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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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



**"While he blessed them, he was
carried up into heaven"**

-Luke 24:51



Pastor Blewu addressing conference attendees in Togo, West Africa. **Page 12**

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How Beautiful Are the Mountains!

Every mountain range has its own character. The Appalachians beckon with forested gentleness. The Rockies ruggedly stand with jagged peaks, and the Cascades boast beauty that covers volcanoes like a blanket.

The Bible reveals a unique mountain range—God’s Mountain Range of Truth. Events that took place on physical mountains form a figurative mountain range that proclaim God’s truth.

A notable summit is Mount Sinai, also called Mount Horeb. Here, God appeared to Moses at the burning-but-not-consumed bush and called him to lead the people out of Egypt (Exodus 3). Here the Lord gave His written Law (Exodus 19 and following). Here, the people danced around their golden false god, and here Moses pleaded on behalf of God’s wayward people (Exodus 32).

Hundreds of years later, Elijah fled to this same mountain when his spirit was deflated and his life was in danger. Here the Lord rebuked His prophet’s self-reliance and renewed Elijah’s zeal. Here, God reminded His prophet of the power in the still small voice of His Word (1 Kings 19).

Even more glorious peaks come into focus as we traverse from prophesy to fulfillment. Jesus teaches Gospel-hungry souls in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). On the Mount of Transfiguration, we see that Jesus’ “face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.” (Matthew 17:2) We also hear the Father’s assuring words, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” (Matthew 17:5)

This brief view of glory and the Father’s words are encouraging when we see what happens after Jesus came down from the Mount of Olives in His Palm Sunday procession to Jerusalem (Matthew 21). Again at the Mount of Olives, Jesus prayed mightily that, if it were possible, the cup of suffering might pass from Him, but ultimately submitting to His Father’s plan of salvation, “Your will be done.” (Matthew 26:42)

In God’s Mountain Range of Truth there are beautiful mountains, but one that stands out because of its ugliness: a low mountain in the shape of a skull where enemies crucified

the Son of God (Luke 23:33). Here, the Father Who had declared pleasure in His Son, forsook Him because He was bearing our sins. Yet, even this hideous mountain is wrapped in beauty, for it is here that the Son of God cried out, “It is finished” (John 19:30), so that like a river, forgiveness of sins continues to flow out of a redemption that is complete.



The Ascension of Christ, South Germany, 1700

It was from a mountain in Galilee that the victoriously risen Savior gave us our commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:18) Later, returning to the Mount of Olives, “as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands [Jesus] blessed [His disciples]. While he blessed them, he . . . was carried up into heaven.” (Luke 24:50-51)

Jesus’ ascension is the final summit in a singular mountain range. All was fulfilled, *Immanuel*—God with us—had come and completed His work. From peak to peak, we see the mountains of our sins, but rising ever higher are the beautiful mountains of God’s grace. There we see a glorified Savior stretching out His hands to bless His own—blessing which continues to us day-by-day and in every condition until our ascended Lord brings us home to the place He has prepared (John 14:3).

After Jesus ascended, the disciples stared at the sky, heard the angels’ message (Acts 1:11), and then “worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.” (Luke 24:53) Ten days later, empowered by the Holy Spirit, they began to share in earnest the panorama of the beautiful mountains of God’s Truth.

They really are beautiful mountains, and we too are given the gift of being the messengers upon those mountains to proclaim the good news of our ascended Lord and a salvation complete. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news . . . who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’” (Isaiah 52:7)



Wayne Eichstadt is pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Spokane Valley, Washington.

A Go-Between Who Cares

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NKJV)

When there are two or more who have a serious difficulty, with at least one of them incapable of reaching a resolution, a mediator is required to bring a satisfactory outcome for them to be agreed and at peace with one another.

This is especially challenging when only one side is completely in the wrong but doesn't know it and/or doesn't care.

The Man Jesus Christ cares very much. He loves us. He knows that He alone can produce a genuine, everlasting reconciliation between us and Him.

The Lord uses an illustration to help us understand that producing something which is not only worthwhile, but also precious, will require an investment.

“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’” (Luke 14:28-30)

If the project is truly worthwhile, it's worth the focus, planning, investment, and work to make it happen! If a person truly cares about it, he will do whatever it takes to make it happen. Jesus would do more than talk about how much He cares about us. He would demonstrate His care and love by His willingness to give Himself. Wait, how much? More than what can be found in any bank account, even more than all the investments on Wall Street. He gave Himself!

“For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:7-8)

When the enemies of Jesus came to arrest Him in Gethsemane, His disciples were willing to fight to defend Him. Jesus asked them this powerful question. *“Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” (Matthew 26:53-54 NKJV)*

There was no ransom note produced by a person. All that was needed for sinners like you and me to be saved was ordained by God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, Who was willing to do what needed to be done.

Jesus did not come into the world because He needed us to do something for Him. He came because He loved us, and we were in great need.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

The Old Testament foretold the coming of the Messiah. Believers in Old Testament times pondered those words and trusted the promises of God. When Jesus came in person, there were those who despised Him and spoke against Him, but none of that stopped Him.

In every era, at exactly the right times, God testified through His prophets and apostles about His Son, Whom He sent to be the Savior of all.

Jesus would do more than talk about how much He cares about us. He would demonstrate His care and love by His willingness to give Himself.



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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.

Timeless Hymns

Johann Franck

A frequent visitor to Sunday services remarked that many of the hymns that we Lutherans sing are very old. The hymn “Jesus, Priceless Treasure” (TLH 347) by Johann Franck is a good example, dated 1655.

The visitor’s observation seemed to imply the question, “Why are you still singing those dated, centuries-old hymns?” To which we can reply that those hymns, though very old, are by no means dated. They are expressions of the timeless message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as helpful to worshipping Christians today as they were when first written. And they were composed during an age when the Lord poured out extraordinary poetic and musical gifts for His church.

We do, however, need to acknowledge that the circumstances under which those old hymns were written often differed greatly from ours today. The severe trials of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in Germany surely shaped Franck’s poetry, as did also the blessings that he experienced during that time. When he suffered the loss of his father at the age of two, Frank was adopted by his uncle, who paid for his education. He was able to study law at the University of Koenigsberg, which was the only university in Germany left undisturbed by the war. While there, he also had the opportunity to develop his gift for poetry by studying under Simon Dach, another of the great hymnwriters of that age and author of “Through Jesus’ Blood and Merit.” (TLH 372) But his studies were also interrupted when he needed to return to his home to help his mother cope with the presence of both Swedish and Saxon troops in his hometown of Guben. Those soldiers made life difficult for the townspeople by using threats to extort money and food from them.

But though the life circumstances and experiences of the hymnwriters of long ago were different from ours, we find their hymns relevant to our lives today. This is so because their lives were in many ways not unlike our own. They dealt with the same afflictions that we experience, such as pain, weakness, and weariness. We can imagine that their human relationships were

no more free from troubles than ours are. They faced the same temptations that trouble us. Above all, their Christian faith was the same as ours. In their life’s struggles they found help in the same Lord Jesus Who comforts us.

We see these things in Franck’s great hymn, “Jesus, Priceless Treasure.”

*"Thou art mine,
O Lamb divine!
I will suffer naught
to hide Thee,
Naught I ask
beside Thee."*

The author confesses Jesus Christ as his priceless Treasure, One who has been his truest Friend throughout his life. He calls Jesus the Lamb divine, a name that expresses Jesus’ unique identity as the incarnate Son of God Who offered Himself as sacrifice to atone for the sins of the world. To have Him is to have all that one needs (stanza 1). To believe and trust in Jesus as Savior is to rest in the safety of His arms. It is to have refuge from the troubles of life in this world (stanza 2). With Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we can defy the mightiest and most terrifying of enemies: Satan, death, and fear. Jesus is Lord over them all (stanza 3). Jesus frees us from spending our lives in the futile pursuit of “earthly treasure” and “empty glory” (stanza 4). He reveals the vanity of this world and the deceitfulness of sin (stanza 5). In Jesus, the believer has peace within, even in the midst of the storms of life (stanza 6).

These thoughts are helpful to believers in every age, regardless of their particular circumstances. We have no trouble applying them to our own turbulent age and personal individual lives. No matter how chaotic and troubled our world, no matter how bleak and seemingly hopeless our circumstances, we have Jesus. And because we have Jesus, nothing else need worry us, because in Him we have the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, the privilege of prayer, and the certain hope of eternal life.



John Klatt is a retired pastor. He lives in Watertown, South Dakota.

Our God of Grace and God of Glory

“You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” (2 Peter 3:17-18 NKJV)

Each of the Spirit-inspired New Testament epistles (letters) has its own closing words. Some offer a brief summary of the theme, some farewell greetings, and still others close with a benediction or divine call to faith and faithfulness. Peter’s closing words are no exception.

Thank you, Lord, for the things we “know beforehand” from Peter’s epistles—that we are simply earthly exiles awaiting Christ’s promised and certain return, that we are called to God-glorifying lives which include suffering and persecution, that any seeming delay in Christ’s return is out of love for souls, and that our wonderful eternal future will be spent with the Lord in the “new heaven and new earth, the home of righteousness.” (2 Peter 3:13 NIV84) These precious truths form the foundation for the Spirit’s three-pronged closing divine counsel:

1. **“Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”** God created all living things to grow—plants, animals, and humans. This growth occurs with the intake of life-giving and life-sustaining nutrients. God’s grace in Christ is our spiritual lifeline. Growth in that grace coincides with the faith-intake of Spirit-provided nutrients: the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Both publicly and privately, at every age and life stage, faithful use of these “means of grace” remain vital to the growth and survival of our faith.

2. **Beware, lest you be “led away with the error of the wicked.”** An essential and blessed by-product of spiritual growth is an enhanced recognition of and resistance to error and its dangerous consequences. Knowing the evil that surrounds us and the sin and spiritual vulnerability

within us, how vital it is that we steadfastly use the Word to build up and fortify our spiritual immune system against the attacks of the Evil One!

**Thank you,
Lord, for
the things
we “know
beforehand”
from Peter’s
epistles**

3. **“To Him be the glory now and forever!”**

How important to be reminded, as Scripture does often, that our ongoing and ultimate life purpose is to glorify God in all things. And a recurring theme in Peter’s epistles (1 Peter 4:11 and 5:11) is God’s grace and glory. Peter’s final words link both. The ultimate purpose of God’s grace is His greatest of all glories in redeeming sinners, who then respond in time and eternity by giving to God alone all praise and honor and glory. Glory be to God for Peter’s epistles of comfort, encouragement and hope!

God of grace and God of glory,
On Thy people pour Thy power;
Crown Thine ancient church’s story,
Bring her bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
For the facing of this hour.
Lo! The hosts of evil surround us,
Scorn thy Christ, assail His ways!
Fears and doubts too long have bound us,
Free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
For the living of these days. (WS 764)



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Beauty in the Midst of Judgment

One of the recurring themes of the Old Testament is “mercy in the midst of judgment.” At the very beginning, when Adam sinned and brought judgment on the whole human race, mercy was promised through the Seed of the woman.

This theme continued during the period of the judges. When God’s people would sin grievously against Him, divine judgment followed at the hands of their heathen neighbors. When the people repented, merciful rescue was sent. The judgment of the Babylonian Captivity was likewise followed by deliverance as the Jews returned to their promised homeland.

But our focus here is “beauty in the midst of judgment.” We know little about the antediluvian earth, except that God created it “*very good*.” This included fruit that was pleasing to the eye. Even the stars in the sky were a thing of beauty, as Job later observed (Job 38:31).

But then came the judgmental waters of the world-wide Flood, caused by great human wickedness. All land-dwelling creatures were destroyed, except those that found refuge on the ark. The whole face of the earth was changed, and yet God, in His grace and kindness, left us great beauty. From canyons to mountains, from waterfalls to erupting geysers, from rivers to alpine lakes, from coasts to prairies to deserts, God has left us a world that is pleasant to the eye. Yet all that we see today is the result of God’s judgment; all of it the result of uplift and erosion, volcanoes and glaciers, layered deposition and topography-changing plate tectonics. People may differ in what they deem beautiful, but there is something for everyone. If Niagara Falls or the sunflower fields of South Dakota do not impress you, the amazing scenery of the West surely will. God is good. God is kind, and has given us great natural beauty to enjoy. All the result of worldwide judgmental waters.

The greatest judgment of all fell upon one Man—the hellish judgment over mankind’s sin and guilt. Of Jesus’ physical appearance we know little. Was He a cute baby? A handsome teenager? We are not told. But in the midst of judgment, He

appeared ugly. Isaiah described the scene at His cross: “*He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him . . . He was despised . . . and as one from whom men hide their faces.*” (Isaiah 53: 2-3)

Calvary was an ugly blood bath for our Lord, with gruesome and death-causing wounds from head to foot. The sight must have been terrible to behold. And yet not many hours later, like a worm-to-butterfly emerging from her chrysalis, the Christ appeared alive in all His glory and beauty. Gory wounds were now beautiful, for they testified to what He had accomplished: the payment for all sin. Through God’s grace human minds would

be turned to Christ in faith, hands would serve Him, feet would follow Him, and hearts would love Him. Natural-born mockers would now sing “Beautiful Savior,” fairer than all creation.

We all were born haters and enemies of God. Our souls reeked of sin, death, and judgment. But Christ’s atonement for sin brought about our justification, with the Holy Spirit making us spiritually alive in faith. Our Old Man is still ugly in rebellion, but our New Man is a thing of beauty, created after the image of God Himself.

That beautiful transformation will be completed in our own resurrection to eternal glory. There we will live with our Lord in the heavenly Jerusalem, whose streets are paved with gold, its foundation, walls, and gates built of precious gems (Revelation 21:18-21). Beauty in the midst of Final Judgment; beauty everywhere, nothing but everlasting beauty. We long for the sight of it. Come quickly, beautiful Savior!



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KNOW YOUR BIBLE BOOKS

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.

I John

God is Love

The Apostle John's contributions to the New Testament came late, probably written between A.D. 90-100. By this time, he was in Ephesus, part of what is now southwestern Turkey. Later he moved to Patmos. The first epistle of John is simultaneously one of the warmest of the New Testament works (*love* appears twenty-six times, more than in any other New Testament letter), and yet as polemical as, say, Paul's letter to the Galatians (but with more honey, and less vinegar). In both cases, John and Paul recognized a serious, destructive error taking root among a flock they deeply loved, and they acted to inform, warn, and counsel the Christians in those places.

At the heart of John's concern was the appearance, within the church ("*they went out from us*" 2:19), of an emerging error that attacked the Gospel near the close of the first century A.D. It was broadly called "Gnosticism" (from the Greek *gnosis*, which means "knowledge"), which, in simplest terms, saw the human in dualistic terms: the spirit versus the body. The body was seen as a limiting, corrupt container that the spirit was best to be rid of (it was that sort of thinking that turned off many of the Athenians when Paul started talking about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Acts 17:37). As it crept into the church, the thinking had two corrosive effects. One was Christological: Gnostics rejected the incarnation, the truth that God was dwelling in a man. According to Martin Franzman, at least some of these Gnostics asserted that the Holy Spirit came to live in Jesus only at His baptism, and departed before Jesus' execution on the cross. The goal of true believers, Gnostics asserted, was to achieve intellectual communion with God, despite their life in the body.

That false teaching, in turn, fostered the notion that one could have communion with God and yet indulge one's fleshly impulses without danger to the soul. The *Halley Pocket Bible Handbook* explains that for them, a "lofty mental mystical piety was entirely consistent with [a] voluptuous sensual life."

Understanding that background, First John's opening verses take on a helpful clarity. Those verses speak of what John and his fellow apostles had "*seen with our eyes*" and "*what our hands have handled, concerning the word of life.*" (1:1 NKJV) God's gift of true righteousness came bodily, in Jesus. Because of that, sin cannot stand alongside godliness; God came in Christ to deliver us from unrighteousness, by the incarnation of Christ: "*the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*" (1:7) That this is what John had "*seen*" and "*handled*" gave him the authority of an eyewitness, and the certainty that the incarnation is the central truth of the Christian faith.

True faith, as the rest of the epistle demonstrates, is not a mere mental exercise; it is the daily restoration and renewal of the sinner through the Gospel message. As John writes: "*everyone who has this hope in Him [the Father] purifies himself, as he is pure.*"

(3:3) Perhaps to underscore this transformation of life through faith, John presents ideas in antithetical manner: light versus darkness (1:5; 2:8, 9), truth versus lie (1:6, 10; 2:4; 4:20), Christ versus antichrist (4:3), God versus devil (3:8). Nor is this a dualist, yin-yang sort of philosophy. These realities are oppositional: such contradictions cannot stand in the life of Christian faith.

John's letter is relevant even today. As John then urged his "*children*" to be ready to "*test the spirits, whether they are of God*" (4:1 NKJV), so we need to do today. All Christian truth pivots on this marvelous act: God became flesh. In this way His love was "*manifested among us.*" (4:9) Therefore, "*beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*" (4:11 NKJV) The mark of a life lived in God is not a sterile, bare "faith"; it is God's love, directed toward one another.

True faith, as the rest of the epistle demonstrates, is not a mere mental exercise; it is the daily restoration and renewal of the sinner through the Gospel message.



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



Rev. Keith N. Olmanson
1929-2016

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. Keith N. Olmanson (1929-2016) was involved in the early formation of the CLC. He held pastorates in Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota. This article is from the Lutheran Spokesman of May 1994. Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.

Joy in Christ's Ascension

Usually when a dear friend leaves us, we feel sad. That was true of the disciples too. Jesus was leaving them. He had said of them concerning His ascension, "Sorrow has filled your heart." (John 16:6) Yet joy overcame their sorrow. Luke tells us, "And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." (Luke 24:52)

There were two reasons for this joy. One was for Christ's own sake. The other was for the sake of mankind. Both are found in Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

His ascension was a homecoming for Jesus. He had left the glories of heaven to take on the form of man and to live in this sin-filled world. He walked the dusty roads of Palestine, spent long, uncomfortable nights in the open, encountered various trials, suffered under the hatred of the Jewish leaders, and died on the cross.

With His work completed, He was returning to heaven where His greatest joy would be to welcome all those who received Him as their Savior. It was because of this joy awaiting Him in heaven that He endured the shame and the cross on earth.

When the disciples could no longer see Him, they knew that He was then at His Father's right hand ruling over all things for the sake of His Church. The disciples rejoiced over the joy Jesus had in returning to heaven.

That joy was not to be limited to those disciples assembled

on Mount Olivet that day. It is also to be experienced by us. Looking toward Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, we may greatly rejoice as did the disciples. Jesus has salvation for us as well.

Jesus Will Come Again

He kept God's Law for us. God now considers us as having kept it also. Jesus died for the sins we have committed, and paid the penalty for our sins. Since sin is the only thing that can bar the way to heaven, and since that sin is washed away by Jesus' blood, heaven is open to us. We are free to enter.

Jesus ascended to prepare for our arrival. He tells us, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2-3) He is our Forerunner Who has gone ahead to show us that we too will go one day.

He will come again to take us to heaven on the Last Day. Of that day we are told, "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) That will be our ascension.

What is our joy in Christ's ascension? It should be joy over the certainty that we shall enter into heaven. In His ascension we see our own. Let us prepare ourselves for that great day, making use of the opportunities we have to hear and study God's Word so that we may be kept in the faith.

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Jamestown, North Dakota

Greetings from the Buffalo City and the saints at Our Savior's. Let's begin with what isn't new. The Gospel is preached and the sacraments administered according to our risen Savior's command: Matthew 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Gospel ministry has resulted in many encouraging events at Our Savior's. Since our last *Spokesman* report, several adult instruction classes were completed, resulting in new members. A young couple that moved away moved back home. A non-member spouse became a member. One child brought a friend to church, while another brought five friends to VBS! All the credit for these encouraging things goes to the sure Word of God and the Holy Spirit who works through it. He makes use of church people who encourage and invite. He makes use of



what we might assume are long-forgotten Sunday School lessons and Bible truths learned in youth. He remembers His baptized lambs and uses His Word to gather them.

Another unchanging thing is our service time, 10:00 A.M. Sundays, year-round. I mention it because I know we're on



Pastor with Sunday school teachers



Ladies of Our Savior's at a garden outing



Photo display of Our Savior's church family

the way to a lot of places and we welcome visitors always! We're not too far off of I-94, so please do include a Sunday stop at Our Savior's in your vacation trip. You may be interested to know that we have CLC neighbors about 100 miles away on every point of the compass except north. Our Savior's has had opportunity in the last few years to "share" their pastor with neighboring congregations during vacancies, like Zion in Ipswich, South Dakota, which has since found a new home in Aberdeen and is being served by Pastor Daub from Hecla, South Dakota.

What's new at Our Savior's? Last spring we dedicated a new organ for the church. It includes many features the old one lacked, not least of which is reliability. It has different virtual pipe organs from around the world on it. If it looks familiar with its dual screens, it's from the same Minnesota builder that made one for Trinity in Watertown, South Dakota, which was previously featured in the Spokesman.

Speaking of enhancing worship, the sainted Dorine (Ohlmann) Nohrenberg left a monetary gift to Our Savior's. We could think of no better use than a new digital piano for the sanctuary. Dorine served for decades as a dedicated organist here.

One final improvement yet to be installed is a new church sign, the electronic kind that can display whatever you like. We plan to integrate it into our existing sign frame this



New church organ with video display



Some of Our Savior's voting members

summer. We'll be able to deliver scripture truths to our neighborhood as well as display the usual things like our name and service times.

Our full service with hymn lyrics displayed are uploaded to my personal Facebook page weekly, and set so anyone can view them. The power to change hearts isn't found in new electronics or different forms of media, though. That comes from the same source as always, Gospel preaching and teaching: Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."



James Naumann is pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Jamestown, North Dakota.

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

New Laborers for the Harvest

On December 6, 2025, we celebrated the graduation of three men from the Mount Horeb Bible Institute near Amousoukopé, Togo, West Africa, which is about ninety minutes north of the capital city of Lomé. We started in March 2021 with ten students, but for various reasons seven dropped out over the course of study.

The graduation celebration was attended by over two hundred people. The students invited friends and family to join them for this joyous occasion. The students worked hard over these three plus years. Our curriculum (which was written primarily by the late Pastor and Seminary Professor David Lau) is more rigorous than any of their previous schooling, but they greatly appreciate the depth of our teaching.

The Église Évangélique Luthérienne de Confession du Togo (EELCT, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Confession of Togo) does not have any vacancies, so we are working with the students to help them start preaching stations and congregations. EELCT President, Pastor Kossi Blewu, has resumed his radio program on a station based in Assahoun, about twenty minutes south of the seminary. Previous callers have expressed interest in attending our services, as they have noticed a difference between our preaching and what they typically hear from other pastors on the radio. Unfortunately, we do not yet have a church in the area. Pray that we will be able to start one there.

One challenge here is that most prospects simply do not have the means to travel very far. It is akin to the olden days in the U.S. with parish churches where people would attend the local church that was within walking distance or a short ride away.



Classroom damage from the heavy rainstorm



Graduates with Seminary Professor Peter Evensen

Education does not stop at graduation. On February 24-25, 2026, we held the first national pastoral conference at the seminary/EELCT center. The five current pastors, the three graduates, and a man from the previous class attended, along with Deborah, who leads a women's and children's ministry.

The afternoon of the first day was interrupted by a heavy rainstorm. The seminary classroom has a sheet metal roof, and during rain it becomes too noisy to hear anything. The rain blowing in from the mostly open sides forced us to all move to the center of the room and wait until the rain subsided so we could continue our session.

After finishing on the last day, when we preparing to return to Lomé (where I live), an even heavier rainstorm hit. The heavy winds tore off a metal panel from the roof of the teacherage and it started raining in the room in which I stay when teaching seminary. I am thankful we were finished, and that I wouldn't have to spend the night on the soaked bed. It also tore off about a quarter of the seminary classroom roof.

Despite the rain, the conference was a great opportunity to encourage, with God's Word, the current and new laborers of the harvest. Pray that they will continue their work with a holy zeal inspired by God's grace in Jesus. And pray that the Lord will provide the new laborers with fields and a harvest.



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.

Riley Naumann



Age: 21

Program: Education

Year in School: Senior

Where were you born?

Born and raised in Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Married? Unmarried? Tell us about your family.

I am the youngest of five girls. My parents are Steve and Eve-Lynn Naumann. Growing up with sisters in a Christian home has taught me the importance of keeping Christ at the center of the home, valuing family deeply, and how to hide the clothes or shoes you don't want any of your sisters to borrow! Also, I am now engaged to Ethan Sydow. We are excited to be getting married at the end of July this summer. Ethan and I enjoy being outdoors and spending time with our families. My faith and family are very important to me and shape the way I approach both life and teaching.

What hobbies, sports or extracurriculars interest you?

I enjoy reading, baking, and playing almost any sport; but have been, as of late, more into sand volleyball. Ethan and I have also been discovering more board games and card games together. I also enjoy a good arts and crafts project. Recently, I have been

trying my hand at simple sewing and macramé.

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

On a Mission Helper Trip to Nepal in 2023, I went paragliding.

Which academic subjects especially interest you?

I remember disliking both math and reading when I was a kid, but now, being on the other side of it, I find that math and reading are my favorites to teach.

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

When I was little, I used to hold Sunday school and day school in our basement for stuffed animals and dolls. I used to teach them using a small whiteboard and dollar store activity books. Then in high school, I decided that I didn't want to be like my sisters, who were all teachers themselves, and I wasn't going to go into teaching . . . and, well, God pushed me right back on track where He wanted me to be, and I am surely glad He did! I also taught Sunday school with my mom and then for many years by myself. I could not stay away! Teaching God's little lambs about Him and His Word has been a true, lasting light in my life. I can't wait to continue in this wondrous opportunity.

What have you appreciated most about your time at ILC?

The gift I have most enjoyed and benefited from has been the opportunity to study God's Word regularly in class and in chapel. This has helped me grow in my faith and has been a constant encouragement. I have also greatly appreciated the Christian community and the friendships that have formed during my time at Immanuel. Getting the opportunity to coach both JV volleyball and track and field at Immanuel has been an incredible experience. I not only get to share my love for sports, but also get to encourage and be a light for those students in high school. One of the most meaningful lessons learned during my eight years at ILC has been how to serve others and live out my faith beyond the school setting and in every area of my life.

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

Dedication to God's Word, patience, genuine kindness, honesty, humbleness, and gentleness are qualities I believe will be most needed by future leaders of the church. These and certainly more are needed to showcase a true godly model for our lambs and members of our congregations.

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS MAY 2026

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
May 1	WS 735 / LSB 485	Ezekiel 28	Ezekiel prophesies against Tyre and laments over Tyre. Ezekiel prophesies against Sidon, but the Lord promises to gather the house of Israel and protect His people.
May 2	TLH 204 / LSB 487	Ezekiel 29	Ezekiel prophesies against Egypt.
May 4	TLH 189 / LSB 488	Ezekiel 30	Ezekiel laments over Egypt. Ezekiel prophesies that Egypt will fall to Babylon.
May 5	LSB 483	Ezekiel 31	Through a parable the Lord foretells the destruction of Pharaoh and of his people.
May 6	TLH 192 / LSB 467	Ezekiel 32	Ezekiel laments over Pharaoh and over Egypt.
May 7	TLH 28	Psalm 99	The Lord reigns in holiness. All too often, however, we and our human rulers are anything but holy. Lord, forgive us for the sake of Christ.
May 8	TLH 1 / LSB 901	Psalm 100	The Lord has blessed us tremendously. He has created us. He has redeemed us. He has sanctified us. We have cause to thank Him not only on one day of the year, or on certain holidays, but every day.
May 9	TLH 112	Psalm 101	No merely human ruler can live up to the righteous standard that David outlines in Psalm 101, but our King, Jesus, can. None of us can live up to this standard, but our Savior, Jesus, has.
May 11	TLH 203	1 Chronicles 10	Saul and his sons die in battle.
May 12	LSB 477	1 Chronicles 11	David becomes king over Israel. David captures Jerusalem from the Jebusites. The chronicler lists the mighty men of David.
May 13	TLH 568 / LSB 785	1 Chronicles 12	The chronicler lists the mighty men who joined David while he fled from Saul. The coronation of David occasions a great celebration in Israel.
May 14	TLH 216 / LSB 492	1 Chronicles 13	David and his commanders agree to retrieve the ark of the Lord. The Lord takes very seriously the holiness of His ark. Though his intention is to help, Uzzah touches the ark unlawfully.
May 15	WS 737 / LSB 491	1 Chronicles 14	King Hiram of Tyre assists David in building a house. David takes additional wives and fathers additional children. David defeats the Philistines twice.
May 16	TLH 212 / LSB 493	1 Chronicles 15	Amid joyful celebration, David brings the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem.
May 18	TLH 30 / LSB 811	1 Chronicles 16	David keeps the ark of the Lord in a tent and appoints Levites to minister before the ark. Asaph and his brothers sing psalms of thanksgiving to the Lord.
May 19	TLH 625 / LSB 862	1 Chronicles 17	David wishes to build a house for the Lord. The Lord, however, has not asked David to build Him a house. The Lord promises that the offspring of David will build Him a house and establish a kingdom.
May 20	TLH 218 / LSB 494	1 Chronicles 18	The Lord blesses David with the defeat of the Philistines, the Moabites, King Hadadezer, and the Edomites. The Lord blesses David with loyal administration.
May 21	TLH 222 / LSB 495	1 Chronicles 19	King Hanun and the Ammonites disgrace the messengers of David. Israel defeats the Ammonites and the Syrians.
May 22	TLH 213	1 Chronicles 20	Joab continues waging war against the Ammonites, besieging Rabbah. Israel defeats the Philistines and their giants.
May 23	TLH 215 / LSB 701	1 Chronicles 21	Foolishly and sinfully, David orders a census of Israel. The Lord sends a terrible pestilence on Israel. David builds an altar and offers sacrifices to the Lord, and the Lord ends the pestilence.
May 25	TLH 224 / LSB 497	1 Chronicles 22	David begins making preparations for the construction of the temple and charges his son, Solomon, to build the temple.
May 26	TLH 564 / LSB 890	1 Chronicles 23	David organizes the Levites so that the worship activities of the temple may be carried out in an orderly fashion.
May 27	TLH 233 / LSB 498	1 Chronicles 24	David organizes the priests, the descendants of Aaron, so that the worship activities of the temple may be carried out in an orderly fashion.
May 28	TLH 236 / LSB 500	1 Chronicles 25	David organizes the temple musicians.
May 29	LSB 503	1 Chronicles 26	David organizes the gatekeepers, the treasurers, and other temple officials.
May 30	TLH 231 / LSB 768	1 Chronicles 27	The chronicler lists the military officers and the tribal leaders 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.

ILC Musicians Participate in the Solo and Ensemble Music Festival

Over the last dozen years, students at Immanuel Lutheran High School have spent the cold winter months practicing vocal and instrumental music that they've never heard before. Their goal? To perform for others and be given feedback by judges in order to become better musicians. This event, sponsored by the Wisconsin Music Teachers Association, is called Solo and Ensemble, where students perform by themselves or in small groups to learn how to stand on their own two feet and play or sing for others. So many memories of wonderful performances, so many friends working together having the best time, and so many students discovering they have God-given talents they didn't know—these are the factors that bring Mrs. Laurie Lau to coordinate this opportunity year after year.

The Wisconsin State Music Association (WSMA), founded in 1932, provides music education opportunities to public and private schools, as well as to homeschooled students. This is not unique to Wisconsin; music associations in other states include Solo and Ensemble opportunities at the high school and middle school level. ILC has had a number of students enroll with prior experience in this event, and it's been a blessing to be able to offer this program so that they can continue their learning.

Almost sixty ILC students have participated in Solo and Ensemble since 2014. Many of them entered more than one event each year, and many participated for multiple years. The process first involves deciding what type of piece to perform—solo, or ensemble (small group). Then, all performers must follow what's affectionately called "The List" to find what music suits or challenges them. Much of it is classical, but there are also jazz and musical theater options. Students work their way from class to class, and if students earn a high enough score performing music from the most advanced list, they qualify for the State Festival in May. It takes about six or more weeks of practicing on their own, with weekly mini-lessons at ILC or with a private teacher outside ILC, for students to be ready to perform at the district levels.

On a Saturday in March or April, students get up early and go to a local high school to perform. Students wait their turns in the hall, enter with their accompanist and any friends or relatives coming to listen, and settle in for approximately eight minutes



ILC String Choir performing

of performing and comments by the judge. Judges are current and former music teachers from all around our region. Then it's on to the next event to perform, or cheer for another musician, while waiting for scores to be posted online.

Half of our events this year are eligible for the State Solo and Ensemble Festival, held at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire on the first Saturday in May. These students will put their feedback from districts into their performance and are hoping to earn high scores, receive even more feedback from specialized judges, and perhaps be nominated or given the Exemplary Soloist/Ensemble award. This is the "best of the best" acknowledgement from this organization.

An added benefit of membership in the WSMA is the opportunity to audition for the State Honors Project—a large-group performance opportunity. To be selected for this state-wide competition is an honor. This group meets for a camp in the summer, after which the band, orchestra, and choir perform in Madison at the Wisconsin State Music Conference. ILC has had three performers over the years selected to participate in the band.

The spring semester is filled with many activities for those at ILC, and music performances and competitions have been one of them for over a decade. Thank you, ILC, for supporting your musicians!



Dr. Daniel Schierenbeck is President of Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Laurie Lau contributed to this article.

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.

Remembering Rover’s “Dog Mom” on That Special Day. Sixty percent of Americans believe that “pet moms” deserve Mother’s Day recognition, according to a recent survey. This aligns with similar societal trends: 76 percent of millennials say they prefer pets to children, while only 38 percent of Gen Z prioritize family over career and leisure. Blake, Suzanne. “Majority of Americans Want Pet Moms Celebrated on Mother’s Day.” *Lifestyle. Newsweek.com*, 9 May 2025. Web. 18 Mar. 2026.

AI Makes a Bad Marriage Counsellor. Recent studies show that spouses are increasingly utilizing ChatGPT and other large language models (LLM’s) as counsellors or surrogate therapists. The problem is that most LLM’s will tell you you’re right nearly every time, which isn’t a good way to resolve marital disputes. Experts warn that AI isolates individuals within a self-validating narrative, which tends strongly toward exacerbating conflict rather than resolving it. Simply put, AI is highly unlikely to encourage the sort of self-sacrificial love required in a healthy marriage. Dupré, Maggie. “ChatGPT Is Blowing Up Marriages as It Goads Spouses Into Divorce.” *Ethics. Futurism.com*, 18 Sep. 2025. Web. 18 Mar. 2026.

When the Court Says You Can’t Take Your Kid to Church. In *Bickford v. Bradeen*, a Maine judge recently barred a divorced mother from taking her twelve-year-old daughter to church or sharing Bible teachings. Labeling Christian instruction “psychologically harmful,” the court granted the non-religious father a “total veto” over the child’s Christian upbringing. It’s only the most recent troubling example of secular authorities pathologizing historic Christianity, abandoning judicial neutrality, and threatening the fundamental right of families to live according to their faith. Alexander, Robert. “Mom Battles Judge’s Order Banning Her Taking Daughter to Church.” *U.S. News. Newsweek.com*, 17 Nov. 2025. Web. 18 Mar. 2026.

Some are Returning to the Pews—Especially Young Men. While attendance at mainline Protestant churches remains in freefall, a small revival is stirring among an unlikely demographic: Gen Z men (born 1997-2012). According to recent surveys, young men, many of them highly educated professionals, are increasingly turning toward traditional faiths as a solution to the “spiritual vacuity” of modern life. Attracted by the aesthetic of antiquity and rigorous discipline of historic Christianity, young men are closing the “God Gap” between the sexes. In contrast to liberal denominations, these traditional expressions of faith provide a narrative of responsibility and objective truth in the midst an empty and materialistic culture. Kotkin, Joel and Mahlobo, Bheki. “Surprising Revival: Gen Z Men & Highly Educated Lead Return to Religion.” *Religion. RealClearInvestigations.com*, 17 Feb. 2026. Web. 18 Mar. 2026.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

ILC Dorm Supervisor Position. Jaqi Bredehoft will be resigning as girl’s dorm supervisor at the end of this school year. We thank her for her faithful service to the Lord and for being such a positive role model to our dorm students. ILC is accepting applications for this position to begin the 2026-27 school year. This role is vital to our campus, given how dorm supervisors provide spiritual counsel and a fatherly or motherly role to those students who are living away from home. Females who are CLC members in good standing and

are able and willing to fill this position may contact ILC President Daniel Schierenbeck (dan.schierenbeck@ilc.edu/660.864.9231) for more information about the responsibilities and compensation for this position. An application is available online at ilc.edu > Forms and Applications > ILC Employment Application. Review of applications begins April 15.
—Daniel Schierenbeck, ILC President