

MARCH 2025 VOL 67 NO. 9

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



DEATH

Then,
BEHOLD,
The veil of the
Temple was
TORN IN TWO

—Matthew 27:51



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The Lutheran Spokesman (USPS 825580) (ISSN 00247537) is published monthly by the Church of the Lutheran Confession, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701, and is an official organ of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). Website address: www.clclutheran.org

Periodicals postage paid at Eau Claire, WI and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes (Form 3579) to Lutheran Spokesman, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701-7134

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Material submitted for publication should be sent to Editor Paul Naumann three months before date of publication. Announcements and other short notices should also be sent to Editor Naumann.

Business Manager: Steve Lentz, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701. E-mail to lutheranspokesman@ilc.edu. Subscription Manager: Jessica Lau. Individual subscriptions {foreign-U.S. currency only}: \$18.00 {\$36.00} for one year; \$34.00 {\$50.00} for two years; \$50.00 {\$72.00} for three years; sent in bulk to congregations: \$15.00.

Send address or payment question requests to: lutheranspokesman@ilc.edu

Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org

Printed in U.S.A.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, New King James Version, © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

THE VEIL TORN IN TWO

Have you ever stood on one side of a locked door, longing to be on the other side? Maybe it was a door to a hospital room, or the emotional wall of a broken relationship. That ache of separation is universal, and it mirrors the deeper separation humanity has faced since sin entered the world. Sin locked us out from God's presence.

Lent is a season to confront that separation. It's a time for reflection and repentance as we journey with Christ to the cross. But Lent is not only about what sin has done. It's about what Christ has undone. And few moments capture that better than the tearing of the temple veil.

The temple in Jerusalem was a place of worship—and separation. At its center was the Holy of Holies, the space where God's presence dwelled.

A thick, heavy veil marked it off, saying, in effect, "No entry." Only the high priest could pass through, and then only once a year, with the blood of a sacrifice.

The veil wasn't just a curtain. It was a constant reminder of sin's barrier. It proclaimed, "God is holy. You are not. Keep out." But everything changed on Good Friday: "*When Jesus had cried out again with a loud voice, He yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*" (Matthew 27:50-51)

Picture it: the heavy fabric, torn not from the bottom by human hands, but from the top by God's own power. God Himself reached down and tore apart the barrier. Why? Because the sacrifice was complete. The separation was over. Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, had offered Himself for the sins of the world.

With His final cry, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30), Jesus declared the work of salvation complete. His blood was the atonement

sin demanded. The torn veil was God's announcement that the way to Him is open. No more sacrifices. No more mediators. The barrier of sin is gone.

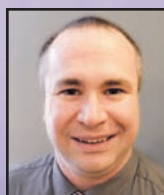


Lent invites us to reflect on this reality. What barriers stand between you and God? Is it guilt that whispers, "You're too sinful"? Is it doubt that questions whether God hears you? Lent reminds us that every obstacle was removed by Christ. "*For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*" (Ephesians 2:18)

Because the veil was torn, we can approach God without fear. The writer to the Hebrews urges us, "*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.*" (Hebrews 10:22) Jesus' sacrifice means we can bring our sins, our burdens, and our doubts to God, confident in His mercy.

Lent is more than a season of sorrow. It's a season of grace. It's a time to marvel at the love that led Jesus to the cross. It's a time to rejoice that He tore apart the barrier between us and God. As you walk through these forty days of Lent, let the image of the torn veil guide you. It's God's invitation to draw near—to lay your sins at the foot of the cross and find peace in His loving embrace.

The door is no longer locked. The veil is torn. The way is open. So let us approach the cross with humble and repentant hearts, confident that in Christ, we are forgiven, loved, and welcomed into God's presence.



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

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:8 NIV84)

“T”

Once the familiar T-shape of the cross was only a symbol of **Terror**; of a death so gruesome and shameful that it was reserved for the vilest of criminals and the lowest of slaves. The same Romans who practiced crucifixion also feared it. Cicero, the Roman orator, declared that the very word *cross* should be “far removed from not only the bodies of Roman citizens but even from their thoughts, their eyes, and their ears.”

Crucifixion was designed to be excruciatingly painful. In fact, the term excruciating is from the Latin *excruciatuus*, literally meaning “from out of the cross.” The physical agony of crucifixion was unspeakable. Seven to nine-inch iron spikes were hammered through flesh and bone, wrists and feet. Joints became dislocated, a circumstance described prophetically of Jesus in Psalm 22: “*I am poured out like water; and all My bones are out of joint.*”

The position of the body on the cross made breathing difficult, especially inhaling. Often, death by crucifixion was due to suffocation. And along with the physical agony of crucifixion came psychological torture like the constant gasping for breath and the humiliation of being crucified naked.

The Bible states simply: “And they crucified Him.” Yet, the words are steeped in blood, misery, unjust suffering, and untold agony. In reality, you and I have no concept of what Jesus endured on that cross. His physical suffering was gruesome enough. Yet, at the same time, He was carrying the incomprehensible weight of the world’s sin and guilt, and suffering the agonies of hell. And all of this for our sake. As Isaiah wrote: “*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*” (Isaiah 53:5 NIV)

“T” for Triumph

Yet, for believers, that familiar T-shaped cross has become a symbol of **Triumph**, not defeat; power, not weakness; forgiveness, not failure. For by His death on the cross, Jesus atoned for the

sins and sinners of all the world. Because of Him we humbly and lovingly display the cross in our homes and churches, on hymnals and Bibles, at baptisms and funerals, in benedictions and lyrics: “Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim.” “In the cross of Christ I glory.” “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.” “This the superscription be: Jesus crucified for me.”



T-shaped cross monument
County Donegal Ireland

Of this “T” for Triumph Paul wrote in Colossians 2: “*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.*” (Colossians 2:13-15 NIV84)

“T” for Transformation

The message of Christ’s cross has the power not only to save us, but also to **Transform** us; that is, to empower us to live grateful lives befitting so great a salvation. Paul wrote of this transformation in Galatians 2:20, saying: “*I have been crucified with Christ and I [the Greek word is EGO] no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life*

I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (NIV)

How can we stand at the cross of Jesus, then walk away unmoved? How can we understand what He paid for our forgiveness, yet refuse to forgive others?

He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.



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

HYMN OF THE WEEK PLAN

The Lutheran church enjoys a long tradition of identifying a “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.

INTRODUCING THE *Hymn of the Week* March (Pre-Lent and Lent)

The Season of Pre-Lent (concluded) During March, our journey with Jesus continues as we move from the last of the “Gesima,” or Pre-Lent Sundays, into the season of Lent.

- ♦ **March 2**—On Quinquagesima Sunday, our eyes are directed to Jerusalem and the culmination of Jesus’ journey as the Christ. We are also reminded that Christians do not watch Jesus from a distance, but rather journey with their Savior. The hymn for this Sunday is “**Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus**” (TLH 409; LSB 685), which is appropriately based on the words of Thomas: “*Let us also go, that we may die with Him.*” (John 11:16) This hymn points to the perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection of Jesus, and how His life serves as the motivation for the Christian’s walk as a follower of Jesus.

The Season of Lent Lent is a time of preparation for the resurrection of Jesus. During these seven weeks we consider the warfare between Christ and His Church on one side, and the kingdom of the devil on the other. It is a time of repentance, which is marked by the color purple and the absence of liturgical hymns of praise such as the “Alleluia” and the “Gloria in Excelsis.” Historically, the Sundays within this season are not a part of the season of Lent, but are Sundays IN Lent, since every Sunday is a mini celebration of Jesus’ resurrection from death. The forty days of Lent begin on Ash Wednesday (March 5) and end on Easter Eve (April 19), but do not include the Sundays in between. For this reason, the themes of the Sundays in Lent will not focus on the Passion of Jesus, but will point us ahead to the assurance of Christ’s victory on Easter, and His victory in the Christian’s life through Spirit-worked repentance and faith. The meditation on the Passion of Jesus is reserved for our mid-week worship.

- ♦ **March 9**—On the First Sunday in Lent we reflect on the battle against sin and temptation. We see this in readings which highlight the temptations that Jesus faced, that Israel faced, and that we all face. The hymn

“**God the Father, Be Our Stay**” (TLH 247; LSB 505) predates the Lutheran Reformation. Although it has a challenging melody, this hymn is a beautiful prayer to our Triune God, acknowledging the dangers we face and expressing our confidence in God’s power over sin through faith.

- ♦ **March 16**—The Second Sunday in Lent assures the Christian of God’s power over the devil and his evil cohorts. The Reformation era hymn, “**When in the Hour of Utmost Need**” (TLH 522; LSB 615) is also a prayer to God for help in our time of need. This hymn teaches us the importance of heartfelt repentance and emphasizes God’s power to deliver us.
- ♦ **March 23**—The Third Sunday in Lent reminds us that there are only two sides in the war against sin. The true God is vehemently opposed by the devil and his forces. There is no middle ground. The hymn for this Sunday is “**Lord of our Life and God of Our Salvation**” (TLH 258; LSB 659). This hymn is a prayer to the true God, requesting His help in this battle with Satan.
- ♦ **March 30**—The Fourth Sunday in Lent marks a subtle change as a theme of victory and joy begins to surface. God supplies our needs of body and soul and assures us of the victory over sin and its consequences. The hymn “**Jesus, Priceless Treasure**” (TLH 347; LSB 743) reminds us that our ultimate victory is secure in Jesus who is greater than any power or treasure of this life. He alone removes all fear and sadness and gives true joy.

Jesus, bless us through Your Word and our worship this month!



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God's Reminders

“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.” (2 Peter 1:12-15)

Pocket calendars, sticky notes, and smart phone apps are just some of the many tools we use to make necessary reminders to ourselves. We live in a sea of busy-ness, and it can often feel like we're drowning in our many daily tasks. Therefore, we set reminders to pay the bills, to set out the garbage, to take the children to school and sporting events, to keep business appointments—the list seems endless! These are all things we know need to get done, and the reminders help ensure we don't forget to do them. Forgetting often comes with painful consequences such as late fees on bills, loss of playing time on a sports team, or even loss of employment.

Peter's heart was set on giving his readers reminders of important truths they already knew so as to further establish them and fix their hearts on Jesus.

Three times in our text Peter mentions “reminding” or “reminders.” As long as he was in his tent (his body), Peter's heart was set on giving his readers reminders of important truths they already knew so as to further establish them and fix their hearts on Jesus, lest the constant buffeting of the devil and the world cause them to forget. Given Peter's threefold denial of Jesus, he knew firsthand how easily the Christian could lose the struggle against the devil's and the world's cunning pressures. Peter also knew that the best remedy for sin's daily struggle was the many reminders provided by the precious promises of God in His Word. Therefore, his deathbed promise to his

readers was this: “I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.” (verse 15)

Peter wasn't the only one to stress the importance of such reminders. The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, “For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.” (Philippians 3:1) In Deuteronomy, Moses told the people, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

Day by day, we live surrounded in the world's sea of sin and unbelief. We can often feel ourselves being pulled along by the rip currents of doubt and temptation, for in our sinful flesh we have an active participant who wants us to forget every truth we've ever learned from God's Word. Such forgetting, though, brings with it the painful consequence of eternal death in hell. Reminders of God's saving truths are necessary lifelines to pull us out of the world's dangerous rip tides, for such reminders tell us about God's love for us in Christ Jesus and that our salvation is in Him alone. Those kinds of reminders are worthy of pursuit our whole life long. As long as we are in this tent (body), may we seek God's reminders for ourselves and each other as we hear them preached from the pulpit, read and study them in our Bibles, and share them with one another.



Chad Seybt is pastor of a quad parish that includes Morning Star Lutheran Church in Fairchild, Trinity Lutheran Church in Millston, St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Melrose, and Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran Church in Onalaska; all in Wisconsin.

Guaranteed Victory

Perhaps you have learned the hard way. Even when the odds seem to be stacked in your favor, you should never guarantee a victory. They are called upsets for a reason—an unexpected outcome despite the odds. What if God guarantees a victory? Is that different?

The Israelites had witnessed the effect that the ten plagues had had on Egypt. Following the tenth plague, the Israelites fled, and God provided a dry escape route through the Red Sea. He then wished His people to take possession of the Promised Land, guaranteeing a victory over its inhabitants. Moses told them, “Look, the LORD your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the LORD God of your fathers has spoken to you; do not fear or be discouraged.” (Deuteronomy 1:21) So why didn’t they?

They wanted to know what they were up against first. Twelve spies, one from each tribe, were sent to investigate the land and the people who lived there. They returned after forty days and reported that the land indeed “flowed with milk and honey,” but “the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large.” (Numbers 13:27-28) They especially noted the descendants of Anak, giants, to whom they comparatively would appear as grasshoppers. Ten of the twelve spies convinced the people that they should not enter the land. This led to weeping and complaining among the Israelites. Some even blamed the Lord for freeing them from the Egyptians. “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! . . . Why has the LORD brought us to this land to fall by the sword?” (Numbers 14:2-3) Of the twelve spies, only Joshua and Caleb trusted in God to give them success. For saying as much, the people desired to stone them.

Because of their disobedience and lack of trust in the Lord, He caused them to wander forty years in the wilderness, a year for each day they spied in the land. Of all those aged

twenty and older, only Joshua and Caleb would be allowed to enter the Promised Land. The ten spies who showed a lack of faith soon died of a plague.

What you may not recall from this Bible account, however, is how the Israelites reacted *after* God pronounced judgment on them. They suddenly said, “We have sinned against the LORD; we will go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.” (Deuteronomy 1:41) Does this response remind you of a child after hearing the disciplinary consequences of the child’s actions? “No, no, please, I’ll be good. I’ll do what I’m supposed to do now.” “Too late! You don’t get a do-over,” says the parent.

But, STOP! Before we begin to suppose that we belong to the group that includes Joshua and Caleb rather than the group with the ten spies and the disciplined child, let us evaluate our own faith responses. In spite of God guaranteeing our victory over sin, death, and the devil,

how often do we act as though we are on the losing side? How often do we murmur and complain and doubt God’s promises in spite of all His faithfulness to us? How often do we fear earthly opponents even though we should know God’s power over them is unquestionable? And how often do we want a do-over after disobeying His clear commands?

Thank God that His love for us is in spite of us rather than because of us. May His Holy Spirit work in us the faith that Joshua showed in his witness: “Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)



The spies return



Joe Lau is a professor at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

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

Galatians

Freedom, and the Destructive Power of Addition

At times what ought to be obvious to us is finally identified only through comparison. So it is with the Holy Spirit's urgent message to the churches of Galatia, delivered through this Epistle by His servant Paul. Comparing Paul's Letters to the churches in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica, his letters followed a familiar pattern: 1) From, 2) To, 3) Words of thanks, praise, and encouragement, 4) The message God the Holy Spirit would convey.

Not so here. Writing to the Galatian churches in Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium, Paul identifies himself as the author, the churches in Galatia as the recipients, but omits any words of thanks, praise, and encouragement. In fact, he does quite the opposite. Rather than words of thanks and praise, Paul launches immediately into what is arguably one of the strongest reprimands found anywhere in his writings: "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:6-8 ESV) Not even in his letters to the troubled congregation in Corinth did Paul deliver such sobering words of rebuke and disapproval. Understanding why Paul did so is key to understanding the entire epistle.

"False brothers" (called Judaizers) had insinuated themselves into the Galatian churches. In loving concern for the souls of the tender new Christians there, Paul used the strongest of terms to identify the subtle but deadly danger. The attack was subtle in that it did not overtly deny Christ but suggested a "simple addition"—the Law, especially circumcision. The Judaizers' argument was, "Faith in Jesus is fine, but you also have to observe the Law of Moses." Understand how seductive this argument must have been for Jewish converts, who had been raised under the constraints of the Mosaic Law. Recognizing the threat for what it was, Paul addressed it so

forcefully because what was being promoted as a relatively minor addition destroyed the Gospel entirely.

The theme of Paul's Letter to the Galatians is summarized in one word: *Freedom*. "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

(Galatians 5:1 ESV) To add anything at all that man must do to what Christ has done for us is to abandon the freedom we have in Christ and to again place ourselves under the slavery of the Law. If it is even in part by works, then salvation is not by grace alone. By His perfect life offered in innocent death, Christ freed us. He paid what we owed and thereby liberated us from the bondage and condemnation of the Law. Paul therefore asked of the Galatian Christians the obvious question: "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless

elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?" (Galatians 4:9 ESV)

Having first established that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by works, Paul goes on to address what Christian freedom is not; that is, it is not a license to return to the slavery of sin. "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh . . . Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit." (Galatians 5:13, 24-25)

Since Satan will certainly continue to tempt us with the subtle appeal of works righteousness, treasure the gift that is Paul's Letter to the Galatians and the true freedom it proclaims.

Paul launches immediately into what is arguably one of the strongest reprimands found anywhere in his writings.



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



Rev. Bertram J. Naumann
1931-2009

In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Rev. Bertram J. Naumann (1931-2009) was involved in the formation of the CLC. He served as pastor at various CLC congregations, including Marquette, Michigan; Hales Corners, Wisconsin; and Lynnwood, Washington. He also served on various boards and committees of the CLC, notably the Board of Trustees and Board of Doctrine. This article is from the Lutheran Spokesman of February, 1989. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

"Greetings, Rabbi!"

Who spoke these enthusiastic words? No, it wasn't the welcome of just another would-be follower of Jesus for his revered teacher.

It was an informant for the enemy. And he came from the closest group gathered around Jesus as He faced death. The words, of course, came from the lips of Judas, one of the Twelve (Matthew 26:49).

What's the word for it? Oh yes— "guile." "Cunning—deceit—duplicity—treachery" says Webster.

But then came the answer from Him who would shortly pay for just such deceit because, as Scripture records: "[Christ] committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth." (I Peter 2:22)

As important as it was for all of the disciples of Jesus again in the season just past "to keep Christ in Christmas," just so important is it "to keep guile out of Lent."

Getting Personal

Where's the guile—the deceit? It can be hidden away in numbers. The CLC has an officer who yearly gathers numbers, and he is called the Statistician. Your pastor can give you a copy of last year's "stats." And hidden away under an item called "Church Attendance, Average all services," are your congregation's attendance stats, including those from Lenten services. Why is it that we can find no church's Lenten attendance stats higher than the same figures for Sunday's? Obvious, right? *Fewer people attend Lenten services.* What's the reason? Better, what's yours?

Is it perhaps because there is still a lot of "Rabbi greeting" going on that is far from genuine and free from guile? Let's get personal.

"Oh, was it Ash Wednesday already last week? It came so soon this year that I missed it." (Note that there are half-truths in all of this.) "Services reach beyond the children's bedtime, and with them to distract me, I might as well stay home." "Once a week is enough." "It's raining." "The roads are treacherous." "That evening is my _____ night (you fill in the blank: bowling—cards—

union meeting—aerobics—television—sports—work late—class work, etc.). What is so different about saying, rather, with the full intent of the original Judas's deceit: "Greetings, Rabbi!"?

The Solution

Another Lenten season has come, and there is a wonderful solution to all of the above. The only One who truly has earned and deserves the title "Rabbi" was the One who willingly met His guileful deceiver and called him "friend." "Friend, why have you come?" (Matthew 26:50)

Jesus knew why Judas had come just as surely as God knew where Adam was before He asked him in Eden: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9) The reason for the question was and is to invite true repentance.

Our strength in this and any season of the church year is in Christ Who came to pay for our guilt. His Word is "the power of God unto salvation." (Romans 1:16) "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

It's not too late. Your pastor has made very special preparations for Lent and midweek services. He has done his best to put the "apples of gold" of God's Word into the (lesser but still) "settings of silver" of a sermon carefully written just for you (Proverbs 25:11).

And through the Word of God you will hear how God has covered all your guile by sending His Son to pay for it all in full. Yes, Lent is the season for guilt, but it is first and foremost the season for repentance and faith.

It must be granted that there are guileless reasons which necessitate a Lutheran Christian's absence from Lenten services. But if at all possible, may you be found among those Lenten stats which include all who come to the Savior's House this Lenten season.

Above all may you be among those who with repentant hearts offer the very same welcome and, completely without guile, say: "Greetings, Rabbi!"

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

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

In 1983 Pastor David Koenig, Pastor David Schierenbeck, and layman John Rohrbach went to India for the CLC Board of Missions to meet with Rohrbach's contact, Pastor V.S. Benjamin, and his people.

This is an excerpt from Pastor Koenig's report upon their arrival in India.

A LOOK BACK AT OUR FIRST CONTACT IN INDIA

Thursday, January 13, 1983.

We landed in Chennai, India at 12:45 A.M. After haggling with a cab driver, we took the bus to the railroad depot. After going to the wrong depot, we finally got to the right one by rickshaw (a three wheeled bike with double seat in back and powered by pedaling—not ours). Here we truly came into a different world.

IN CHENNAI. Here we began to see a poverty that is hard to fully describe. As we walked along the sidewalk, we walked with everybody from cripples to cows. There are many beggars, most of whom really do look like they need help. All along the route from the airport to the railway depot the road was illuminated by fires made by people living along the road. Some of them lived right along the road in a hut no bigger than a small closet. In the railway depot, scattered across the floor, were huddled humps of humanity. Completely wrapped in their blankets, people were sleeping



Pastor David Schierenbeck (left) and Ipswich, South Dakota member John Rohrbach (second from right)



Chennai main train station at night

there, either waiting for the train or simply because they had no other place to sleep. We finally ate breakfast in the depot cafe terrace. It was rundown, as was so much in the India we saw. We ate eggs, toast and tea. Below us cars, buses, and rickshaws jammed the streets, their horns honking. The sights and sounds of mass humanity were spread out before us. And alighting above us were some carrion crows. These crows are larger than those in our country.

In the train we rode in second class for something like 220 miles. It took eight hours. We were crowded into passenger cars in the same way that cattle are herded into cattle cars in our country. During any portion of the trip, fully one-third of the passengers in our car had no seats. Even when we would yield our seat to ladies, they were hesitant at times to take it—different customs. Every time we stopped at a station, which was close to twenty times, the vendors would come to the windows to sell their bananas, coffee, pastries, soda, and such. Also, beggars would travel through the car.



One of the multitude of trains constantly moving through Chennai

There was a blind couple who would sing. One man dragged himself with his hands because his feet were all twisted and withered. A disheveled and filthy mother passed by with her child, among many others.

While on the train, we had chances to witness. David and John talked at length with a Salvation Army major. They discussed differences in Bible teaching with him. I had a long talk with a very well-educated Hindu. He had a Bible, but considered Jesus to be just one of many world religious leaders, no more. It was sad that he was so intelligent but would not believe. As I left him, I prayed that he would read his Bible again, and that the Spirit would yet work in his heart. Even though we couldn't talk with most of the people in our train car, our heart went out to them.

IN NIDUBROLU. We arrived in Nidubrolu about 5:00 P.M. There is no question that God was with us all the way, and that He would direct our work here for the two and a half weeks that remained to us. One illustration of the Lord's guidance: We sent a letter announcing when we would arrive in India, but Pastor V.S. Benjamin received it too late to get to Chennai to meet us. So, on Thursday evening, out of concern for us, he was praying. As he finished his prayer, his son Nireekshana rushed in to tell him that we had arrived and were at the depot there in Nidubrolu. May the Lord be praised! The same night we arrived we witnessed their first service. We were to stay at Benjamin's house, and it was here this evening that they gathered. A microphone and loudspeakers were set up. The mats were laid out. The singing began with a drum and a small hand-pumped organ. Forty people gathered and welcomed us with messages. We also spoke the Word of God to them.

Friday, January 14.

This afternoon we went to the first of the many meetings. M. Sayarao is pastor here. Our presentation was in three parts,



A bicycle rickshaw



Pastors David Schierenbeck and David Koenig (back row l to r) along with CLCI President V.S. Benjamin (seated) at a conference of CLCI pastors

a procedure we would follow throughout our stay. John Rohrbach would begin with a statement about his returning and his joy in the Gospel to see them. Then Dave and I would trade off with a Gospel message and explanation of the CLC. We would also sing with them one of our hymns. To this service, which lasted two hours and twenty minutes, fifty-seven people came. Afterwards there were prayers for a boy with polio, a man who had recovered from near death, and others. These people are a praying people and it is wonderful to see!



David Koenig has served as a foreign missionary in Africa, India, and elsewhere. Though officially retired, he continues to be active in the synod's mission endeavors.

WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Updates from congregations around the Church of the Lutheran Confession

Grace Lutheran Church Valentine, Nebraska

“Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.” (Psalm 98:1)

Anyone visiting Grace of Valentine, Nebraska, who is familiar with both the congregation and school, will be able to see many “new” things and people as you visit its property on West Third Street. Our Lord has indeed done “*marvelous things*” in recent years by giving the members of Grace many opportunities to share the Gospel, especially in the area of Christian education.

Beginning in the fall of 2015, Grace reopened its parochial school with one student and a plan to add one grade per year until the school would once again be a K-8 parochial school. The Lord has blessed those plans beyond anyone’s expectations! Ten years later, the school is now a full K-8 school with an active preschool as well. Total enrollment for the 2024-2025 school year has reached 65 with most of those students in the lower grades. Praise the Lord for doing “*marvelous things*” within the hearts of so many parents in



The teaching staff of Grace Lutheran School



Teacher Ann Sprengeler working with lower grade students

our congregation and the surrounding community, filling them with the desire to bring their children up “*in the training and admonition of the Lord.*” (Ephesians 6:4)

Miss Candice Ohlmann, who was called in the summer of 2015 to reopen the school, continues to serve as preschool teacher and teacher in the lower grades. Joining her in the past three years has been Mr. Andrew Roehl, who now serves as the upper grade teacher and principal; Mr. Stephen Krause, who serves in both the middle and upper grades; and, most recently, Mr. Noah Ohlmann, a recent graduate of our Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, who will serve in the lower grades. Grace was also blessed by the able service of retired teacher, Miss Ann Sprengeler, during the first half of this 2024-2025 school year.

Meeting the increased need for classroom space due to the larger enrollment has also led the Lord to do “*marvelous*



Students of Grace Lutheran School at lunch time

things!" During the summer of 2022, the members of Grace constructed a new fellowship hall. The new building, with dimensions of 28' x 72', is attached to the west side of the school building. It provides the congregation and school with a fully functional kitchen, cafeteria, expanded bathroom facilities, and enough space to set up an additional classroom. The hall is light and airy and has functioned well in every capacity, including hosting the 2023 CLC Women's West Retreat and the 2024 CLC West-Central Delegate Conference.

During the summer of 2024 an additional classroom was built, once again by the members, to provide for a needed fourth classroom area. This 28' by 32' structure was added to the west side of the fellowship hall with direct access to the fellowship hall but also with exterior exits on both the north and south sides. It too is light and airy and has functioned well in its first year of use.

As Grace congregation looks ahead, we pray for both the presence and wisdom of God, so that the opportunities He is giving us will be met. Plans are being developed to remodel the basement of the church, including the addition of a third exit from that space, which will allow the basement to be used for a variety of purposes including an additional classroom.

The members of Grace are approaching the future with confidence—not in themselves, but in the Lord, Whose *"right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory."* (Psalm 98:1)



Paul D. Nolting is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Valentine, Nebraska, as well as Saint Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church in White River, South Dakota, and Peace Lutheran Church in Mission, South Dakota.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS MARCH 2025

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

DATE	HYMN		READING
March 1	TLH 135 / LSB 414	Luke 9	Jesus sends the twelve apostles to preach, to heal, and to drive out demons. Jesus feeds five thousand. Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ and Jesus predicts His own death. Jesus calls His followers to bear the cross. Peter, John, and James witness Jesus transfigured on the mountain. Jesus heals a boy of an unclean spirit. Jesus teaches His disciples many things.
March 3	TLH 366 / LSB 536	Luke 10	Jesus sends the seventy-two to go ahead of Him, to preach, and to heal the sick. The seventy-two return with joy. Jesus rejoices in the will of His Father. Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan. Jesus visits the home of Martha and Mary.
March 4	TLH 555	Psalms 13	Often we find that we must wait for the deliverance of the Lord. We wonder when He will answer our prayers. When and how will He finally deliver us from our enemies? Since the Lord has granted us forgiveness and salvation in Christ, we know and believe that He is working all things for our eternal good. Therefore we wait patiently, trusting in Him.
March 5	TLH 328	Joel 1	Joel describes a terrible invasion of locusts, destroying all crops. In light of such a catastrophe, Joel calls his people to repentance.
March 6	TLH 428 / LSB 729	Joel 3	Joel foretells the judgment of the Lord on the nations. For Judah, however, the future will be glorious.
March 7	TLH 334 / LSB 689	Isaiah 1	Through Isaiah the Lord reveals the wickedness of Judah. Jerusalem has been unfaithful to her God.
March 8	TLH 67 / LSB 514	Isaiah 2	The Lord will establish His holy mountain. Isaiah calls his people to walk in the light of the Lord. The day of the judgment of the Lord is coming.
March 10	LSB 511	Isaiah 3	The Lord judges Judah and Jerusalem in their wickedness.
March 11	WS 792	Isaiah 4	The situation will be tragic for those who have rejected the Lord. Those who trust in the Branch, however, will escape the judgment and will be glorified.
March 12	TLH 345	Psalms 14	All people know by nature and by conscience that God exists; only a fool could deny it. All people are corrupt with sin and foolish by nature. However, our salvation has come out of Zion!
March 13	TLH 458 / LSB 766	Luke 11	Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. In response to accusation, Jesus reasons that He cannot be driving out demons by the power of demons. Jesus teaches about unclean spirits. Jesus gives the sign of Jonah. Jesus teaches His followers to let their lights shine. Jesus pronounces woes to the Pharisees and to the lawyers.
March 14	TLH 263 / LSB 666	Luke 12	Jesus warns against the leaven of the Pharisees. Jesus teaches us to fear God and not man. Jesus urges us to acknowledge Him before men. Jesus tells the parable of the rich fool. Jesus encourages His disciples not to be anxious, but urges them to be prepared for His coming. Jesus brings division on earth, not peace. Jesus urges each of His hearers to recognize that the messianic age has come and to settle with his accuser.
March 15	WS 751 / LSB 594	Luke 13	Jesus teaches us to repent lest we perish. Jesus tells the parable of the barren fig tree. Jesus responds to ridicule for healing a woman of a disabling spirit on the Sabbath. Jesus compares the kingdom of God to a grain of mustard seed and to leaven. Jesus teaches that the door to salvation is narrow and that many will not be able to enter. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem.
March 17	TLH 27 / LSB 814	Exodus 21	Through Moses the Lord provides laws regarding slaves and laws regarding restitution.
March 18	TLH 22	Exodus 22	Through Moses the Lord provides laws regarding restitution and laws regarding social justice.
March 19	TLH 441 / LSB 781	Exodus 23	Through Moses the Lord provides laws regarding social justice and laws regarding the Sabbath and festivals. The Lord promises to give His people victory over the peoples of Canaan.
March 20	TLH 298 / LSB 590	Exodus 24	The Lord confirms His covenant with His people.
March 21	TLH 400 / LSB 783	Exodus 25	The Lord gives instructions regarding contributions for the sanctuary, the ark of the covenant, the table for the bread of the Presence, and the golden lampstand.
March 22	TLH 404	Exodus 26	The Lord gives instructions regarding the construction of the tabernacle.
March 24	LSB 782	Exodus 27	The Lord gives instructions regarding the bronze altar, the court of the tabernacle, and the oil lamp.
March 25	LSB 686	Exodus 28	The Lord gives instructions regarding the garments of the priests.
March 26	LSB 848	Exodus 29	The Lord gives instructions regarding the consecration of the priests.
March 27	LSB 502	Exodus 30	The Lord gives instructions regarding the altar of incense, the census tax, the bronze basin, the anointing oil, and the incense.
March 28	TLH 270	Luke 14	Jesus heals a man of dropsy on the Sabbath. Jesus tells the parable of the wedding feast and the parable of the great banquet. Jesus teaches the cost of discipleship. Salt that has lost its taste is worthless.
March 29	TLH 324 / LSB 609	Luke 15	Jesus tells the parables of the lost sheep, of the lost coin, and of the prodigal son.
March 31	TLH 738	Exodus 31	The Lord blesses Bezalel, Oholiab, and others with the knowledge and the skill necessary to craft precious metal, wood, oil, garments, and all the furnishings necessary for the tabernacle. The Lord commands His people to keep the Sabbath.

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.

Financial Aid for Future Pastors and Teachers

IMMANUEL LUTHERAN
HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE & SEMINARY

The growing number of pastor and teacher calls and vacancies recently in our churches and schools attest that the need for young people to prepare themselves for the public ministry has never been greater. The aim of this article also is to encourage our youth for such preparation by showing the financial support our church body is providing to young people enrolled in ILC's pre-theological and education programs.

Public Ministry Preparation (PMP) Program

In addition to the Student Aid Fund (SAF) available to all students in the ILC high school, college, and seminary departments through SAF student loans, family multi-student grants, and campus student employment (work study), special financial aid is available for students preparing for the public ministry. That program is aptly named "Public Ministry Preparation" (PMP).

The PMPE represents the **Endowment** invested portfolio part of the PMP fund. The PMPG represents the **Grant** part of this fund, namely, the annual earnings of interest and dividends only, (not capital appreciation) available from the Endowment portfolio. These earnings are granted routinely each year to all full-time ILC public ministry students.

Since its inception in 2000, the PMP Endowment portfolio has grown to \$2 million, largely from bequests, but also from memorials and offerings. Earnings vary each year, of course, and the amount of grants awarded each student depends on the number of public ministry students enrolled full-time each year. Some years have provided as much as half of a student's tuition. This year's earnings are providing about 56% of the tuition for our full-time education and pre-theological college students. Over the last four years, the PMP has provided from 73% to 81% of seminary students' tuition.

Partners in Ministry (PiM) Program

Another encouragement for students preparing for the public ministry is to be aware that our church body has also established

a financial program to help students *after* they accept a call and become CLC pastors or teachers in our congregations. This program is called "Partners in Ministry" (PiM), which helps CLC called servants pay back ILC student loans. From inception of the program through the end of December 2024, funding of \$85,077 from eight donors has been used to match \$65,455 of called worker loan payments to help them pay off \$130,910 of their SAF loan balances. Nine SAF loans have been repaid to date, and seven are still making payments and receiving matches. The current balance of donor funds on hand is \$19,621 which obviously is insufficient to match beneficiary balances totaling \$52,287. Funding is always welcome and needed to continue this special program of support for active CLC pastors and teachers who used ILC SAF loans to prepare for their pastoral or teaching ministries. If you would like information on being a donor, please contact ILC Business Manager Steve Lentz (715-836-6622 or steve.lentz@ilc.edu).

Beneficiaries of both these programs have expressed their appreciation that the CLC has established these programs, and their gratitude to the Lord and the donors for providing the funding. Offerings for these programs may be designated and sent c/o the ILC Business Manager, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI 54701. Student aid applications for the 2025-26 school year are due May 1, 2025.

We are truly thankful that the Lord not only provides those willing and able to serve in the public ministry but also the means and willingness of our members to support them. *"Let him who is taught in the word share in all good things with him who teaches."* (Galatians 6:6).



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

Lutheran Spokesman

501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701

SEEN IN PASSING

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

“Thou Shalt Not Murder.” –God. In an ever-shifting moral landscape, Americans have at least been able to agree that murder is bad. Until now, that is. In the wake of Luigi Mangione’s cold-blooded assassination of insurance CEO Brian Thompson in New York in December, waves of support *for the killer* have swept across social media. Talking heads of the left excused his actions. Merchandise featuring Mangione’s image sprang up on Amazon. A video projection of his face was cheered at a rock concert in Boston. A crowdsourced defense fund quickly swelled with donations. Wanted posters appeared in Manhattan with pictures of other corporate CEOs. And these were not aberrations. In an Emerson College survey, 41% of Americans polled said that the killer’s actions were either “somewhat” or “completely” acceptable. Among young people it was worse: nearly 60% of 18- to 29-year-olds were unwilling to condemn the murder unequivocally. McDonald, Heather. “Luigi Mangione and the American Abyss.” *Eye on the News*. City-Journal.org, 23 Dec., 2024. Web. 23 Dec., 2024.

Belief in Supernatural Increasing Among the Educated? Statistics released by the federal government’s General Social Survey reveal something surprising about college-educated Americans—between 1991 and 2018, the percentage of those who say they “definitely believe” in miracles increased from 45% to 63%. Among post-graduate degree holders, the percentage more than doubled, from 30% in 1991 to 61% in 2018. Other survey questions querying about belief in various aspects of the supernatural reflected similar trends. How could this be, given a simultaneous and well-documented *decline* in religious affiliation? “Making sense of this apparent contradiction requires rethinking what it means to be ‘secular,’” said a writer at *Breakpoint.org*. “For example, just as rejecting religion is not the same as rejecting the supernatural, so an increased openness to the supernatural should not be equated with religious revival. . . . A softening toward ‘signs and wonders’ among college educated Americans may simply reflect the general resilience of supernaturalism, which is not the same thing as embracing faith, Christian or otherwise. Put differently, there is such a thing as a secular spirituality, and that may be what we are seeing today.” Stonestreet, John. “The Rising Belief in Miracles.” *Articles*. Breakpoint.org, 8 Jan., 2025. Web. 8 Jan., 2025.

Christians Disappear from Palestine, the Birthplace of Christianity. “The Christian population in areas governed by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas has plummeted drastically by up to 90% in some communities, a new study suggests, attributing the decline to violence, discrimination and economic hardships that threaten the survival of Christianity in its historical heartland. The Christian demographic in Palestinian territories has experienced a dramatic reduction over the past century. In 1922, Christians made up 11% of the population in geographical Palestine. By 2024, this number had dwindled to 1%, marking a nearly 90% decrease, according to a study conducted by the Israeli think tank Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs. . . . The city of Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, serves as an example of this trend. In 1950, Bethlehem and its surrounding villages were 86% Christian. However, by the last census in 2017, the Christian population had dropped to about 10%.” Kumar, Anugra. “Christian population nearly wiped out under Hamas, PA rule in Christianity’s birthplace.” *News*. ChristianPost.com, 25 Dec., 2024. Web. 8 Jan., 2025.