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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

All we like sheep have gone astray,
and the Lord has laid on Him
the iniquity of us all.

—Isaiah 53:6



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STRONG + TENDER = GOOD

“The sheep are out!” Whenever those words echoed through the farmhouse, everyone knew what it meant: “Drop what you are doing and get outside!”

It was urgent, lest the sheep trample the garden or wander into danger by reaching the highway.

The call for help needed multiple responders because even though the sheep somehow wiggled their woolly frames through the smallest of gaps in the fence, they would run right past the pasture’s wide-open gate if a person wasn’t there to stop them.

These escape artists were not underfed, and they had plenty of pastureland to roam. Yet they were discontent, wanted what they could not have, kept leaving the boundaries set for them, were completely unable to return within the boundaries on their own, and they were ignorant of their self-created danger.

Fed, safe, secure, and kept—yet these sheep did their own thing. How foolish! Sadly, we too are that foolish. “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way.” (Isaiah 53:6)

Christian artwork often portrays sheep peacefully grazing in rich pastures, calm and serene (Psalm 23). It is less common for artists to capture the dangerous reality for sheep without a shepherd—a wolf stalking its frightened prey, a lion ready to pounce upon a helpless lamb, or a bear bounding toward a witless flock. God, Who describes us as sheep, also describes our enemy as this kind of predator. “Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

Because a sheep has no noteworthy strength of its own and tends to wander into trouble, it needs a shepherd. The shepherd needs to be strong enough to defeat the enemy and protect the sheep.

Jesus is that strong warrior-shepherd for us. “Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him.” (Isaiah 40:10) Our Savior-Shepherd is strong enough to defend us against “principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly



places.” (Ephesians 6:12) He had the strength and endurance to bear the sins of the wandering sheep. “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:4,6) “What punishment so strange is suffered yonder! The Shepherd dies for sheep who loved to wander!” (TLH 143:4)

Jesus is our strong and mighty Savior in the battle, and He is also tender, nurturing, merciful, and kind. “He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.” (Isaiah 40:11)

Jesus has defeated our predators so we don’t need to run in fear of death. Rather, we run with our Savior away from temptation and into His loving arms. Having died for our sins, Jesus is our living Savior Who calls us to

His side, carries us, loves us, forgives us, hears our prayers, calms and comforts us, provides for us, and promises, “I give [you] eternal life, and [you] shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch [you] out of My hand.” (John 10:28)

This is the Shepherd Who cares for us! Gone is the fear of the enemy. Gone is the danger. Gone is our condemnation, because He is strong! Tender is His embrace. Tender is His care. Tender is His nurturing of our souls.

Our strong and tender Shepherd is indeed very good.

*I am Jesus’ little lamb,
Ever glad at heart I am;
For my Shepherd gently guides me,
Knows my need and well provides me,
Loves me every day the same,
Even calls me by my name. (TLH 648:1)*



Wayne Eichstadt is pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Spokane Valley, Washington, and serves as Secretary of the CLC.

THE GIFT OF MOTHERS

Does the title of this article mean that mothers are the gift or that mothers are the ones from whom the gift comes? The answer is, “Both!”

“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.” (Genesis 3:20)

Eve means “life” or “source of life.” Every person since then has received the gift of an earthly, human life from her—our first mother—as God Himself designed. The Old and New Testament Scriptures attest to that.

All who are children of God by faith can trace their eternal life back also to Eve. (Some readers may have responded to that last sentence with a doubletake, but it’s true!)

When God gave the very first Gospel promise in Genesis 3:15, did He not refer to the one we now know as Jesus Christ as “her Seed”?

Over the following millennia God did give life *and* the promise of eternal life through mothers. God revealed the names of many: Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. The physical family line and the accompanying promise of a Savior were, in no small part, passed along through the mothers of succeeding generations.

Gabriel summarized it well when he said, *“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the LORD God will give Him the throne of His father David.” (Luke 1:30-32)* By announcing that she would conceive in her womb and bring forth a Son (become a mother by having a baby), that His name will be Jesus (Savior), and that her Son would be the Son of the Highest (divine) and the son of David (human), the angel brought it all together very well!

By granting salvation to them through the Messiah and the privilege of being mothers through whom the Messiah would come, God gave awesome gifts to those mothers. By

providing the generations following Eve with children raised to know the coming Messiah (Christ) as their Savior, mothers supported the fathers in blessing their children and their children’s children with the gift of eternal life through the Gospel found in the books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.



Mothers are God’s wonderful gift also to those of us living today! Christian mothers are God’s gifts when they bless their children’s children with the gift of life everlasting through the Gospel foretold in the Old Testament and now fulfilled in the New Testament through Jesus Christ. Think of those mothers joining with the fathers in bringing their children to be baptized

for the remission of sins—including inherited sin—and forgiveness washing over them for the rest of their lives. God considers a mother singing “Jesus Loves Me” while rocking her baby to be more important than anything being reported in the secular news.

I recall a seminary professor saying that Christian mothers may well have a greater impact than the clergy on their sons entering the seminary. There’s an old proverb that says, “An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy!”

One source quotes C.F.W. Walther saying to his expecting daughter, “If God would give you a million dollars, this would be a lesser gift than a little child. . . . In dying you must leave everything behind here; but . . . when through God’s grace that little one learns to know the Savior and to believe in Him, you will rejoice with it in all eternity.”

Thanks be to God for the Gift of Mothers!



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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* May (*The Season of Easter*)

The Season of Easter - Since the earliest days of the New Testament church, believers in Jesus have gathered for worship on Sunday to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Christians still gather on Sunday to sing praises to the Lord and celebrate the hope and joy of Christ's victory over death, and the assurance that because He lives, we will live also. While it is true that every Sunday is a mini celebration of Jesus' resurrection, this is especially true during the Easter season as we reflect on how Christ's resurrection impacts our lives still today.

- **May 4**—The Second Sunday after Easter in most church calendars is known as Good Shepherd Sunday. The readings on this weekend highlight the security which the Lord provides for His people through His love and power as our Good Shepherd. The hymn of the week for this weekend is **“The King of Love My Shepherd Is”** (TLH 431; LSB 709). Based on the familiar words of Psalm 23, we confess our confidence in the Lord because of His love and concern for us, His weak and wandering sheep.
- **May 11**—“Jubilate” is the Latin name given to The Third Sunday after Easter. The mournful melody of the hymn of the day might seem out of place during Easter and especially on a day called *Jubilate*. But true joy can only be known when a person experiences deep loss, grief, or pain. The readings on this Sunday often highlight examples of mourning or grief in order to help us fully appreciate the joy that Jesus offers to us through His life, and in the new life we have in Him. **“O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe”** (TLH 263; LSB 666) beautifully describes the reality of the enemy, while pointing to our joy in Christ's certain victory for sinners.
- **May 18**—The Fourth Sunday after Easter marks a shift in the Easter season. In Psalm 98:1 (the Psalm for this Sunday) the Christian is encouraged to *“Sing to the Lord a new song! For He has done marvelous things.”* Those “marvelous things” include Jesus' promise of the Holy

Spirit whom He sends to bring us to faith and strengthen our faith as we face the sinful world around us. In the magnificent hymn **“Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice”** (TLH 387; LSB 556), by Paul Speratus, we confess our inability to save ourselves, and sing of God's work of salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus.

- **May 25**—The Fifth Sunday after Easter focuses on another gift of our risen Lord: prayer. Jesus repeatedly taught His disciples about proper prayer and assured them that prayers offered to the Father through Him would be heard and answered. What a blessing prayer is, and how much more we should use it! The hymn for this day is Martin Luther's catechism hymn on the Lord's Prayer, **“Our Father, Thou in Heaven Above”** (TLH 458; LSB 766). In this hymn, Luther takes each of the petitions and teaches us how we should pray in our own lives, confident that our Father in Heaven hears us for Jesus' sake.
- **May 29**—The Festival of the Ascension of Jesus is celebrated forty days after Easter. Many churches no longer have worship services on Ascension Day, but this is the day our Savior takes His place at the “right hand of the Father.” Jaroslav Vajda's hymn **“Up through Endless Ranks of Angels”** (WS 737; LSB 491), wonderfully captures the meaning of Christ's ascension, declaring Christ to be the “death destroying, life restoring” Savior of mankind.

Jesus, give us true joy in You as our victorious Lord and Savior!



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

The Glorious Light of the Prophetic Word

"And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, 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." (2 Peter 1:19 ESV)

As I write this article, the season of Epiphany is wrapping up, and the church is preparing to enter the season of Lent. Epiphany is a season of Jesus being revealed as the Son of God, our Savior. Traditionally it begins with the birth of the Savior being revealed to the Wise Men by the light of a star. Epiphany culminates with Jesus being transfigured when we see His "unveiled glory," and God the Father once again speaks His words of endorsement for His beloved Son.

Peter, the inspired writer of our letter, was there on the mount with Jesus. In the verses just before our section (1:16-18), Peter writes about having been an eyewitness to Jesus' glory and an ear-witness to God the Father's words on that mountain.

That event was so amazing that this same Peter, who didn't understand what he was saying at the time, blurted out, "*Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.*" (Mark 9:5) Peter didn't want that glorious moment to end.

Do you ever wish you had been on that holy mountain with Peter? Do you think that your faith would be stronger if you had seen the brightness of Jesus' glory and heard the glorious voice of God the Father?

Peter, who was there, says you have something better. He points you to the glorious light of "*the prophetic word.*" The prophetic Word is the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus says of the Old Testament, "*these are they which testify of Me.*" (John 5:39) From Moses to Malachi, the prophetic word speaks with one voice about the glorious work Jesus would do to save us from our sin.

One source lists over three hundred Old Testament passages



that were fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Some passages Jesus Himself fulfilled by what He said or what He did, such as riding on a colt into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as prophesied in Zechariah 9:9. Other passages about Jesus were fulfilled by His enemies, such as the soldiers who cast lots for Jesus' clothes (Psalm 22:18), and pierced His hands and His feet (Psalm 22:16). King David even prophesied that Jesus would rise from the dead (Psalm 16:10)!

Truly, as Peter says, "*we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.*"

While the Scriptures were always true, the life of Jesus confirms just how true they are. Even better than the voice of God that spoke in one moment on the Mount of Transfiguration is the voice of God speaking to us in the prophetic Word. We can go back to that Word again and again to be more firmly established in the truth.

No wonder Peter calls on us to pay attention to the prophetic Word "*as to a lamp shining in a dark place.*" We need God's lamp to enlighten and lead us through the dark places in our heart and the dark teachings of this world.

However, Peter says there will come a day when we won't need that lamp. When Jesus returns on the Last Day, we will see Him in His unveiled glory forever and we will be glorified with Him. Until the day of Jesus' return dawns, let us pay attention to the lamp God has given us in His Word!



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Lacking Nothing

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1)

I think I was in college before I understood verse one of the 23rd Psalm. Perhaps others have puzzled over it as well.

The rest of the psalm seemed relatively clear to me. Like a faithful shepherd, our gracious God perfectly provides for us, perfectly protects us from danger, and perfectly preserves us in times of trial.

That last phrase in verse one stumped me, though. What does "I shall not want" mean? I shall not want . . . *what* exactly? I shall not want a decent house? I shall not want a wife and family? I shall not want nice clothes?

When I started to study the languages of the Bible, however, the truth finally dawned. This passage isn't using "want" in the transitive sense of "desire" or "wish to obtain," but rather in the intransitive sense of "have a lack" or "experience an unfulfilled need." Some English translations give a more easily-understood rendering, "*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall lack nothing.*" (Psalm 23:1 Hebrew Names Version)

"I shall lack nothing."

With the Lord Jesus Christ as your loving Good Shepherd, there is no possibility of want or lack in your life. "*For the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.*" (Psalm 84:11) No good thing will He withhold? Really? Can it really be true that a believing child of God will never lack anything good? That's what this verse promises, and God always keeps His promises. Even better, you can trust your omniscient Savior to perfectly distinguish between what *you think* is good for you, and what *He knows* is good for you. Perhaps your Good Shepherd has a different career in mind for you than the one you've set your heart on. Perhaps He has prescribed a health issue or a

financial setback that will draw you closer to Him and provide you with priceless spiritual growth. The will of God is always best, as King Solomon acknowledged, "*Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me.*" (Proverbs 30:8) God knows what is needful for you, and He will take care that you lack nothing!



Could there ever be an exception to this rule? Listen to King David: "*I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread.*" I'm pretty old myself, and I've never seen that, either. Have you? He Who fashioned the universe with its innumerable stars and galaxies, leaving out not the slightest detail, will surely provide for all your life's needs, down to the smallest detail.

You are assured in Luke 12:7 that "*the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*" Not only does your Lord know the total, but each hair itself is individually numbered, and He knows exactly which ones came out in your brush this morning. And the One Who knows all your needs has said, "You shall lack nothing!"

Finally, there is the promise that has comforted believers down through the centuries: "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" (Romans 8:32) It's the ultimate rhetorical question. Your gracious Lord has done the greater; He will not stint to do the lesser. Or as the Apostle Paul put it even more simply, "*All things are yours!*" (1 Corinthians 3:21)



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KNOW YOUR BIBLE BOOKS – THE LETTERS OF SAINT PAUL

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.

Philippians

Human Authorship—the Apostle Paul

Time and Place of Writing—Probably 63 or 64, written to the Philippian congregation from Rome, where Paul was imprisoned.

Major Theme—*"Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ." (1:27)*

Do you know what an asymptote is? The word *asymptote* is a little-known technical term of mathematics that the *American Heritage Dictionary* defines as "A line whose distance to a given curve tends to zero." But in a more general, non-mathematical sense, an asymptote is something that you can get increasingly close to, but never fully reach.

What in the world can that possibly have to do with our lives as Christians? It is this: letting our conduct always be *"worthy of the Gospel of Christ"*—the theme of this Bible book—is an asymptote: with the help of God, we can (and should!) continue daily to seek growth in sanctification throughout our lives, but we do so while knowing that we will never attain perfection in this life. The fact that we cannot *perfectly* let our conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ, however, does not mean that what God is telling us here need not be diligently pursued. We won't perfectly attain the goal, but we can keep getting closer to that goal day by day.

When Paul wrote, *"Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ,"* he was not uttering a trite platitude such as when the grocery store checkout clerk says, "Have a nice day." Rather, he was beseeching us to embrace that goal as the focus of our everyday conduct. In his lectures on this book, Dr. George Stoeckhardt said that Paul's purpose was "to exhort his Philippian Christians to a godly life and to strengthen their faith," and Stoeckhardt then notes that "what he says to the Christians at Philippi concerning faith and life is designed to find general application with Christians, also in our time."

When a clerk says, "Have a nice day," he would probably be shocked if you responded, "Fine, but how do you suggest I do that?" But God doesn't stop just with the exhortation. He also tells us how to do it. Beginning with verse 27 of chapter 1, we have God's own instructions for how we are to pursue the goal of walking worthy of the Gospel of Christ. Remember, however, that these instructions are Law. They do not earn salvation; they serve as a guide to Christians who are already motivated by the Gospel to do them.

The first point of instruction addresses us as members of the Church Militant. *"Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the*

faith of the gospel." (1:27) Joined together with other Christians, we are to contend for the faith of the Gospel against all enemies. The devil and the world constantly pressure us to compromise and even violate what the Bible teaches us; they say, "You've got to go along to get along." Doing that, however, would be the opposite of letting our conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

That first "how to" told us to strive against the world. This second one now turns from strife to harmony. We are told to be *"like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."* (2:2) Notice, though, that this working together is based on complete agreement, and

that that agreement is referenced to something outside of ourselves, namely *"the faith of the gospel."*

The third admonition gives us a frame of reference. Our natural tendency is to evaluate all things based on how they affect us personally. That is not God's way, and it is not "conduct worthy of the Gospel." God tells us, *"Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."* (2:4) Rather than "Why should I care about this?" we should learn to ask ourselves "How can I be of help to others in this situation?"

The final exhortation expresses the attitude we need in order to obey the previous one. Referring to Jesus as our example, we are told to be of the same mind: *"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."* The attitude of Christian humility will enable us to consider others before ourselves.

Dear Christians, pursue that asymptote: *"Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ."*



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



Pastor Norbert Reim
1918-2007

In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Pastor Norbert Reim (1918-2007) was a leader in the formation of the CLC. After ten years' work as a missionary in Nigeria, Pastor Reim served congregations in Seattle, Phoenix, and Albuquerque. We here reprint an article from the Lutheran Spokesman of April 1964. Scripture quotations are from the King James version.

Go! Easter Faith and Mission Zeal

The Church now revels in the forty-day period between the Lord's resurrection and His ascension. Particularly in contrast to the somber forty days of Lent, this season after Easter has a heart-warming, faith-invigorating glow that fills the believer with new joy, and a corresponding desire for mission work.

Remember what this forty-day period meant for the disciples! The Lord's death had dealt such a shattering blow to their faith that the first reports of the women concerning an empty tomb "*seemed to them as idle tales*," (Luke 24:11) and fell on unbelieving ears. Faith in the resurrection was slow in coming. The eye-witness report of ten brethren was not enough to convince Thomas. Even those who saw the risen Lord standing before them "*believed not for joy*," (Luke 24:41) Faith was first trembling and hesitant. When these men woke to another new day, they would wonder again whether they had perhaps just dreamt all these glorious things.

Could it possibly be true? Can such a mangled corpse actually rise from the dead? During the forty days the Lord appeared unto them again, and again, and yet again, until finally all doubts were forever laid to rest, and their exultant hearts burned within them. Their faith grew during this period to an unshakable conviction of an incontestable TRUTH; The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed!

During this same period the tremendous significance of The Event had time to sink in. Each new day brought a new awareness of what it all meant. Satan has had it! Our sin has been forever removed! Death is truly swallowed up in victory!

A head of steam was building up within the apostles. This news had to be told. When finally Jesus told them "Go . . . and preach," (Mark 16:15) it was not so much a pushing or even a sending as a releasing. He let them go!

In an incredibly short time, the known world was sprinkled with mission congregations. The zeal and boldness of the apostles was a direct result of the certainty of faith that they enjoyed as eyewitnesses of the resurrection. Did the authorities forbid preaching about the Christ? Their answer was automatic: "*We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*," (Acts 4:20) And so, "*they spake the word of God with boldness. . . . And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*," (Acts 4:20,31,33)

Such a sure faith must be our propelling force as well if we are to bear effective witness. But this of course is something any good sales manual would stress: you yourself have to be sold on your product before you can expect to sell it to others.

Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church

Phoenix, Arizona

Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church and School is located in the heart of North Phoenix. This central location is the hub for many visitors throughout the winter months for people visiting from all over the upper Midwest who enjoy spending a few weeks or a few months in various parts of "The Valley." From as far east as Apache Junction and Mesa to those staying out in Sun City and Sun City West, on Sundays (and some Wednesdays in Advent and Lent) they meet in the middle at Holy Cross. Hundreds of thousands of winter visitors enjoy a winter respite here in the valley of the sun. At the height of our busy visitor season, Holy Cross has had a tradition of treating our guests to a winter visitor luncheon to show our appreciation



for their time spent among us and the gift of fellowship shared here while they are away from their home congregations. This year the luncheon was cherry themed and the guests were treated to a game of "Name that Hymn" while the little ones played "Pin the Cherry on the Ice Cream."

"But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 ESV)

For the past two years we have hosted an annual outreach event at Moon Valley Park, located just two miles from us. On a Saturday in early spring, we will rent an enormous inflatable bounce house with slides, and while park goers bring their kids over to play, we offer them a picnic lunch consisting of hot





Left and Right: Holy Cross outreach event at Moon Valley Park in Phoenix

dogs prepared on site along with chips and a drink. This lends itself well to sharing information about our church and school. One person who works in real estate even commented that she was going to borrow the idea, as she liked how you had a captive audience while parents stood by watching their children play. Many meals have been served, and almost anyone will take a bottle of cold water off of your hands around here. So far, one new student has been enrolled in our school as a direct result of our school parents chatting with other parents at the park.

Since the summer of 2022, Holy Cross has hosted an offsite worship service at Orchard Pointe at Arrowhead, a senior living community and memory care facility. Our service has been the only one regularly offered to the residents since the facility was built. On Thursday mornings several residents, including a faithful core, have met regularly for these past three years. Those who attend have appreciated the high-quality organ

music that is offered (by way of the Lutheran Service Builder) and remarked that it feels like they are sitting in church again, which they sorely miss. We have had the joy of sharing the powerful Gospel of Christ crucified for sinners with a number of people who have come through Orchard Pointe, either returning home because their rehabilitation was complete or because they had nearly reached the end of their time of grace.

At all times and in every circumstance, Holy Cross Lutheran Church strives to be an oasis of God's Word, offering the water of life to thirsty souls here in the desert Southwest.



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

In the World, You Will Have Tribulation

The “prosperity gospel” is rampant in the world, especially here in Africa. It promises people health and wealth (especially if they “sow a seed of faith” by giving money to enrich whichever preacher is making such promises). That is in stark contrast to Jesus’ words above from John 16:33 and the teaching of Paul and Barnabas that “*through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*” (Acts 14:22 ESV) I recently shared these passages with a friend who had the idea that being a Christian should mean having an easy life. I pray he will continue to come to our church to hear the unadulterated truth.

Here in Togo, as in the U.S., we enjoy relative freedom of religion, although the government here wants to forbid (or has already forbidden) the forming of new congregations at least in the capital city. When we moved the main church here, we had to convince the government that it was just a move and not a new congregation. I can sympathize with this desire, as I stumble across a new church on almost every other block as I walk around my neighborhood. Judging from the names and signs, I hesitate to imagine the “gospel” they are hearing in these churches. But we also want to start new congregations and preaching stations that faithfully preach the true Gospel. I guess one must often accept the bad with the good in this sin-stained world.

Many countries don’t experience such freedom of religion. While India may be a secular country on paper, the goal of the ruling Hindu party is to make India a Hindu nation. That fact that Hindus are in power in national and state governments has led to the persecution of Christians, even in the more open south where the brothers and sisters in our fellowship live.

Thankfully, I did not experience any persecution when I was in India beyond some dirty looks and occasionally being questioned as to why I was there. But our pastors in India have experienced much worse. I remember meeting two who had both been beaten. The perpetrators were young hoodlums who were paid by Hindu radicals to keep tabs on Christian preachers. Doctors for one of the pastors said it was doubtful he’d be able to walk again, but he has recovered almost completely; thanks be to God! The other

pastor still has some hearing loss and pain in one of his hands. When I met them, they were happy and laughing. I often wonder if I would be as carefree in their situation.

Later in the same city we met with a group of believers in a home. On the way back to the hotel I asked if that was a house church. I was told no, they did have a church building, but they didn’t think it would be safe for me to go there.

Many Indian states have “anti-conversion” laws. These laws sound reasonable on paper, as they make it illegal to force someone to convert, or entice them by bribing them. We would agree that those are not valid reasons to “convert.” But these laws are often abused by people making false allegations. One head pastor had a police case filed against him because he baptized two people in a village.

He was accused of paying them to be baptized. He didn’t. The two who had been baptized said he didn’t give them money. But how do you prove you didn’t do something, especially to police who are usually Hindu and predisposed against you? You cannot.

While this case was settled over six years ago, the situation has not improved. Our pastors there are routinely arrested on false charges. In 2023 there were twenty-five attacks against our evangelists. In 2024 there were forty-five attacks on members and pastors. The head pastor reports that 2025 looks to be one of the most violent and difficult years for them.

Jesus warned us that we will be hated by the world, slandered, beaten, and even put to death; but persecution is not an easy thing to face. Pray that our brothers and sisters will continue to hold fast and boldly proclaim the true Gospel of eternal life through Jesus’s death and resurrection as they rejoice in their eternal reward in heaven.



Worshippers arriving for the Sunday service in Togo



Peter Evensen is a full-time foreign missionary for the CLC.

IN THE PIPELINE

Want to meet the person who may be your next pastor or Christian day school teacher? This series profiles the men and women who are in their final year of preparation for the public teaching or preaching ministry at our Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Erica Ohlmann



Age: 22

Program: Education

Year in School: Senior

Where were you born?

Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Where did you grow up?

Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family.

I was married to Noah Ohlmann back in August. We spent a few months living in Eau Claire and then moved down to Valentine, Nebraska when Noah took a call to serve as a teacher at their school.

What hobbies, sports or extracurriculars interest you?

I enjoy a lot of activities revolving around art. I've done quite a few hand-lettering/calligraphy projects, which include making and hand-lettering all the signs for my own wedding. I've also recently gotten into cooking new recipes and dabbling in bread

baking. I love a walk in nature on a sunny day. I've always had a love for volleyball.

Tell us one thing about yourself that most people don't know.

I like to make my own candles out of thrifted trinkets, beeswax, and essential oils!

Which academic subjects especially interest you?

I've always enjoyed English and math throughout all the years of my schooling. In college, I particularly enjoyed learning about child psychology.

How did you first come to consider the public teaching or preaching ministry as a career?

I became an aunt quite young, and I've always loved being able to teach my nieces new things or do fun projects with them as they've grown over the years. I think that first created an idea in my head that I could maybe be a teacher in the future. In high school I became convinced that I should use my life, gifts, and talents to serve Christ's Kingdom. God kept this close in my heart, and I came to realize that there was no better way to serve Him with the gifts He had given me than to share His love with children.

What have you appreciated most about your time at ILC?

I've definitely appreciated the constant Christian fellowship found at ILC. I'm grateful for the absence or minimization of many worldly values, as well as the blessing of being surrounded by Christian peers who share my morals.

What qualities do you think will most be needed by the future leaders of the church?

There are so many traits one could list to describe what leaders in the Church should have, but humility and love have always stood out to me as vitally important. I think you can look to God's Word to answer this most accurately. When considering this for myself, I'm always drawn to the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5 and Paul's list of attributes for a church leader in 1 Timothy. Specifically, humility seems to me to be the foundation of a servant attitude. Anyone who is a leader in the Church or school is a servant of Christ, serving His kingdom to the best of their abilities. I believe that it is important to serve in humility, aware that we are also sinners saved by the grace of our Savior.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS MAY 2025

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
May 1	LSB 417	Jeremiah 34	Jeremiah prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity.
May 2	LSB 477	Jeremiah 35	The Rechabites have obeyed the command of their father, but the Judeans have not obeyed the Word of the Lord.
May 3	WS 735 / LSB 485	John 21	Jesus appears to seven disciples and restores Peter, predicting that Peter will die the death of a martyr.
May 5	LSB 475	Jeremiah 36	Jeremiah sends to King Jehoiakim a scroll on which he has written a message from the Lord. Jehoiakim rejects the Words of the Lord, burning the scroll. The Lord pronounces judgment on Jehoiakim.
May 6	LSB 474	Jeremiah 37	Jeremiah warns King Zedekiah that Jerusalem will be destroyed. Jeremiah is falsely accused and imprisoned.
May 7	TLH 467 / LSB 645	Acts 17	Paul and Silas visit Thessalonica and Berea. Paul travels to Athens, where he uses an altar “to the unknown God” as an opportunity to teach the Athenians about the Lord.
May 8	TLH 511 / LSB 832	Acts 18	Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth. The Jews oppose his teaching, but many of the Corinthians believe and are baptized. Paul spends a year and a half teaching them the Word of God. Priscilla and Aquila travel with Paul. Apollos begins proclaiming Christ at the synagogue in Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila instruct Apollos.
May 9	TLH 211	Acts 19	Paul teaches in Ephesus. The sons of Sceva attempt to exorcise an evil spirit. Believers who formerly practiced magic burn their books of witchcraft. Demetrius and the craftsmen oppose the preaching of Paul and incite a riot.
May 10	TLH 442 / LSB 851	Acts 20	Paul travels to Macedonia and to Greece. While Paul speaks at length, Eutychus falls asleep, falls from the third-floor window, dies, and is raised to life. Paul encourages the elders in Ephesus.
May 12	LSB 764	2 Samuel 1	David hears of the deaths of Saul and of Jonathan. David composes a lamentation.
May 13	TLH 341 / LSB 525	2 Samuel 2	The men of Judah anoint David king over Judah. Abner appoints Ishbosheth king over Israel. At Gibeon a battle breaks out between the servants of David and the servants of Ishbosheth.
May 14	TLH 590 / LSB 755	2 Samuel 3	The house of David grows stronger and the house of Saul grows weaker. Abner abandons Ishbosheth and joins David. Joab kills Abner. David mourns.
May 15	TLH 598	2 Samuel 4	Two men kill Ishbosheth and report it to David. David has them killed.
May 16	WS 727 / LSB 473	2 Samuel 5	The people of Israel anoint David as their king. The Lord gives David victory over the Philistines.
May 17	LSB 837	2 Samuel 6	David brings the ark of God to Jerusalem. David dances before the Lord; Michal, his wife, despises him.
May 19	TLH 491 / LSB 681	Acts 11	Peter explains to the believers in Jerusalem that the Lord intends to call also Gentiles to faith through the Gospel. Barnabas and Saul teach the believers in Antioch for a year.
May 20	LSB 481	Acts 12	Herod kills James and imprisons Peter. An angel rescues Peter from prison. The Lord kills Herod.
May 21	TLH 91 / LSB 352	Acts 13	Barnabas and Saul sail to Cyprus. Sergius Paulus believes the Gospel. Barnabas and Saul travel to Perga and to Pisidian Antioch. Paul preaches a sermon in Pisidian Antioch.
May 22	LSB 586	Acts 14	Paul and Barnabas preach at the synagogue in Iconium. Paul heals a crippled man at Lystra and the crowds attempt to worship Paul and Barnabas as Greek gods. The Jews stone Paul at Lystra. Paul survives and continues preaching.
May 23	TLH 331 / LSB 614	Acts 15	A council convenes in Jerusalem to settle the question of whether or not believers must be circumcised in order to be saved. Paul and Barnabas part ways, Paul traveling with Silas and Barnabas traveling with Mark.
May 24	TLH 495	Acts 16	Timothy begins traveling with Paul and Silas. The Lord calls Paul to preach in Macedonia. Lydia believes the Gospel. After Paul drives out a demon, Paul and Silas are imprisoned. The jailer believes the Gospel and he and his family are baptized.
May 26	TLH 187 / LSB 459	Jeremiah 38	Because Jeremiah continues proclaiming the coming destruction of Jerusalem, he is cast into a cistern. Ebed-Melech rescues Jeremiah from the cistern. Jeremiah warns King Zedekiah to surrender to the Babylonians.
May 27	TLH 428 / LSB 729	Jeremiah 39	Babylon conquers Jerusalem, but the Lord delivers Jeremiah.
May 28	TLH 190	Jeremiah 40	Jeremiah chooses to remain in Judah, now occupied by Babylon.
May 29	TLH 197	Jeremiah 41	Ishmael the son of Nethaniah kills Gedaliah, whom the king of Babylon has appointed governor.
May 30	TLH 202	Jeremiah 42	Jeremiah warns the people to live in Judah under the rule of the king of Babylon and not to flee to Egypt.
May 31	TLH 203	Jeremiah 43	The men of Judah ignore the warning of Jeremiah and flee to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them.

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.

CLC GRADE SCHOOL TOURNAMENT

When Spring Break begins at ILC, many of our students hit the road, either to return home or to head out with the Tour Choir. One might expect, then, the campus to depopulate and begin shutting down for the next week or so. The exact opposite happens. Even before classes end at noon on Friday, the CLC Grade School Basketball Tournament begins.

In 1986, Don Brandt organized the first tournament of CLC grade school teams to play basketball with other churches and grade schools in our synod. This first tournament hosted five teams. The tournament, which is hosted annually at ILC, has grown throughout the years. In this year's tournament, for example, sixteen teams participated. Even more impressive than the number of teams is how far some teams travel. The tournament has regularly included teams from our congregations in Washington, California, and South Carolina.

In addition to playing in or watching the basketball games, there are a number of ways people can participate in the tournament. Every year, Laurie Lau organizes a pep band concert that includes grade school students and ILHS students. Also, on Friday night after the games are over, alumni participate in a pick-up game. The robotics club also provides a demonstration of their latest invention. Volunteers provide and sell concessions, and this year the proceeds were donated to the EDUK8 fund. Indeed, volunteers are the heart of this tournament. Coaches and staff members of the schools and congregations give countless hours of their time for the youth of our synod. At the tournament itself, under the direction of Steve Schierenbeck and Steve Sydow, volunteers officiate, run the clock, keep score, and run the video livestream. It is quite amazing to see how the Lord moves so many people to help

out in so many different ways.

During this packed weekend, many great memories are made.

Certainly, players and fans alike will remember close games that went into overtime or the wonderful crowd reaction when the smallest kid on the team sinks an unlikely basket. But the most lasting and important effects of the tournament don't pertain to basketball.

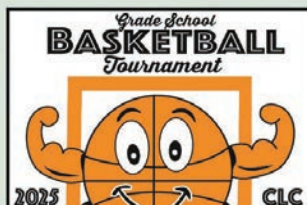
Indeed, the goals of the tournament are to provide Christian fellowship and promote Christian sportsmanship, while exposing families to the campus of Immanuel. It is truly delightful to see Christians from across the country being able to meet like-minded brothers and sisters or reconnect with

friends and family. One very special aspect of this tournament is the way it spans generations. A game may feature students from grades 5-8, referees who could be as young as teenagers or in their 70s, and spectators of all ages. In all the differences among those attending we can see the variety of God's gifts, but above all these differences, we can also joyfully recognize how we are all bound together in the unity of fellowship and faith.

*Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above. (TLH 464:1)*



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



ANNOUNCEMENTS

2025 CLC General Pastoral Conference

June 17-19

Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Agenda:

- Old Testament Exegesis: Amos 2:4ff—Missionary Peter Evensen
 - New Testament Exegesis: 2 Thessalonians 3:1ff—Pastor Johnathan Schnose
 - Motivation for Ministry—Pastor Thomas Naumann
 - Online Communion—Pastor Timothy Daub
 - Pastoral Self-Care—Professor Paul Naumann
 - Study of the Pastor's Role as Both Servant and Leader—Pastor Andrew Schaller
 - Study of Theses and Antitheses on The Role of Admonition in the Termination of Fellowship with Church Bodies (TARA1990) and What Scripture Teaches Regarding Admonition and Termination of Fellowship (2023)—Missionary Bruce Naumann
 - Communion Service Liturgist—Pastor Jonah Albrecht
 - Communion Service Speaker—Pastor Emeritus John Schierenbeck
 - Chaplain—Pastor David Ude
 - Music Coordinator—Pastor Robert Sauers
- Pastor Wayne Eichstadt, CLC Secretary

Installation. In accord with our usage and order, **George Dummann**, who was called by Faith Lutheran Church of New Ulm, Minnesota, to be their pastor was

installed on March 30, 2025. Participating in the service (photo, l. to r.) were Pastor Joseph Naumann, Pastor Emeritus Norman Greve, Pastors Samuel Rodebaugh, George Dummann, Zachary Sippert, Nathan Pfeiffer, and Luke Willitz. Faith of New Ulm will form a dual parish with Salem Lutheran Church in Eagle Lake, Minnesota.

—Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer.



Onalaska and Fairchild Anniversaries. Peace with God Lutheran Church of Onalaska, Wisconsin, will celebrate twenty-five years of God's grace on Saturday, June 21, during our regular worship service at 9:30 A.M. Morning Star Lutheran Church of Fairchild, Wisconsin, will also celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary, on the following Sunday, June 22, during our regular worship service at 8:30 A.M. Former Pastor Richard Kanzenbach will serve as guest preacher for both occasions.

—Pastor Chad Seybt



Church members in Kampala, Uganda hold bibles in their own language



Four children received Holy Baptism in the Massai village of Mbuyuni, Tanzania