England.** A British army veteran has been convicted for silently praying outside an abortion clinic, in what experts are calling “a legal turning point of immense proportions” for free speech and religious liberty in the U.K. Adam Smith-Connor, who served 20 years in the Army Reserves, was found guilty in October of violating a buffer zone around a Bournemouth clinic in 2022. The court ruled that despite his silent prayer, his clasped hands and bowed head were enough to show “disapproval of abortion,” the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) International, said in a statement. The veteran was given a two-year conditional discharge and ordered to pay nearly \$12,000 in court costs. Mr. Smith-Connor, expressing shock at the verdict, said he didn’t know how the courts could so viciously turn on the tenets of religious expression that England once fully espoused. “I served for 20 years in the Army Reserves, including a tour in Afghanistan, to protect the fundamental freedoms that this country is built upon,” he said. Catholic MP Sir Edward Leigh called the ruling a grave assault on personal liberty. “It is disgraceful that in Britain in 2024 someone can be put on trial for praying silently in his head.” Ayers, Emma. “U.K. convicts pro-life veteran of thought crime for praying outside abortion clinic.” *Higher Ground News*. WashingtonTimes.com, 18 Oct., 2024. Web. 8 Dec., 2024.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



**Installation.** In accord with our usage and order, **Zachary Sippert** was installed as pastor of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Sleepy Eye, Minnesota on September 29, 2024. Also participating in the service were (photo, l-r) Pastors Nathanael Mayhew, Luke Willnitz, George Dummann, Nathan Pfeiffer, Johnathan Schnose, Zachary Sippert, Joseph Naumann, Professor Steven Sippert, Pastors Emeritus Norman Greve, Daniel Fleischer, and David Schierenbeck. - Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer