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# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



**THIS is**  
**My beloved Son...**  
**HEAR HIM.**

—Matthew 17:5



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# Hear Him!

***“We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:16-21 ESV)***

What an amazing thing it must have been to be on the Mount of Transfiguration . . . to see Jesus in glory shining like the sun . . . to see Moses and Elijah . . . to hear a voice from a bright cloud saying, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”* (Matthew 17:5) What an emotional high!

Why can’t we have experiences like this? Then, our faith would be set in concrete, right? Wrong. Guided by the Spirit, Peter, who was on the Mount, sets us straight.

Shining faces and voices from heaven are amazing, but only temporary. Afterward, we are left with an elusive memory: “Did I really see that? Was it a dream?” Faith cannot be built on sensory experiences or emotions.

Yet, there are churches that do just that. They want us to prove that we are born again by pointing to some physical or emotional experience. However, what if we don’t feel saved today? What if we cannot recall that born-again experience? It can only leave us in doubt.

Peter tells us that *“we have something more sure”* (verse 19) than a momentary experience, more solid than emotion. We have the living and abiding Word of God. God did not say, *“This is My beloved Son. Look at Him!”* He said, *“Hear Him.”* It is the light of His Word that shines like the morning star and illuminates the darkness of our hearts.

The disciples had to come down from that amazing, mountain experience, down into a valley of sorrow. There they would see Jesus despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, arrested, beaten, condemned, and nailed to a cross.



Did the memory of the Mount of Transfiguration bolster their faith on the Mount of Calvary? No. Instead of saying, *“It is good for us to be here”* (Matthew 17:4), they ran away from Jesus.

What, then, is the greater glory? That on the Mount or that in the cross? It was not on the Mount of Transfiguration that our Lord paid the price for our sins. It was on the cross; there the real glory of Jesus was shining forth. It was the glory of infinite love, the glory of a Redeemer. No sensory experience or emotion reveals this great truth. It is only the Word of God.

That Bible in your hands is more certain than all experiences and emotions. It is solid. It doesn’t change with emotional highs and lows. When you are in doubt,

it is the unchanging, solid Word that reassures you. When you are suffering, the unvarying Word brings comfort. When you are staring death in the face, it is the Word that says, *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”* (Revelation 14:13)

As amazing as the sights and sounds on the Mount of Transfiguration were, much more amazing is the unchanging, life-giving, eternal Word of God.

*Hear Him!*



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

# Of Saints and Valentines

“Saint Valentine” is not found in the Bible, nor is his “day.” Saint Valentine’s Day falls into the category of adiaphora—things neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. Let’s look at the big picture.

Saints, according to Scripture, are not extra-good believers who have died, gone to heaven, and there have special “pull” with God. The Bible does not tell us to pray to saints or worship them. Actually, every believer is a saint, one in whom the Holy Spirit, through Scripture’s message of salvation in Christ, has worked faith in Jesus. The word *saint* (Latin *sanctus*) means one who is “holy,” “set apart,” “sanctified”—or “saintified!”—before God. All believers, whether dead or alive, are saints—cleansed in the blood of Jesus. Paul wrote to the living believers, “*saints who are in Ephesus.*” (Ephesians 1:1) He also spoke of the believers in heaven and their inheritance, “*inheritance of the saints in the light.*” (Colossians 1:12) We do remember the believers in heaven who lived and served strong in the Lord—Saint Matthew, Saint John, Saint Paul, and so forth—but ascribe no special “powers” to them.

The name “Valentine” was a rather common surname, or last name, in the Roman Empire at the time of early Christianity (A.D. 100’s—300’s). The name means “valiant one.” We today still know names such as Rudi Valentino and Bobby V (Valentine). Records indicate that there were apparently two church leaders in the A.D. 100’s with the name *Valentine*. Both would later be given the special Roman Catholic status of “Saints.” February 14, the day on which one of them was martyred, was designated as Saint Valentine’s Day. We do not celebrate saints’ days—whether Saint Francis, Saint Christopher, Saint Anne, Saint Valentine, or others—in the same way that the Roman Church does.

It is difficult to make a clear connection between either of the early Valentines (or any other Valentine, for that matter) and the modern idea of Valentine-sweethearts. The claim may be correct that the English poet Chaucer’s words (A.D. 1300’s),

written regarding birds finding mates on Saint Valentine’s Day, lies at the root of the idea.

The question is, what can or should we make of February 14? It is definitely not a Biblical or a Lutheran church holiday.



Saint Valentine is said to have ministered to the faithful amidst the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire

And neither are Mother’s Day or Father’s Day for that matter, yet we often highlight a church service around them (some may not). Perhaps “Valentine’s Day” seems a little too “worldly” for that. Yet even Easter and Christmas are corrupted with many worldly ideas that are neither helpful nor godly. If celebrating Valentine’s Day means a day to let go of or to corrupt God’s will for marriage, then it is wrong! Can we categorically say it’s a bad idea for a Christian to

celebrate a day to honor one’s sweetheart? No. Unless it means that for the other three hundred sixty-four days of the year, the deal is off and “I” come first. Hypocrisy! The idea of Valentine’s Day is regularly adjusted to include love within the home and family. It also becomes a day for school children to express friendship with all their classmates. No fault there.

Christians sometimes draw the Lord’s love into Valentine’s Day. What about that? I can’t say it’s bad, but I definitely hear the caution not to trivialize the love of God by comparing it to sweetheart love. A similar example would be turning Christmas into merely a “birthday party” for Jesus. The Lord’s love and salvation are so much bigger than that!

Celebrating Valentine’s Day—(Saint) Valentine’s Day—is an adiaphoron. It is not a “must.” Christian freedom and Christian good sense are necessary. Whether it’s anniversaries, or birthdays, or Valentine’s Days, such days reflect blessings from God, Who with His immeasurable, forgiving love in Christ cares for us in every aspect of life.



Richard Kanzenbach is pastor of Saint Luke’s Lutheran Church in Lemmon, South Dakota.



## 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* February (Epiphany and Pre-Lent)

**T**he Season of Epiphany (continued) As we have already begun to see this year, the seasons of the church year do not coordinate with the beginning and ending of months. In the month of February, we continue in the season of Epiphany, which is often called “Christmas for the Gentiles.” The Sundays in Epiphany highlight the revelation of God’s glory and salvation in the person of Jesus, Who came as the Savior for all people.

- ♦ **February 2** This Sunday is the Fourth Sunday in Epiphany. Here we are comforted by the nature of the true God. We see His love and compassion for sinners, even through the adversities that we face in life. The hymn “**Seek Where Ye May to Find a Way**” (TLH 383; LSB 557) beautifully reinforces this theme. This hymn is a challenge to anyone to find a “god” like the Lord, the true God, and Jesus as our only Savior. It also serves as a reminder to the Christian not to forget or take for granted the salvation that is found in Jesus alone.
- ♦ **February 9** The Season of Epiphany concludes with the festival of Transfiguration. This Sunday we hear about the miraculous transformation of Jesus as He was glorified in the presence of three of His disciples. The fifteenth-century Latin hymn “**Oh, Wondrous Type! Oh, Vision Fair**” (WS 720; LSB 413) is a poetic retelling of Jesus’ Transfiguration and its implications both then and now. The liturgical color for Transfiguration is white.

**The Season of Pre-Lent** The Transfiguration of Jesus marks a significant pivot point in Jesus’ ministry. At this point in His ministry Jesus “*set His face to go to Jerusalem*” (Luke 9:51) and began to speak to His disciples about His coming death and resurrection. Many church calendars contain three Sundays between Epiphany and Lent. This Pre-Lent “season” helps prepare us to contemplate God’s work of salvation in the suffering and death of Jesus. These three *gesima* Sundays serve as a countdown to the beginning of Lent. The first of

these Sundays is called Septuagesima. This word comes from Latin and simply means “seventy days.” Sexagesima means “sixty days” and Quinquagesima means “fifty days.” In this way, these three Sundays count us down to Easter and give us an approximate idea of how many days we have left until the celebration of our Savior’s resurrection. Remember, these weeks are not Lent. They are time to *prepare for* Lent. For this reason, the liturgical color for these Sundays is green.

- ♦ **February 16** Septuagesima Sunday is the first Sunday of “Gesimatide.” We reflect on what we deserve because of our sin, as well as God’s rich and abundant grace which gives us what we do not deserve. The hymn “**Salvation unto Us Has Come**” (TLH 377; LSB 555) by Paul Speratus wonderfully summarizes the Biblical teaching on man’s sin and God’s grace in Christ.
- ♦ **February 23** On Sexagesima Sunday our focus shifts to the mercies of God and serves as a warning for us not to harden our hearts against the Lord and His grace. The hymn for this Sunday is “**May God Bestow on Us His Grace**” (TLH 500; LSB 823,824). This hymn is Martin Luther’s metrical summary of Psalm 67, which has been called the Missionary Psalm. While this hymn is found in the Missions section of our hymnal, it serves as a reminder of all that we have received from the Lord (stanza 1), that the Lord is coming again to judge all people (stanza 2), and that God works through His Word to bless us and keep us in the faith. May God’s gracious kingdom come to all people through faith.

May the Lord bless your worship this month.



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

# Are You Truly One of God's Elect?

***“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:10-11)***

The Bible Class attendees were asked which of these statements best describes their level of spiritual confidence: “I think I’m saved,” “I hope I’m saved,” or “I know I’m saved.” When those who selected one of the first two responses explained why, their primary reason was not wanting to seem proud or presumptuous, especially knowing their own sinful natures and spiritual weaknesses. One put it this way, “I trust Jesus; I just don’t trust myself.”

Those who confidently asserted their own spiritual destiny rightly pointed to the cross and empty tomb of their Savior as well as His many precious eternal promises given in His Word, including those which speak of our eternal election in Christ (2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 8:28-30; and Ephesians 1:4-6,11-12).

Before one builds a house, a design plan is carefully drafted. This plan unfolds as construction takes place and the building is ultimately completed. Similarly, God in eternity *designed* a marvelous *salvation plan* for lost mankind, As revealed through His Spirit-inspired Scriptures, His plan was *prophesied* in advance, *carried out* in time by our God-Man Redeemer, *continued* through the Gospel at work in hearts and lives, and will ultimately be *completed* in eternity.

Our election has not occurred randomly nor because of human merit nor even because of our faith, but solely by God’s grace for Christ’s sake. My confidence that I am one of the elect rests upon Christ and His saving work and promises. My great comfort as one of the elect is that God has eternally secured my salvation, that Jesus is both “*the Author and Finisher*” of my faith (Hebrews 12:2) and that therefore “*neither shall anyone snatch [me] out of His hand.*”

(John 10:28)

The doctrine of election provides a divine reassurance that God’s grace persists and prevails before, during, and after our womb-to-tomb earthly sojourn, including our own “time of grace.” As Peter earlier assured His readers, you are “*kept by the power of God through faith for salvation.*” (1 Peter 1:4)

***Our election has not occurred randomly nor because of human merit nor even because of our faith, but solely by God’s grace for Christ’s sake.***

Like the Apostle’s dispersed and battle-weary audience of faithful believers, we too face our own external and internal faith-struggles: hostility, worldliness, apathy, selfishness, and so forth—all of which Satan uses to erode both the certainty and ultimately even the reality of our own salvation. And like these ancient brethren, we need the same encouragement to be “*even more diligent in making our calling and election sure*” (verse 10) in our own hearts.

Only by “*fixing our eyes on Jesus,*” (Hebrews 12:2) by renewing and fortifying our faith through His true and trustworthy Word, only with spiritual eyes and hearts open to seeing the grace and loving hand of God in our lives will we be more confident and appreciative of our own “*entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (verse 11)

So, yes, thank God, what a blessing to know I’m saved in Christ! *Solo deo gloria!*



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



# Bright Light / Dark Shadows

Everyone who sees can discern the relationship between light and shadow. The Germans had a saying: “*Wo viel Licht, da viel Schatten.*” That is, “Where the light is bright, the shadow is deep.” How true in the physical world! But what about the spiritual and moral? It seems the world is full of people of extremes. They can soar to great heights in their confessions and accomplishments, but also sink to great depths in their moral and spiritual failures.

Abraham was a bright light as he simply trusted in the Lord’s promises; so bright that the Lord counted it to him for righteousness; so bright he is called the father of all believers. But on occasion, he fell into the grim shadows of mistrust, impatience and fearful cowardice.

David was the great king of Israel, whose promised Son would be eternally greater. David was a man after God’s own heart. He authored many inspired and beautiful psalms, including Psalm 27, “*The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? . . . Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear . . . One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.*” (verses 1,3,4) What beautiful, comforting words of light!

But we also remember the deep shadows of adultery and murder. 1 Samuel 27 also relates a grim shadowy chapter in David’s life. In a crisis of faith and fearful of perishing at the hand of Saul, he fled into the land of the Philistines. Instead of praying for guidance, David himself decided what he would do. Instead of his God-given home, David sought refuge and alliance with his ungodly enemies. Instead of seeking the beauty of the Lord, David and his men utterly exterminated three local tribes and then lied about it by telling the king of Gath that he had attacked his own people of southern Judah. What grim and bloody shadows indeed.

What can one say except that this history was written for our instruction and self-reflection. Have we never been in situations where we made moral and spiritual decisions without first inquiring of the Lord? Have we never been so

despondent that we seek counsel and wisdom from godless mouths? Do we always behold the Lord’s beauty, never neglecting our worship of Him? We confess the truth, yet we can lie and are readily tempted to compromise it for whatever reason. Are we always loving, and never cruel? O Lord, have mercy upon us!

David’s greater Son always prayed His Father for help and courage, was fearless when facing His enemies, never broke His commitment to redeem us,

never lied, and never, ever compromised God’s truth. He always sought the beauty, the will, and the glory of His Father, and so redeemed us and paid for all our sin, including the deepest, blackest shadows of them. Thank you, Lord Jesus!

What does He now expect? He said, “*Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*” (Matthew 5:16) Let us then adopt a new saying and action plan: Where the light is brightest, the shadow is dimmest! So help us shine, Lord Jesus.

*Jesus, all our ransom paid, All Thy Father’s will obeyed,  
By Thy suffering perfect made, Hear us, holy Jesus.*

*Save us in our soul’s distress, Be our Help to cheer and bless,  
While we grow in holiness, Hear us, holy Jesus.*

*Brighten all our heavenward way, With an ever holier ray,  
Till we pass to perfect day: Hear us, holy Jesus. (TLH 185)*



David before King Achish



David Fuerstenau is a retired pastor. He lives in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

*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.*

# Second Corinthians

## *A Defense of the Gospel*

No Christian congregation is without problems, but the city of Corinth seems to have been a breeding ground for spiritual disruptions that would try any shepherd's patience. What we know as First Corinthians (see the January 2025 *Spokesman*) arose from Paul's physician-like process of diagnosing and treating the many spiritual ills that disrupted the unity of faith that Christ would have His churches enjoy. But in this "second" letter to the Corinthians (there were others, now lost to us), Paul the physician finds his "doctoring" vigorously criticized and his credentials rejected. He was under attack and had to defend himself; more importantly, he had to defend his role as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

This letter arrived in Corinth perhaps six months after the earlier one (possibly the fall of A.D. 56), as the culmination of an amazing period of "shuttle diplomacy" between Paul and this very troubled congregation. After First Corinthians—with its strong medicine—was written, Paul dispatched Timothy to Corinth to see how things were going. Timothy returned with a report that left Paul still deeply concerned, so the apostle dropped what he was doing in Ephesus and sailed across the Aegean Sea himself to see how his words were sitting with the congregation. After he returned to Ephesus, he then sent Titus back to Corinth, again to see to the conditions there, while he made his way to Macedonia. He had declined to go back himself because he feared he may have dealt, or still might deal, too strongly with troublemakers of the church (II Corinthians 1:23). It was after Titus met him in Macedonia and provided a "good news/bad news" report that Paul penned this letter.

At the root of all this activity, and of this letter specifically, was the danger to the faith and life of the church because of greedy, false-hearted leaders (it is easy to imagine that the party spirit that Paul called out in I Corinthians 1 was still an active issue). Many sincere church workers have experienced

some of the things Paul suffered from his detractors: their nit-picking and fault-finding about trivial things (he changed his plans; didn't carry through on a "promise," 1:15-16); his bark was worse than his bite (they claimed he could write powerful letters, but wasn't that impressive in person, 10:10); his integrity was shaky (Paul countered "we

*are not men who peddle the word of God," 2:17). But underlying all this was a very serious matter—one that Paul couldn't just graciously pass over. For Paul's word was the word of "an apostle of Christ by the will of God" (1:1), and that could not be despised or undermined without harm to the church, which lives by the Gospel proclamation.*

So Paul crafted a vigorous and impassioned defense of his work, his authority, and his divine commission; not to spare himself, but to confirm the power of the Gospel of Christ and His salvation. Interestingly, in this deeply

personal letter we find an abundance of passages that give Christ the glory. Here are a few of our favorites:

*"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (4:6)*

*"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." (5:19)*

*"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." (8:9)*

*"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (12:9)*

**Paul's word was the word of "an apostle of Christ by the will of God" (1:1), and that could not be despised or undermined without harm to the church**



**Peter Reim** is a former pastor who now teaches English at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. He makes his home in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.





Pastor George Barthels  
1914-1990

*In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor Emeritus James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Rev. George Barthels (1914-1990) was a leader in the formation of the CLC. He served as pastor at various CLC congregations, notably in Red Wing, Sleepy Eye, and Okabena, Minnesota. He was a member of the Board of Doctrine, and was a longtime moderator of the CLC. This article is from the Lutheran Spokesman of February 1960. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.*

## **“Lord, it is Good for us to be here.” (Matthew 17:4)**

There were several things that caused Peter to burst forth with these words. One of them was that Jesus was transfigured before them. *“His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.”* Although the three disciples could see that it was the same Jesus, whom they knew so well, yet He looked much different. A bright light suddenly beamed forth from Him as though they were trying to look into the brightness of the sun. Not only His face shone with this brightness, but even His clothing appeared as though it had been transfused with a shining light. At the same time they noticed something else very unusual. Two more people were suddenly present in their little group, men whom they had never seen before. Yet they needed no introduction, for they knew immediately who the two were. They were Moses and Elijah, who both appeared here with glorified bodies.

Luke records the subject of their conversation: *“They spake of His decease which He should accomplish in Jerusalem.”* (Luke 9:31)

All this was in perfect agreement with what Jesus had told His disciples a few days earlier: that He must go up to Jerusalem and be crucified. The disciples could gather that this was a topic of such extreme importance that even Moses and Elijah, who were already in glory, showed high interest in conversing about it with Jesus.

If the disciples were wondering what it all signified, they had not long to wait for an explanation. *“While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom*

*I am well pleased; hear ye Him.”* (Matthew 17:5) With these words is summarized the significance of this whole incident. This Jesus, whom the disciples knew so well as man, is also true God, who was proclaimed here by the Father as God the Son. The disciples heard the very voice of God the Father say so.

One thing is emphasized by the special announcement from the Father: this glorious Son of God, great and mighty as they here beheld Him, has a message for all poor sinners, who were here represented by Peter, James, and John lying on the ground, dreadfully frightened before the greatness and majesty of Jesus. This message is vital and cannot bear being slighted.

This message is centered in *“the decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem”* for the atonement of the sins of all the world. This message of the Son is so important that the Father on the Mount of Transfiguration warns, *“Hear ye Him!”* If the disciples were impressed by the transfiguration of Jesus, they should all the more take the Father’s admonition to heart; *Hear ye Him!*

This Jesus is your gracious God, who comes to bring to you the comforting message of eternal life. . . . It is in this Gospel where we see Him in close communion with all those who are His own, whether they are still in this life or have already departed into eternal glory, speaking about *“His decease which He accomplished at Jerusalem.”* It is in this Gospel where the Father also speaks to us from heaven, and says, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him.”*

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD

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

# The Harvest Awaits!

***“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” (Galatians 6:9)***

On November 24, 2024, our Lord answered the prayers of many in the *Tanzania Church of the Lutheran Confession* (TCLC), as well those of the CLC-USA. We have been asking “*the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*” (Matthew 9:38) God is answering that prayer with the graduation of four men from the Wittenberg Lutheran Seminary in Arusha.

All of our seminary graduates are being assigned to daughter parishes of their home congregations and will be working with the guidance of the home church pastors. Our two evangelism graduates intend to return to enroll in the three-year seminary program.

The speaker for the graduation service was the senior faculty member at Wittenberg, Pastor Nathan Lengutai. He encouraged the graduates with words from Luke chapter 13, with the theme “*After this Life—Eternal Life!*” A guest choir from the Maasai tribe in Mbuyini

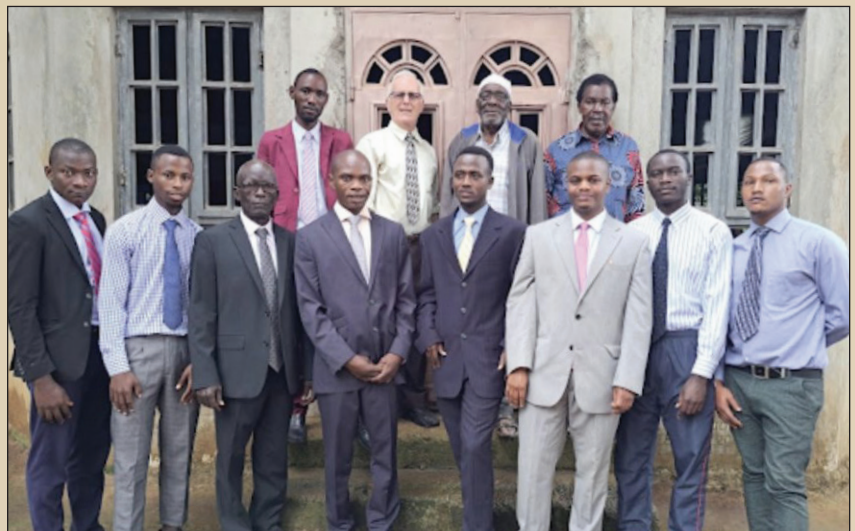


2024 Wittenberg Seminary faculty

sang several joyful anthems, and the Ambureni Sunday school children also sang their praises to the Lord. The graduates received lightly used suits and ties, as well as new shoes, as gifts from CLC Project Kinship. The seminary graduates were also given red pastoral stoles,



Pastor Emeritus Nathan Lengutai



**Back row L to R: SEMINARY FACULTY, Robert Loskira, Bruce Naumann, Nathan Lengutai, Jeremia Issangya. Front row: SEMINARY STUDENTS, Godfrey Mzoo, Eubank Elijah, Jasper Musakali, Raphaeli Kinyaga, Marko Joseph, Elinaja Bayo, Dennis Musakali, Emanuel Boniface**



with Luther's seal, made by Paula Naumann.

Any farmer knows that a good harvest comes only after a lot of hard work. Our Wittenberg graduates have finished their formal education through a great deal of effort—on their part as well as that of many others. The students have applied themselves to their studies in the areas of Christian doctrine, preaching, church history, Old and New Testament studies, practical theology, and youth education methods. Their teachers have also worked hard to equip the students with all the tools they will need for the pastoral ministry. Also, we should not forget that our faithful members of the CLC-USA have given their generous support to this effort to build a seminary, field a missionary, and provide for the daily needs here at Wittenberg.

The four-year course of study has been a steep climb for the students, tempting them to *"grow weary while doing good,"* as Paul warns against in our passage above. Likewise, the CLC faces a tremendous challenge in doing good for all our overseas mission opportunities, as well as our educational and other needs at home. The work



Maasai choir performing following Wittenberg Seminary graduation

can be difficult and expensive, yet we have God's promise that *"in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."* The heart for these efforts comes from the completed work of our Savior, Jesus, Who redeemed us by His suffering and death, and went before us to heaven, which we will inherit through faith in His name.

Inspired by this grace of God in Christ, we continue the work before us. The time of reaping will come as the faith of Christians in our Tanzanian churches is strengthened, and as many more come to faith in the Lord Jesus as the only Savior from sin. We are eagerly looking forward to educating future pastors in 2025. We expect, with God's blessing, to have four students in our seminary department and to enroll as many as five new students in the introductory year of evangelism studies. May our Lord graciously bless this and all our other efforts for His kingdom!

You can see video highlights of Wittenberg's 2024 graduation service by entering the following URL in your internet browser: [www.wittenbergtz.com](http://www.wittenbergtz.com)



Paula Naumann with neighborhood children who brought a gift of bananas



Bruce Naumann is a CLC Missionary to East Africa. His home is in Arusha, Tanzania.



# Reflections on a Father's Passing

[Editor: the author who contributed this article asked that his name not be used.]

**T**he evening did not start out well.

My dad was dying. The voice that I had heard for over seventy years was silent. The hands that held me as a baby could no longer hold anything. The legs that had led me here and there could no longer hold up his body. He had not been out of bed in over five weeks. Three spoonfuls of ice cream was an all-day meal. He who had changed my diapers now needed changing. The eyes that showed love and compassion for years remained closed. Add in the death rattle, a type of deep gurgling, nonstop for over twelve hours. The scene was not pleasant.

And then came—VICTORY.

Dad took his last breath. The Savior sent angels to take his soul to heaven, and I helped bag the body to start its journey to the cemetery. Yet all my senses informed me that death had won.

My eyes could only see the stillness of death, but the Word of God told me:

*"I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"* (Job 19:25–27)

My ears could hear nothing of life, but the Word of God told me:

*"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."* (John 10:27–28)

The only smell was the smell of death, but the Word of God told me:

*"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who*



*believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."* (John 11:25–26)

There was no warmth of life to the sense of touch, but the Word of God told me:

*"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 15:55–57)

The Word of God even spoke of the taste of death:

*"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."* (Hebrews 2:9)

Strongest of all, common sense said that death had won. But the Word of God said:

*"Our Savior Jesus Christ . . . has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."* (2 Timothy 1:10)

It appeared that death had won, but that was only an illusion. The evening and the scene belonged to Jesus. He had won and so had Dad. The night that started out so dismal had just ended with the most spectacular victory!

*"Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His saints."* (Psalm 116:15)

Yet while this death scene ended in triumph, many of my fellow human beings continue to be swallowed up by death and have not heard of their Champion over sin and death.

Here is one attempt...



# “BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS FEBRUARY 2025

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
February 1	TLH 28	Psalm 9	David praises the Lord for His deliverance and for His just judgment. Mindful of the grace that the Lord has demonstrated toward us, we join David in this psalm of praise.
February 3	TLH 514 / LSB 765	Psalm 10	The psalmist wonders why injustice seems to prevail in this world. He calls on the Lord to intervene, trusting that the justice of the Lord will prevail in the end.
February 4	LSB 538	Psalm 11	The sovereignty of the Lord is comforting to those who are His children by faith in Christ, because He protects them from all harm and danger. However, the sovereignty of the Lord is terrifying to those who defy Him, because they are under His just wrath.
February 5	TLH 260	Psalm 12	The Lord judges the wicked and defends the faithful. Blessed are they who take refuge in Him.
February 6	TLH 266	Deuteronomy 19	Through Moses the Lord provides laws concerning cities of refuge, property boundaries, and witnesses.
February 7	LSB 777/778	Deuteronomy 20	Through Moses the Lord provides laws concerning warfare.
February 8	TLH 410 / LSB 718	Luke 5	Jesus calls Peter, James, and John to be His first disciples. Jesus cleanses a leper and heals a paralytic. Jesus calls Matthew to be His disciple. Jesus explains why His disciples do not fast.
February 10	TLH 156 / LSB 431	Deuteronomy 21	Through Moses the Lord provides laws concerning atonement for unsolved murders, marrying female captives, inheritance rights of the firstborn, and rebellious sons. A man hanged on a tree is cursed.
February 11	TLH 295 / LSB 579	Deuteronomy 22	Through Moses the Lord provides various laws including laws concerning sexual immorality.
February 12	TLH 19 / LSB 819	Deuteronomy 23	Through Moses the Lord provides laws concerning those excluded from the assembly, laws concerning uncleanness in the camp, and various additional laws.
February 13	TLH 292 / LSB 585	Deuteronomy 24	Through Moses the Lord provides laws concerning divorce and various additional laws.
February 14	LSB 792	Deuteronomy 25	Through Moses the Lord provides laws concerning levirate marriage and various additional laws.
February 15	TLH 493	Luke 6	Jesus declares Himself “Lord of the Sabbath,” heals a man with a withered hand, appoints twelve of His disciples to be apostles, heals many, and teaches many things.
February 17	TLH 359 / LSB 873	Luke 7	Jesus heals the servant of a centurion, raises to life the son of a widow of Nain, gives evidence that He is the Messiah, and forgives the sinful woman who has anointed His feet.
February 18	WS 781 / LSB 586	Luke 8	Certain women also follow Jesus and support Him and His disciples. Jesus tells and explains the parable of the sower. Jesus tells the parable of the lamp under a jar. Jesus calms a storm at sea. Jesus drives many demons out of a man. Jesus heals a bleeding woman and raises to life the daughter of Jairus.
February 19	TLH 568 / LSB 785	Deuteronomy 26	Through Moses the Lord provides laws concerning offerings of first-fruits and tithes.
February 20	TLH 613 / LSB 672	Deuteronomy 27	Moses commands the people to build an altar to the Lord on Mount Ebal. The Levites are to pronounce curses on those who are guilty of various iniquities and the people are to respond with their “Amen.”
February 21	TLH 495	Deuteronomy 28	“God threatens to punish all who sin against these commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not act contrary to these commandments. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also love and trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.” (Luther’s Small Catechism)
February 22	TLH 50 / LSB 924	Deuteronomy 29	Through Moses the Lord renews His covenant with His people in the land of Moab.
February 24	TLH 115	Deuteronomy 30	The Lord promises to forgive His people when they repent. The Lord sets before His people the way of life and the way of death.
February 25	TLH 192 / LSB 467	Deuteronomy 31	Moses prepares Joshua to lead the children of Israel after the death of Moses. Moses commands the priests to read the law to the people of Israel every seven years at the Feast of Booths. The Lord commissions Joshua to lead Israel.
February 26	TLH 38 / LSB 794	Deuteronomy 32	The Lord commands Moses to write a song for the people of Israel to learn. The song will serve as a witness for the Lord against them when they turn to false gods and break the covenant of the Lord. The Lord commands Moses to go up Mount Nebo, where he will die.
February 27	TLH 437 / LSB 714	Deuteronomy 33	Tribe by tribe, Moses blesses the people of Israel before his death.
February 28	TLH 9 / LSB 906	Deuteronomy 34	Moses dies. The Lord buries him in an unknown location in Moab. Joshua begins leading the people.



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

# Highlights of MDF-Funded Projects

The Lord continues to bless the outreach efforts of our church body, opening doors for spreading the Gospel around the world. The Mission Development Fund (MDF) plays a vital role in supporting these endeavors. Here are some highlights of the opportunities being funded through the MDF:

## Major Building Projects in Nigeria and Bangladesh

In Nigeria, construction has begun on a new seminary building that will provide classrooms, a library, and faculty offices to train pastors for the NCLC. This project is over twenty-five years in the making. With an increase in enrollment this year and expectations for even larger enrollment next year, this new building is essential. Similarly, in Bangladesh, plans are moving forward for

the construction of a multipurpose facility that will serve as a place of worship and pastoral training. The project has already received government approval, and everything is in place to begin construction as soon as funding becomes available. The hope is that this much-needed building will soon become a reality.

## Pastoral Training and Outreach Conference

Training seminars and outreach conferences are central to the mission efforts of our sister church bodies overseas. Conferences are planned for the coming months in Tanzania, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Nepal, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. These gatherings equip pastors and lay leaders to faithfully



Pastoral training seminar in Nepal.





Top and bottom photos: Nigerian seminary building to be replaced



500 Bangla catechisms printed with an MDF grant

proclaim Christ and serve their congregations. The MDF provides funding for travel, meals, and materials for these conferences.

work that the Board desires to support but is unable to at this time due to limited resources. The need is great, and these decisions reflect the challenges of balancing opportunities with available funding.

### Supporting Missionary Work in Tanzania

Missionary Bruce Naumann’s work in East Africa is an important part of our overall mission program. His salary and expenses continue to be partially funded by the MDF for the next few years. His work includes teaching at the Wittenberg Seminary, coordinating outreach efforts among the congregations of the Tanzania-CLC, and assisting with evangelism efforts in Kenya and Uganda.

### A Picture of Gospel Growth

From building new facilities to equipping leaders for ministry, the work supported by the MDF demonstrates how the Lord is using our church body to bring the Gospel to the nations. The opportunities and challenges before us remind us of the immense privilege of being laborers in His harvest. Please keep these opportunities in your prayers, trusting that the Lord will provide for His work according to His will.

### The Challenges of Limited Resources

One of the more difficult realities the Board of Missions faces is the need to pause funding for some important needs, such as providing Bibles, catechisms, and assistance with church building improvements and construction. These are important aspects of our mission



**Robert Sauers** is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida, and a member of the CLC Board of Missions



# Lutheran Spokesman

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## SEEN IN PASSING

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

**Don't Dress Like an Anglican Priest in Uganda—Or Else.** The Anglican church in Uganda has taken out a legal trademark on priests' vestments in an attempt to stop evangelicals and Pentecostals from wearing the attire, which indicates ordination and office. Bishop Nathan Ahimbisibwe said people who are not Anglican priests have been abusing the vestments, and now the trademark gives the church in Uganda a legal tool to stop it. "We wish to inform you that this is our attire so that once you are arrested, you will have no defense," Ahimbisibwe said. At least one evangelical minister plans to sue. Silliman, Daniel. "Anglicans try to stop others from wearing vestments." *Christianity Today*, vol. 68, no. 7, November/December 2024, p. 138.

**ASU Cancels Prof's "Intro to Christianity" Course . . . Because He's a Christian.** Professor Owen Anderson of Arizona State University has had his course on Christianity removed from the general education curriculum on the grounds that such a course should not be taught by one who believes in it himself. A colleague complained that Professor Anderson has "a Christian way of teaching Christianity, which is to say the course does not adequately provide the kinds of critical, reflective, disciplinary skills that students need to have in order to study religious traditions." A review panel agreed. Anderson is fighting the removal of his course, citing the fact that, in other cases, the religious studies department actually prefers when the instructor himself is an adherent; this is true, e.g., of Islamic classes. "This is only directed one way," said Anderson, "toward Christians and Christianity." Kabbani, Jennifer. "Christian professor's 'Intro to Christianity' class torpedoed at ASU." *Religion*. TheCollegeFix.com, 20 September 2024. Web. 20 December 2024.

### Judean Date Palm Resurrected After 1500-Year Extinction.

The Judean date palm was a fruit-bearing tree that once carpeted the Jordan valley from the Dead Sea up to the Sea of Galilee. It was once a vital source of food in the region, up to and including the time of Christ. However, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., they also cut down nearly all of the date palms, in order to deny the resource to their enemies. The tree was almost completely eradicated by the end of the Roman era. Then, in 1964, archaeologists excavating the hilltop fortress of Masada unearthed a large cache of ancient date palm seeds. In 2005, two Israeli professors decided to see if the seeds would grow—and they did! A number of viable date palm trees resulted from the effort, the oldest of which is named "Methusaleh" and had reached a height of twelve feet by 2020. Researchers at the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies at Kibbutz Ketura plan to grow dates resurrected from the seeds using tissue culture, and then establish the trees in commercial plantations. Gillan, Joanna. "The Judean Date Palm: Extinct Tree Resurrected from Ancient Seeds." *Ancient Places*. AncientOrigins.net, 17 September 2020. Web. 20 December 2024.



**The energy of the young . . .** College students in ILC's pastoral training program meet for their regular "Theologian Thursday Breakfast" (l-r) Darion Buck, Joel Bernthal, Luke Strike, Troyal Mayhew, Ethan Sydow and Daniel Hein. Behind the camera: Austin Lien



**... And the wisdom of aged.** Professor Emeritus Paul Koch addressing students and instructors during the morning chapel service at ILC on December 12, 2024. He startled the students by beginning, "I'm Paul Reinhard Koch, and I taught many of your grandparents..." Now in his 90s, Professor Koch returned to the lectern for the first time in 28 years, delivering an Advent message on the basis of 2 Timothy 3:1-4