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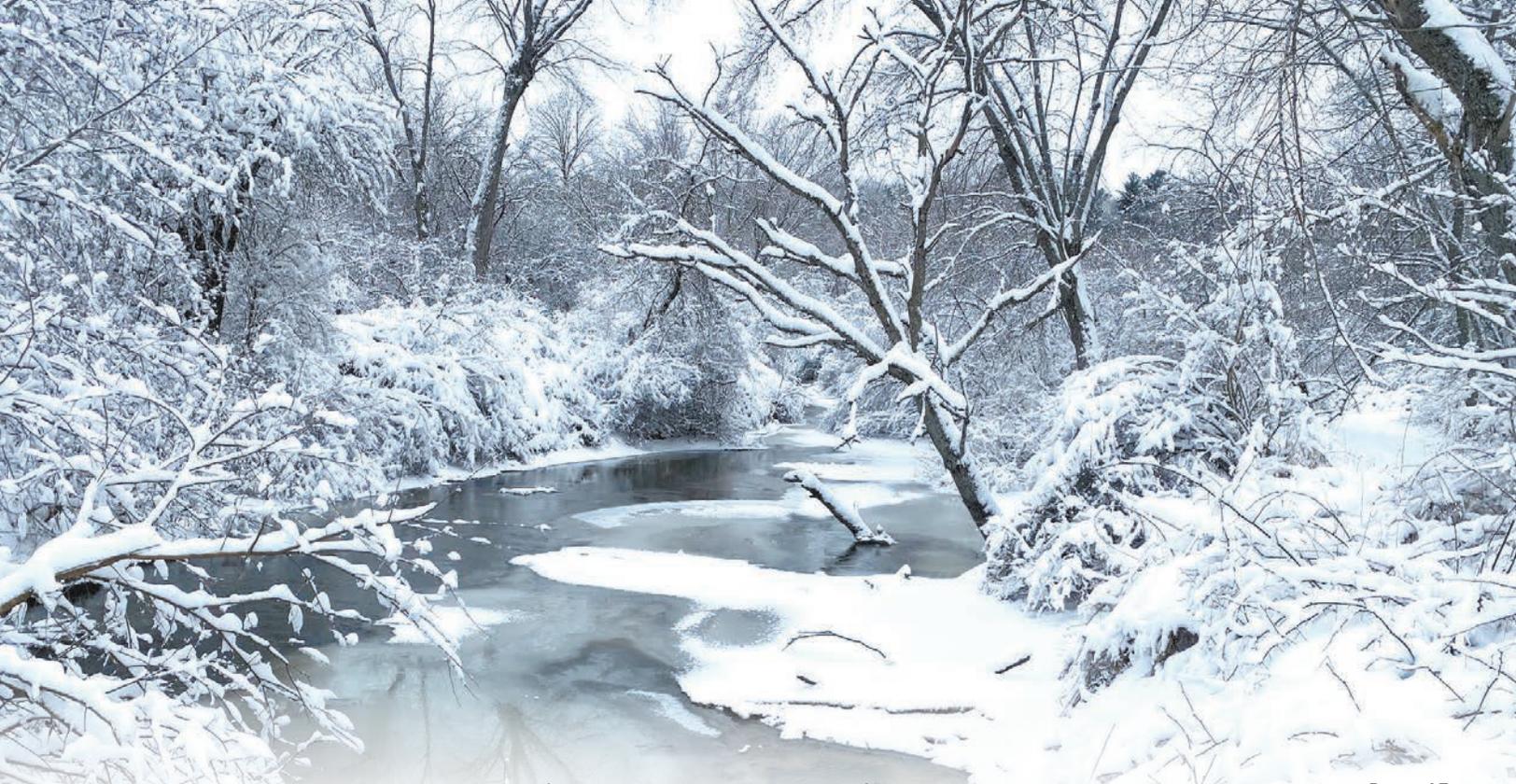
# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



**"Who for the joy that was set before him  
endured the cross, despising the shame."**

Hebrews 12:2



Lowe's Creek in winter, on the campus of Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin **Page 15**

## IN THIS ISSUE MARCH 2026

### COVER STORY - GOOD FRIDAY

A Man of Sorrows..... 3

### DEVOTION - VICARIOUS ATONEMENT

He Bore the Blame ..... 4

### HEARTS IN HARMONY - PROFILES OF THE HYMNWRITERS WHO SHAPE OUR WORSHIP

Nikolaus Selnecker ..... 5

### STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Are We There Yet?..... 6

### GEMS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Babble of Babel Continues ..... 7

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

1 Peter – *The Epistle of Hope*..... 8

### VOICES FROM THE PAST - EUGENE H. RUTZ

What Does Confirmation Mean?..... 9

### WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

Mount Zion Lutheran Church—Madison Heights, Michigan .. 10-11

### NOTES FROM THE FIELD

The Dark African Night ..... 12

### IN THE PIPELINE

Orrin Hanel..... 13

**BREAD OF LIFE READINGS, MARCH 2026**..... 14

### ILC NEWSLETTER

Friends of the Immanuel Forest ..... 15

**SEEN IN PASSING** ..... 16

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# A MAN OF SORROWS

***“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:3-5)***

Thinking back to Christmas, the sound of bells, joyful singing, and happy celebration come to mind. So it was for us, but what about that Child in the manger? Was it a happy time for Him? Of course, we don't know what was going through His mind. However, let's trace His story from His poor manger to His bitter cross. What does this journey reveal: joy or sadness?

The Son of God had to give up the joys and glories of heaven in order to become a lowly child here on earth. How sad. *How sad* that He had to be born in a stable and laid in a feeding trough. *How sad* that no one came to welcome the King of Glory, except a few, insignificant shepherds. *How sad* that during His infancy, His parents had to flee to Egypt, to escape the hateful wrath of King Herod. *How sad* that the people in His hometown rejected Him. *How sad* that His own people despised Him. *How sad* that many, who followed Him at first, ended up rejecting Him. *How sad* that His disciples ran away in confusion and fear. *How sad* that the religious leaders of His people wanted to kill Him. *How sad* that He had to endure a mock trial. *How sad* that the very people He came to save cried out for His crucifixion. *How sad* that Pontius Pilate washed justice from his hands and delivered Jesus to be crucified. *How sad* that God abandoned Him to the agonies of hell. *How sad* that the Lord of life had to die and His body be entombed in the earth He created. No wonder He cried out in Gethsemane, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.” (Matthew 26:38) Truly, as Isaiah prophesied, He was despised, rejected, and a Man of sorrows, for Whom grief was a very familiar companion.



Why would the Son of the Most High God willingly submit to such shame and pain at the hands of His own creatures? Isaiah answers, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities.” From the manger to the cross—it was all for US. “Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.”

Moreover, the Spirit tells us what was on Jesus' mind midst all the sorrows: “Who, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews

12:2) From the beginning, Jesus knew that the temporary sorrow would be subdued by everlasting joy, for He would rise to see His sorrows bring peace and healing to the world. He knew that “many will come from the East and the West and sit at the feast of salvation.” (TLH 415:1)

As we stand on Calvary and ponder the pathway of sorrow that brought Jesus to the wretched cross, we rejoice; but not as did His enemies. They rejoiced in His suffering, but we rejoice in a love so great that the glorious Son of God would willingly become a lowly Man of sorrows, so that we can have the eternal joy of forgiveness of sin and life with Him in heaven.



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

# He Bore the Blame

When I was young, the outdoor game of choice was baseball (softball). I learned the rules from those older; I learned various finer rules from listening to Chicago Cubs baseball on the radio. Major league games featured pinch hitters. I didn't quite understand the "choreography" for being a pinch hitter, but I understood that someone batted for someone else. With a child's mind, I once tried to convince my sisters that a pinch hitter stood behind the batter (we had no catcher) and could hit the ball from there if the first batter missed!

The term "vicarious atonement" describes an action similar to that of a pinch hitter. The term is not found in the Bible, but it aptly describes Bible truth. Likely, you know the word "vicar." Our seminary students each fulfill two six-week terms as a vicar. A vicar serves in a congregation under the guidance of the pastor, similar to a student-teacher, or an "intern." The unusual word "vicar" comes from *vicis*, a Latin word for "a bend, a change, an interchange." Roman government used the term to refer to a lower official who was authorized to act for a higher one. Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church began using the term to refer to one acting in the place of a bishop or the like. Our CLC vicars learn about the ministry by "substituting" for the pastor. Vicars conduct worship, preach sermons, teach confirmation classes, and carry out other duties, all in an effort to learn.

Interestingly, the same Latin word *vicis* shows up in our English expression *vice-versa*—"one for the other." It also shows up in our English words "vice-chairman," "vice-principal," and "vice-president"—one of lesser position who substitutes for one of higher position.

In the Bible, Christ is portrayed as our "vicar"—not that He is the less important one, and we more important ones. Rather, He served as our substitute in God the Father's dealing with sin. Sin and sinners get punished!

The Son of God stepped in for us—was our pinch hitter. Nor do we stand ahead of Him in the batter's box to see if we can do it on our own, and then He will pick up the slack if we miss. The fact is that you and I are out of the game! It all depends on Him. In baseball, a pinch hitter's hits, runs-batted-in, and runs scored, all count for him and his record.

In Jesus' case, His pinch hit "home run" counts as if it were ours! His suffering and death, and His glorious resurrection, all count for us! We may confidently stand before the Father, humbly trusting His own promise that Jesus is the settlement for our debt of sin. We are pronounced "not guilty"—for Jesus' sake!

Jesus made peace for us. His action atoned for us. *Atonement* is a "payment for peace." A convicted bank robber must atone for, make peace for, his crime. He must pay back the theft and also spend a number of years behind bars. Jesus has atoned for all sins—the world's, yours, and mine. No one is able to atone for his own sins before God. Jesus' flawless life and holy death set us at peace with God. We, who were "at odds" with God, are now at peace with God—"at one." Jesus has "at-one-d" us. He has "atoned" for us.

*"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:5 NKJV) *"He [the Father] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* (2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV) The vicarious atonement is a precious peace! Jesus, our substitute, bore the blame. We sinners now have peace!

**We may confidently stand before the Father, humbly trusting His own promise that Jesus is the settlement for our debt of sin.**



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

HEARTS IN HARMONY—  
PROFILES OF THE HYMNWRITERS WHO SHAPE OUR WORSHIP

Each month we highlight a hymnwriter who authored one or more  
of the well-loved hymns that we sing today.

# Nikolaus Selnecker

## 1532-1592

When you get up each morning, what's your normal routine? For me, while my coffee is brewing, I pray a memorized prayer (not simply recite, but actively *pray*—trying to keep both mind and heart focused on the meaning of the words and on the One to Whom the prayer is addressed). I pray Martin Luther's morning prayer.

May I suggest an alternative morning prayer, as well as my hope that all our memorized prayers are genuinely prayed, and not just recited? That alternative prayer is the following:

*"Let me be thine forever, Thou faithful God and Lord;  
Let me forsake Thee never Nor wander from Thy Word.  
Lord, do not let me waver, But give me steadfastness,  
And for such grace forever Thy holy name I'll bless."*

If a melody was playing in your mind as you read those words, you've probably been a Lutheran for a long time. That's because this prayer is the first stanza of Hymn 334 in *The Lutheran Hymnal*. It was, in fact, the daily morning prayer of Nikolaus Selnecker, the author of Hymn 334 (as well as anywhere from 120 to 150 others, including Hymns 292 and 321 in *TLH*).

Today, we remember Selnecker—if at all—primarily as a hymn writer. Certainly, his musical gifts were impressive. For example, he became the organist at the chapel in Kaiserburg in Nürnberg when he was just twelve years old. Lutheran hymns, however, are especially noteworthy for their objective presentation of Biblical truth, so it should not surprise us that this hymnwriter was much better known in his own time as a theologian of the highest caliber, and one with the courage and integrity to uphold pure doctrine even when doing so would cost him dearly.

After the death of Luther in 1546, there was much theological turmoil among those calling themselves *Lutherans*. Over the course of his lifetime, Selnecker lost several pastoral and professorial positions because of his refusal to compromise Biblical truth, especially regarding his opposition to Crypto-Calvinism (the teaching of those who claimed to be Lutheran but secretly accepted and tried to teach Calvinistic doctrine



Nikolaus Selnecker 1532-1592

regarding the Lord's Supper). Although Selnecker was quite gentle and mild in personality, he never wavered theologically. Georg Mylius, a Wittenberg professor, had this to say about Selnecker at his funeral: "He was not a weathervane or a rubberneck on the doctrine of the Christian religion, nor was he a reed, which the wind blows here and there, nor a man in impressible clothing, who would let himself be moved to all changes in religious matters for the sake of lordly favor and worldly glory; but he has remained true and faithful to a simply known and confessed truth during his lifetime and continued till his death."

One of the bedrock theological works of Lutheranism is the *Formula of Concord*. Nikolaus Selnecker was one of the chief authors of that confession, along with Martin Chemnitz and Johannes Andreae. He also authored 170 theological works, including a multi-volume work of instruction on the chief parts of the Catechism. In that work, emphasizing the characteristic Lutheran emphasis on Law and Gospel rightly divided, he wrote, "[There are] two chief parts of Christian teaching: the Law of God and the doctrine of the Gospel. Where these two parts are rightly brought forth, there is the true Christian Church. There shines the morning dawn, the dayspring from on high, Christ, the radiance of the Father, light of light. But where these two parts are missing, there is also no dawn, but rather darkness, hell, death, the devil, and lies."

*Oh, grant that in Thy holy Word  
We here may live and die, dear Lord;  
And when our journey endeth here,  
Receive us into glory there.  
(The Lutheran Hymnal, Hymn 292,  
stanza 9 by Nikolaus Selnecker)*



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# Are We There Yet?

***“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” (2 Peter 3:10-13)***

It’s the perennial question parents hear on a car trip of any distance: “Are we there yet?” Obviously not, but it’s a way young passengers voice their anticipation and impatience. They can’t wait to reach the destination and spend vacation time with cousins, aunts and uncles, and grandparents. If only the minutes and miles would go faster!

“Are we there yet” is likewise the longing question of children of God on their journey through life. Jesus says, “Surely I am coming soon.” (Revelation 22:20) The Church answers, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20) We aren’t there yet, but the Day of the Lord will certainly come, as suddenly and unexpectedly as a thief breaking into a home in the middle of the night. Jesus is returning to carry out final judgment and bring this present world to a cataclysmic, fiery end. Isaiah prophesied, “All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.” (Isaiah 34:4) At the beginning of everything God said, “Let there be.” At the end He will say, “Let there not be!” The entire ordered structure of the universe will disintegrate, from the heavenly bodies above to the earth below and everything on it. Mountains, oceans, and cities with their skyscrapers—all will be torn apart and burned up.

Why would we or anyone eagerly look forward to such horrifying destruction? Saint Paul assured the Thessalonian Christians that on the last day believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and so escape the

earth’s destruction. The best is yet to come. The Lord is not coming just to destroy, but to recycle, recreate, rebuild, and renew what has been ruined by sin.

It’s not just believers who are looking forward. Paul writes, “In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed . . . in the hope that even creation itself will be set free from slavery to corruption, in order to share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time.” (Romans 8:19-22 NIV)

“Behold, I am making all things new,” the Lord promises. (Revelation 21:5) He hasn’t revealed the details, but our new home will be awesome beyond imagination! There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. There will be no more injustice, terrorism, war, or poverty. There will be no sadness, no boredom, no end to the joy of living in a perfect world in the presence of our Savior.

Wouldn’t it be great if we could speed things up? We can. Pray, “Thy kingdom come.” We can let our light shine and spread the news of salvation, for when the Spirit brings the total number of God’s elect to faith, the Day of God will be here. We aren’t there yet, but soon!

**“Are we there yet”  
is likewise the longing  
question of children of  
God on their journey  
through life.**



**Michael Eichstadt** is a retired pastor and former president of the CLC. He lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

# The Babble of Babel Continues

Many people value name recognition. Corporations pay millions of dollars to put their name on sports stadiums. Basketball players “pop” their jersey or point to the last name on the back of their jersey after making a great play. Kings build grand memorials in hopes that generations to come will remember them. Man wants to make a name for himself.

We see this desire of man in the years following the Flood. At that time, the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth all spoke the same language. However, they used this shared language, not to glorify God, but to glorify themselves. *“Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.’”* (Genesis 11:4) They wanted to build a tower to make a name for themselves. Their plans failed when God confused their languages, creating the great number of different languages we have today. That failed building project was called “Babel,” a word related to the Hebrew word meaning to mix, confuse, mingle, because that is what the Lord did to their languages.

The babble of Babel continues today. Confused man continues to try to make a name for himself. He promotes inventions and technology which he thinks will solve the many woes of the world. Yet, what do we find again and again across the pages of history? Only more failed building projects. Social media was created to bring people together virtually, yet study after study finds people suffering from greater loneliness. Ultrasounds allow us to see a developing baby inside a mother’s womb, yet a majority of people claim what they see on that ultrasound picture is not a person and can be killed if its mother so desires. As man tries to make a name for himself, confusion abounds.

Perhaps this happens with us too. Maybe we do outreach in hopes of making our congregation bigger and, seemingly,

more important. Maybe we give offerings and volunteer for projects at church hoping someone will see and praise us for our works. In all this we hope to make a name for ourselves.

The confused babble of Babel is seen in our lives too.

This is just another reminder that we have fallen short of the glory of God. While we may want name recognition, the only names we have made for ourselves are “sinner,” “lost,” and “damned.”

How amazing it is, then, to hear that the “name that is above all names,” Jesus Christ, Who Himself is God, *“made Himself of no reputation,”* and took on the form of a servant. (Philippians 2:7) The only thing He was lifted up on was a cross. This He did to save lost and condemned sinners, just like you.

Now His name is the only name that matters. *“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) Baptized into His name, all believers in Christ are now named “sons of God” and “heirs according to the promise” of eternal life. (Galatians 3:26, 29)

Rejoice that the Son of God gave you His name and shares with you the glories of eternal life in heaven. In heaven, all confusion ceases. There Christians from all tribes, nations, languages, and tongues cry out with a united voice, *“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”* (Revelation 7:10) Let us exalt the name of Jesus—the only name that matters!



Tower of Babel 1679 by Athanasius Kircher



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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.*

# 1 Peter

## The Epistle of Hope

**T**he Latin words *dum spiro spero* (“while I breathe, I hope”) appear on South Carolina’s state seal. Under the Latin is an image of *Spes*, the Roman goddess of hope. The Roman philosopher Cicero (d. 43 B.C.) wrote the words. He looked upon the stone-cold, lifeless goddess, and spoke of hope as a *wish* that would vaporize with his last breath.

Peter wrote otherwise about hope. In about A.D. 62, he addressed a letter to “the Dispersion”—persecuted Christians scattered in the Roman provinces of Asia Minor (Turkey). For as an “apostle of Jesus Christ” he had looked upon the living God! (1:1-2) Peter calls them “elect exiles”—chosen by the Father in connection with the Spirit’s work “for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood.” They were “born again to a living hope” — to an “inheritance” in heaven through Christ’s resurrection—and God was guarding their faith and hope. (1:3-5)

In this they rejoiced, even as their faith was tested by various trials. So Peter writes that they are, “obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.” (1:9) While Gospel-grace was already working for their soul’s salvation, that salvation was a case of “already but not yet!” “Therefore,” Peter says, “preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1:13)

Sober thinking is a key concept in Peter’s letter, connected with “self-control” (4:7), and being “watchful.” (5:8) As sober-minded “obedient children,” they are not to return to the “passions” of their “former ignorance.” For they are to be holy, like their Father, an impartial judge. Peter adds, “Conduct yourselves with fear, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” (1:17-19)

Above all, they are to show “sincere brotherly love” for one

another—not only true affection, but self-sacrificing love (Greek *agape*) as Christ had for them. (1:22; 3:8; 4:8) “Born again” of “imperishable seed” through “the living and abiding word of God,” they are to “long for the pure spiritual milk” of that Word, “like new-born infants” that they “may grow up unto salvation.” For as they “come to him” in His Word, they are “being built up” as a “spiritual house,” a “chosen race,” a “royal priesthood,” a “holy nation,” so that they “may proclaim the excellencies of him who called” them “out of darkness unto his marvelous light.” (1:23-2:10)

So, to the end of his letter, Peter urges his beloved fellow-Christians to abstain from fleshly passion and to live honorably among the Gentiles. They are to be subject to their rulers. Servants are to be subject to their masters, even to the unjust. Wives are to be subject to their husbands

(3:1-6), and husbands are to honor their wives (3:7). All are to have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Even if they “suffer for righteousness sake” (3:14), they are always to be “prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks” (3:15), and to give an answer for their hope. Shepherds and overseers of God’s flock are to serve willingly and eagerly. All are to clothe themselves with “humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (5:5)

Therefore, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. . . . And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (5:6, 10-11)



South Carolina state seal



**Vance Fossum** is a retired pastor and a member of the CLC Board of Doctrine. He lives in West Columbia, South Carolina.



Eugene H Rutz  
1942-2008

*In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor Emeritus James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Rev. Eugene H. Rutz (1942-2008) was among the first students to graduate from Immanuel Seminary. He held pastorates in Missoula, Montana, Stambaugh, Michigan, and Spring, Texas. This article is from the Lutheran Spokesman of May 2003. Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.*

## What Does Confirmation Mean?

When young people approach the altar on Palm Sunday or on some other Sunday of the church year, when they kneel down and have the pastor put his hand on their heads, are they being confirmed in their faith? The answer to this question may be “Yes” insofar as the Word of God is being used in connection with this service, and the Gospel “*is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.*” (Romans 1:16) But we are not to look upon the Rite of Confirmation as some magical ceremony whereby special power is flowing through the pastor’s hand to the young person.

Why is the word *confirmation* used in connection with this ceremony? Listening carefully to what is spoken during that service, you will catch the explanation. In the Rite of Confirmation in *The Lutheran Agenda*, the following words are read to the congregation: “The catechumens publicly make profession of the true faith, confirming the covenant made between them and God.” And again, the following words are read to the confirmands: “You are gathered here before God and this Christian congregation publicly to make profession of your faith in the Triune God and to confirm your covenant with Him.” So the young people are doing something toward God and the Christian congregation; they are not having something done to them. They are confirming—that is, acknowledging and agreeing to—the covenant made between them and God at their baptisms. They are not “being confirmed” in the sense that something is being done to them.

The adjectives used in the church to make this distinction are *sacramental* and *sacrificial*. *Sacramental* refers to anything by which or through which God’s grace comes to us. Thus Baptism and Holy Communion are sacraments. In connection with His Word and through these ceremonies, God gives us the special blessing of the forgiveness of sins.

Prayer and good works, on the other hand, can be called *sacrificial*. This should not be understood in the sense that we are appeasing God’s anger over sin by doing these things. Even the sacrifices in the Old Testament had no power in themselves to reconcile man to God. “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*” (Hebrews 10:4) Those sacrifices were valuable because they were pictures of the sacrifice Jesus would later make on the cross. We now use the adjective *sacrificial* to refer to those things a child of God does out of love for God and in appreciation for what God has done for him.

Getting back to confirmation—while we are certainly allowed to speak of our young people “being confirmed” in the faith and in their knowledge of God’s Word through their instruction in *Luther’s Small Catechism*, let us be aware that such speaking could cloud people’s understanding of the Rite of Confirmation. Again, in the Rite of Confirmation a person is confirming the covenant God made with him at his Baptism.

That is why, in my thirty-three years in the ministry, I always spoke of “catechism instruction” for that class which precedes the Rite of Confirmation.

# Mount Zion Lutheran Church

## Madison Heights, Michigan

“**M**any are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.” (Proverbs 19:21) Or to say it another way: man has a plan, but God has a purpose.

The people of Mount Zion Lutheran Church in Madison Heights (Detroit), Michigan, are a testament to this great truth. In the five years since our last *Lutheran Spokesman* article, God has continued to grace us with many blessings: a dozen baptisms, around twenty new members, five weddings, and a handful of funerals. In 2021, we formed a Board of Christian Education and started an education fund with the goal of opening a Christian day school. In 2022, we became a self-supporting congregation, ending almost twenty years of status as a domestic mission subsidized by the CLC.

In 2023, we observed our congregation's fiftieth anniversary with a special celebration service which was attended by eighty-seven souls.

In 2024, we refocused our attention on finding a way to open a Christian day school for our growing population of young children and for outreach in our community. We had already discovered that this would not be possible in our modest



quarter-acre property and small, split-level church building. We needed to relocate to a larger property and a more suitable building. Initially, our plans for relocation took many different shapes. We thought of leasing a commercial property. Or perhaps we could repurpose a former daycare center or even an old banquet hall. It was important that we not move too far, as Madison Heights is a centrally located suburb and easily accessible for our spread-out metro Detroit membership. Above all, we wanted to be bold in our faith and zealous for the Gospel but also wise stewards of our God-given resources. Finally, we decided that we must first sell our old property before relocating. During the interim we planned to rent a conference room for Sunday services. This was our plan, but God had a purpose.

In early April of 2025, after almost a year without any significant offers on our old property, a nearby church (only two miles away) put their sizeable property on the market at an extremely reasonable price. After much prayer and consideration, we determined that this was an opportunity from the Lord which we could not miss. Man has a plan, but God has a purpose. With the help of a Church Extension Fund loan from the CLC (and substantial assistance from the CLC Board of Trustees), we were able to purchase the new property in late May. The address is 510 W. Girard Ave, Madison Heights, Michigan, 48071. The 1.64-acre plot consists of a 56-car parking lot, a large grassy field, and a single-level, L-shaped building with





Dedication Service Attendees

a large sanctuary, a fellowship hall, kitchenette, bathrooms, nursery, two offices, and three classrooms. Truly a gift from God! His purpose for us was much better than any plans we could have envisioned. We spent the summer sprucing up the building and property, and on September 14, 2025 we officially opened the new location with a special dedication service praising God for His gift of a new church home. We had many visitors from other Michigan CLC congregations and beyond. Total attendance was ninety-two souls.

However, we were still in possession of our old church property, which was now sitting vacant. As we waited for God to find us a buyer, there was plenty of temptation to doubt His purpose. We needed our Lord Jesus' gentle rebuke and reminder: "O you of little faith. . . do not worry . . . For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:30-33 NKJV) As promised, our Heavenly Father did indeed provide for us according to His perfect timing and, as always, all our worries were for nothing! God found us a buyer by year's end, and we closed on the sale of our old property on December 18, just in time to celebrate Christmas and God's greatest gift—His Son, our Savior Jesus. Man has a plan, but God has a purpose.

With the new property, God's people at Mount Zion are now fully concentrated on opening a Christian day school. There



VBS Bible lesson

are still renovations that need to be made to bring the building up to Michigan school code, and our Board of Christian Education is working to ensure that all other preparations are completed before we issue a call for a full-time teacher. In the coming years, there will certainly be more temptations to doubt God's purpose, but every temptation to doubt is also an opportunity for faith. We pray that God would strengthen our faith to entrust all things to Him, and to adjust our human plans to fit His divine purpose.

The future is bright for Mount Zion, as it always is for all God's people. God has given us redemption through Jesus Christ, saving faith through the Holy Spirit, and the certain promise of eternal life. Man has a plan, but God has a purpose. The new home of Mount Zion Lutheran Church is further evidence of this great truth. We invite you to visit the Motor City and join us on Sunday mornings at our new location as we praise God for all that He has done for us.



Moving day



**Thomas Naumann** is pastor of Mount Zion Lutheran Church of Madison Heights, Michigan.

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

# The Dark African Night

When the generator ran out of gas at our home, it was dark. We used candles a lot in Nigeria, as well as kerosene lamps. Abraham Lincoln had nothing on us studying by candlelight. There were neither street lights nor security lights at homes. Darkness was pitch black except for the moon. I am still amazed at how people in the village walked around at night on the paths in the dark with snakes around. They had to have had great eyesight. At times there was some electricity from the national grid, but not much and usually not for long.

Sometimes we would hear a baby bawling from a nearby hut, or a child crying because he had had a boil lanced, or had been swatted for his misdeeds. Otherwise, it settled down to a soothing silence. There were frogs of course because we were in the tropical bush. And they would be croaking away, literally hundreds of them. And then all of a sudden they would stop. It was amazing how they would stop as if by the command of a leader. They would not slow down and there would not be a couple who croaked after the others stopped. They all ceased, all of a sudden.

We might hear a man named Ekong going along the road at night. He suffered from mental illness and would be talking to himself in a low growling voice. Sometimes his voice was raised when he was upset about something or arguing with himself. One day he came into the Bible Institute building when our son Karl and Jane, Pastor Essien's youngest daughter, were playing there and scared them. Pastor Essien just shooed him away. He meant no harm, and added color to village life. He eventually died. When I served in Lemmon, South Dakota there was a man named Gordon, well-known around town, who likewise suffered from mental illness. I had the opportunity to visit and witness with Gordon in his one-room shack. I regret that I did not get to do that with Ekong.

For some time there was a tree in the compound which bloomed at night. It was called the Queen of the Night; it was a sweet, compelling fragrance that wafted all around. This was a good reminder of how the Gospel blooms in this world's dark night and spreads its fragrance everywhere.

There was another tree in the compound that one had to be careful of. It was a cashew nut tree. Up in its branches the ants made nests and bored into the branches. The juice that fell, a mixture of the sap and whatever the ants added, was like a mild acid. Some of this, which I thought at first was dew, fell on my arm one day, and the sores that resulted would not heal until I got some local medicine. Other things that I tried just did not heal the sores. It was not wise to walk out under this tree in the dark, and it was a big tree with overhanging branches. This is a good reminder that there are dangers in this dark world that we should avoid at all costs. As only that special local medicine could heal,

we want to remember that it is alone the Gospel that heals. Man's dreamed-up answers don't heal, only God's real answer of Christ in the dark world, dead on the cross, and alive from the dark tomb.

Of course, the dark night also gave cover to sin being carried out. Men love darkness rather than light, for then their evil can then be masked: drunkenness, adultery, robbery.

In a hut not far from us Ndua and his family lived. He was one of our institute students. A man came into his hut and argued over a broom. Ndua told him to get out, but the man then used a machete on Ndua, nearly severing his hand. Pastor Godwin got a motorcycle and took Ndua to the hospital at Etinan in the dark of night, with Ndua falling from the cycle a couple times, weak from the loss of blood. Men love darkness. We need to be those light bearers to carry the forgiving love of Christ into this world's darkness. Ndua graduated from our Bible Institute, served as one of our pastors, and has since gone to be with the Lord. The suffering we endure in this life is not to be compared with the eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison that we will have with Christ in heaven.



**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.

## 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.*

# Orrin Hanel



**Age:** 23

**Program:** Education

**Year in School:** Senior

**Where were you born?**  
Mankato, Minnesota.

**Where did you grow up?**  
I grew up in Eagle Lake, Minnesota. It's a small town right outside of Mankato.

**Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family.**  
I've been married for almost three years to my wife, Dani, whom I met in high school.

**What hobbies, sports or extracurriculars interest you?**

I like to spend time outside when the weather is nice enough. I like playing basketball, soccer, and football. I also like to go for walks. If I can spend time outside, I try to do it.

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

I was born and raised with the last name Gessner. However, before getting married, my wife and I decided to change both of our last names to Hanel, which is my mother's maiden name.

**Which academic subjects especially interest you?**

I enjoy teaching science and Bible history.

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

Since high school the thought of teaching was always in the back of my mind. However, I didn't want to pursue a degree, so I put teaching on the back burner. The summer after I graduated, I taught VBS in Valentine, Nebraska. It was when I was there that I felt a strong calling to teach.

**What have you appreciated most about your time at ILC?**

I've really enjoyed the lifelong friends I've made at ILC. But the thing I've most appreciated is how in-depth we get in all our religion courses. I've learned so much from them, and have had the opportunity to grow in my faith.

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

A strong foundation of faith and love for God's Word will always be the most important thing for our pastors and teachers. For teachers specifically, a love for the children is an essential that will always be needed. For pastors, being personable and being able to address people's problems is something that I believe is very important.

# “BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS MARCH 2026

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
March 2	TLH 469 / LSB 648	Psalm 87	Through Baptism the Lord welcomes into His family people from all nations.
March 3	TLH 539 / LSB 872	Psalm 88	Sometimes believers experience feelings of sadness and even feelings of abandonment. Jesus Christ truly was abandoned by God on the cross. Through His sacrifice, we are the children of God. When we feel sad and abandoned, we may cry out to our loving Father, and He will hear us.
March 4	TLH 4 / LSB 907	Psalm 89	Ethan the Ezrahite laments the fall of the kingdom of David. Though David and his sons sinned against the Lord, the Lord established the kingdom of David forever in Jesus Christ. Though we have sinned against the Lord, the Lord has welcomed us into His kingdom in Jesus Christ.
March 5	TLH 361 / LSB 554	2 Kings 15	Azariah and Jotham reign over Judah. Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah reign over Israel.
March 6	TLH 368	2 Kings 16	Ahaz reigns over Judah and leads Judah gravely astray.
March 7	TLH 515	2 Kings 17	As a result of the idolatry of Israel, the king of Assyria conquers Israel and exiles the people of Israel to Assyria.
March 9	TLH 575 / LSB 966	2 Kings 18	The Lord blesses Judah with the leadership of faithful King Hezekiah. Sennacherib attacks Judah, and Hezekiah pays him tribute. An Assyrian official mocks and threatens the Judeans, claiming that even the Lord cannot protect them from mighty Assyria.
March 10	LSB 777/778	2 Kings 19	Through Isaiah the Lord comforts Hezekiah. In defiance of the Lord, Sennacherib threatens Judah. Hezekiah prays to the Lord. Isaiah prophesies the downfall of Sennacherib.
March 11	TLH 598 / LSB 598	2 Kings 20	Hezekiah is sick and near death. He prays to the Lord, and the Lord heals him. In his pride Hezekiah makes a foolish mistake. Hezekiah dies, and Manasseh his son reigns over Judah.
March 12	TLH 263 / LSB 666	2 Kings 21	Though Hezekiah, his father, was one of the greatest kings of Judah, Manasseh is the most wicked king of Judah. The prophets of the Lord prophesy disaster for Judah as a result of the brazen idolatry of Manasseh. Manasseh dies, and his son Amon reigns over Judah. Amon continues in the wickedness of his father and is assassinated.
March 13	TLH 266	2 Kings 22	Josiah begins his reign over Judah at the age of eight years old. Josiah repairs the temple of the Lord. The high priest discovers the Book of the Law, and Josiah realizes that the people of Judah have not been living in obedience to the Lord.
March 14	TLH 234 / LSB 496	2 Kings 23	Josiah boldly works to eradicate all worship of false gods from Judah. Josiah restores the celebration of the Passover. After Josiah is killed in battle, his sons Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim reign over Judah; both are unfaithful to the Lord.
March 16	TLH 552 / LSB 878	2 Kings 24	After the death of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin reigns over Judah, following in the wickedness of his fathers. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, captures Jerusalem, takes Jehoiachin prisoner, and exiles all but the poorest people to Babylon. Zedekiah reigns over Judah and rebels against the Lord and against Babylon.
March 17	LSB 417	2 Kings 25	Nebuchadnezzar conquers and takes captive the people of Judah, appointing Gedaliah governor of Judah. Thirty-seven years later, Evil-merodach, the new king of Babylon, releases Jehoiachin from prison and treats him kindly.
March 18	TLH 604	Ezekiel 4	Through several action prophecies of Ezekiel, the Lord illustrates the judgment that He will bring against the people of Jerusalem as a result of their idolatry.
March 19	LSB 675	Ezekiel 5	Ezekiel prophesies the coming destruction of Jerusalem.
March 20	TLH 652 / LSB 606	Ezekiel 6	The Lord condemns the people for their faithlessness but promises salvation for the penitent.
March 21	TLH 324 / LSB 609	Ezekiel 7	Ezekiel proclaims the coming wrath of the Lord. Through the harsh preaching of the Law, the Holy Spirit calls the people of God to repentance.
March 23	TLH 608	Ezekiel 8	In a vision of Jerusalem, Ezekiel witnesses four idolatrous abominations. It is not without cause that the Lord threatens judgment.
March 24	LSB 616	Ezekiel 9	In his vision, Ezekiel witnesses the fierce judgment of the Lord on His disobedient people. The Lord spares a penitent remnant.
March 25	LSB 402	Ezekiel 10	In his vision, Ezekiel witnesses the glory of the Lord departing from the temple.
March 26	TLH 155	Ezekiel 11	In his vision, Ezekiel witnesses the judgment of the Lord on the wicked counselors of Jerusalem. The Lord promises to save a remnant and to give to His people a new heart and a new spirit.
March 27	TLH 535 / LSB 737	Psalm 94	In the final judgment, all who reject the Lord will experience His just wrath. Until then, we pray that the wicked will repent of their wickedness, even as we repent of our wickedness, and receive the grace of the Lord in Christ.
March 28	TLH 24	Psalm 95	Psalm 95 is well-known as the source of the Venite (found in “The Order of Matins” in <i>The Lutheran Hymnal</i> ). The last several verses of Psalm 95 recount the complaining and rebellion of the people of Israel during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness.
March 30	LSB 569	1 Chronicles 1	All of the nations of the earth are descended from our father, Adam. All of the people of the earth have inherited a sinful condition from our father, Adam. Through the family of Abraham, the Lord has accomplished righteousness and salvation for all people.
March 31	WS 710 / LSB 376	1 Chronicles 2	The chronicler records the genealogy of David, of the family of Israel.

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.

# Friends of the Immanuel Forest

## An Opportunity to Volunteer at ILC



In 2025, a volunteer-driven group called “Friends of the Forest” (FOTF) initiated efforts to enhance the eco-system of the forested areas on the lower campus at ILC.

The forested areas at Immanuel contain a surprisingly diverse variety of tree species; including red oak, white oak, burr oak, cherry, plum, chokecherry, apple, basswood, white pine, jack pine, fir, spruce, cedar, ash, alder, hackberry, chestnut, walnut, and others. At least fifty different types of flowering plants were documented this past year.

About eighteen years ago, a commercial logger performed a selective cutting of the forest to remove aged trees and red oaks impacted by oak wilt disease. “Slashings,” the tree material left behind after the usable logs are removed, were left in place and unfortunately have provided ideal habitat for certain invasive species.

About ten years ago, volunteers created a trail system throughout the lower campus forest by moving slashings into piles and windrows. Anyone who visits campus is encouraged to walk those trails and enjoy the beauty of God’s creation. The trails also provide a firsthand view of how honeysuckle and buckthorn have choked out other species in many areas.

FOTF has a three-phased plan to remove invasive species, foster native pine and broadleaf trees to expand their presence, and attack any future emergent invasives.

**Reset**—Remove existing invasives through mechanized means and surgical application of herbicides to *reset* the desirable forest’s growth opportunity.

**Restore**—Transplant desirable native tree species into areas cleared of invasives to *restore* diverse forest health; remove selected standing dead or fallen timber.

**Retain**—Monitor emergent growth for invasives, surgically apply herbicides to prevent re-emergence, and *retain* the quality forest environment being created.

In September 2025 an enthusiastic crew of ILHS/ILC students and Eau Claire Messiah members spent two days cutting invasives along the trail system, putting the cuttings into a commercial chipper,

and spraying the cut stumps with brush killer to kill root systems. A tremendous amount of work was accomplished, but much still remains.

Undaunted, FOTF hopes to rent a mobile forest mulcher for one week in 2026 to remove remaining areas of invasive species. This project would complete most, if not all, of the “Reset” goals.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has a grant program for private landowners doing invasive species management. FOTF plans to submit a grant application for \$5000 to cover the cost of the forest mulcher in summer 2026.

“Restore 1” is also scheduled for 2026 and involves creating an on-campus nursery plot for transplanting desirable seedlings found in the campus forest. In the nursery, they can be attended to until reaching suitable size for transplanting back to selected locations in the forest.

All FOTF expenses to date have been covered by private donations. If FOTF gets the \$5000 grant, it will require 25% owner cost share. Without the grant, FOTF would need \$5000 in private funds for the rental in 2026, or defer the project until sufficient funding is accrued.

The “Reset” efforts in 2025 and those planned for 2026 are the bulk of expected expenses for FOTF. Future years will involve annual spot location spraying of any emerging invasive growth, and transplanting desirable species where needed. Both of these are low-cost or no-cost projects.

Should anyone desire additional information on volunteer opportunities, project concept, or providing a donation to the effort; you can contact one of the two individuals listed below.

Tom Beekman ([thomasbeekman1961@gmail.com](mailto:thomasbeekman1961@gmail.com))(715-491-2025)  
Kyle Scheberl ([kscheberl@gmail.com](mailto:kscheberl@gmail.com))(715-210-0562)



**Dr. Daniel Schierenbeck** is President of Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Tom Beekman contributed to this article.

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# Lutheran Spokesman

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## SEEN IN PASSING

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

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**Prayer Actually Works—Who Knew?** An essay in RealClearReligion argues that the evidence for the benefits of prayer is both spiritual and scientific. Setting aside the obvious benefits of God *answering* your prayers, studies consistently show that the mere practice of regular prayer reduces stress, loneliness, and fear, while fostering longer life expectancy, stronger community ties, and deeper happiness. Yet prayer is declining in America, with only 44 percent reporting daily practice, down from 58 percent in 2007. Author Andrew Fowler connects this decline with rising anxiety and depression among young people, who often embrace shallow “moral therapeutic deism” rather than genuine faith. In contrast, many Gen Z and millennials are rediscovering the value of prayer, flocking to churches for meaning and stability. Fowler, Andrew. “Prayer Works, According to Science.” *Research*. RealClearReligion, 5 Sept. 2025. Web. 20 Sept. 2025.

**Rise of the “Deathbot.”** When an AI-generated video of deceased rock star Ozzy Osbourne was shown at a Rod Stewart concert last summer, an ethical outcry resulted. This led to a report in *The Guardian* about the related subject of “digital resurrection,” where

AI recreates deceased loved ones as interactive avatars or chatbots. Advocates say such technology provides comfort and connection, while critics call it exploitative, eerie, or even dangerous—blurring the line between memory and simulation, and short-circuiting the grieving process. Yet interest is growing: a 2023 *YouGov* poll found that 14 percent of respondents would welcome interacting with a “deathbot.” Sherwood, Harriet. “Digital Resurrection: Fascination and Fear over the Rise of the Deathbot.” *Sunday Read*. The Guardian, 10 Aug. 2025. Web. 20 Sept. 2025.

**Four Decades of Data: Faith and Mental Health.** In *Psychology Today*, P. Scott Richards reviews 40 years of research on the link between religious involvement and mental health. Pioneering scholar Harold Koenig of Duke University has shown that prayer, worship, and spiritual practice consistently predict lower rates of depression, anxiety, suicide, and substance abuse. At the same time, religious participation is tied to greater optimism, forgiveness, gratitude, social support, and marital stability. Richards, P. Scott. “40 Years of Research About Religious Involvement.” *Religion*. Psychology Today, 16 Aug. 2025. Web. 20 Sept. 2025.