

JUNE 2026 VOL. 68 NO. 12

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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

GOD IN THREE PERSONS



HOLY, HOLY, HOLY!

BLESSED TRINITY



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

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

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

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

Business Manager: Steve Lentz, 501 Grover Road, Eau Claire, WI, 54701. E-mail to lutheranspokesman@ilc.edu. Subscription Manager: Jessica Lau. Individual subscriptions \$23 for one year, \$44 for two years, and \$60 for three years. Group subscriptions through congregations: \$20.

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

Spokesman Online Version at: www.lutheranspokesman.org
Printed in U.S.A.

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“Neither Confounding the Persons Nor Dividing the Substance”

Anthropologists estimate that, throughout history, people have worshiped over eighteen thousand gods. Histories of ancient cultures mention many of these gods—gods that are the invention of man’s (evil) imagination which, of course, makes them false gods. But there is one God—and only one—Who is real, not a myth, not produced by man. Isaiah 45:5 says, *“I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God.”* This is the Triune God, the Trinity.

The Bible doesn’t use the words *triune* or *trinity*, but there are Bible passages that speak of the Trinity. For example, Matthew 3:16-17 mentions the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at Jesus’ Baptism: *“He [Jesus] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’”*

The Apostles’ Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed all summarize scriptural teachings about the Trinity. However, even with these helpful documents, we cannot fully understand “one God in three Persons.”

In *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, E. Koehler says of the Trinity of God, “Ours is an incomprehensible God. . . . There is no analogy, no simile, no illustration in the wide realm of human thought which could clarify for us this profound mystery. . . . The finite mind of man simply cannot comprehend the infinite God.”

A coworker at a factory once told me, “I don’t believe in God because I can’t understand Him. He’s too complicated.” We know what causes this thinking: *“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14)

God also tells us, *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”* (Isaiah 55:9) To these higher ways and thoughts, the coworker would say, “Forget that! Too complicated,” while we believers, instead, rely on and are bolstered by 2 Corinthians

5:7, *“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”*

God has told us what we need to know about the Trinity, and we mention some of those points when using the creeds to confess our faith. For example, the Athanasian Creed—the creed you’re likely to hear in church on Trinity Sunday—helps explain the Trinity, increases our understanding, and strengthens our faith. Here is a taste of the Athanasian Creed; believe this:

“There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit. . . . The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet there are not three Gods, but one God. . . . And in this Trinity, none is before or after the other; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are coeternal together and coequal, so that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity [one God] in Trinity [three Persons] and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped. He, therefore, who will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.”

About the Trinity, believe this, also: God the Father loves you and gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, Who suffered and died to remove your sins; and God the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, has called you by the Gospel—created faith in you—to believe that by the grace of the Triune God you have eternal life. With thankful hearts we sing,

*All praise to God the Father be,
All praise, eternal Son, to Thee,
Whom, with the Spirit, we adore
Forever and forevermore. (TLH 12:5)*

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Amen.



Karl Olmanson is a retired teacher. He lives in Kasota, Minnesota.



NOW Is the RIGHT TIME

People often state that timing is everything. Whether making a large purchase or sale, hunting or fishing, or working with the weather, this is often true. Sometimes our timing seems to be right on, everything synchronized. At other times, nothing seems to work out the way we have things planned. “The timing just wasn’t right.”

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could have the insight to know just what to do at just the right time? How incredible that would be!

In a very real sense, we have been given such insight by our loving Father. And the timing we have been given is for things far more important than earthly purchases or prizes!

“Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2 NKJV) When is the right time to present someone with the Gospel message? What is a good time for confronting someone caught up in a sin? How long should we wait to bring comfort to an anguished soul?

This passage will form the theme of the upcoming biennial convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. Essays and devotions will be presented on this and other spiritually beneficial topics.

Now is the time to hear about **mission work**. During convention, delegates will have opportunities to hear reports on the mission work being done in both foreign and domestic fields. These reports don’t just offer facts and figures, they also reveal the true work of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word. When a “golden” opportunity presents itself and we’re relaxed and prepared, that’s a good time for presenting God’s Word to others. However, even when we are nervous or unsure, that is also the time to share His message of sin and grace. The Lord does not hinge the preaching of His Word on our preparedness or lack thereof. Rather, it is *always* the right time to present His Word. That may not always sit well with us or make us comfortable, but we can rest assured it is God’s

will and He will undergird our feeble attempts at speaking the truth that has set us free.

Now is the time to hear about **building opportunities**. In conventions past, the delegates have directed the synod to proceed with a building project on our Immanuel campus, beginning with a gymnasium. Delegates will again hear of

facts and figures, but must not miss seeing the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our members as witnessed by the offerings received.

Our Father promises that if we are ever persecuted and brought before the authorities to be questioned about our faith, He already has it covered! “For the Holy Spirit will

teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” (Luke 12:12 NKJV) And again, “You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name’s sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony . . . for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist.” (Luke 21:12-15 NKJV)

Now might be the time for you to gather with fellow believers around God’s Word and to join in the work He has set before us as a synod. If you are unable to join the convention in body, join in spirit, praying the Lord to send His Holy Spirit to direct our deliberations and decisions.

If the Lord has so provided for our ability to speak His Word in times of trouble and strife, how much more should we be ready and able to do so in times of relative peace as we enjoy now?

In season or out of season, let us faithfully speak His Word!



General Convention floor session in the Immanuel College field house



David W. Bernthal is a retired teacher. He lives in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

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.

Johann Rist

"O Living Bread from Heaven"

Highly regarded as scholar, musician, and poet, Johann Rist (1607-1667) served in several prominent teaching roles before becoming long-time pastor in Wedel, near Hamburg. Recognizing that he enjoyed a relatively more stable life in northern Germany, Rist dedicated his personal gifts and wealth to comforting those who were directly impacted by the Thirty Years War.

Few Lutheran hymnwriters were presumptuous enough to expect their work to be sung at a church service in their own lifetime. Rist had no intention of replacing the Sunday standards of the few dozen *Kernlieder* (core hymnody) by Luther and his contemporaries. Rist's hundreds of hymns were composed for home use, published with musical pointing which encouraged family members to play whatever instruments they owned. This background unlocks a deeper significance to this month's highlight: "O Living Bread from Heaven."

The "now" and "here" of our English translation presume you have received the Sacrament just moments prior, but the "jetzt" and "hier" of the original German emphasize a lasting peace by no means restricted to the church building:

*Ja mich so reich begabet,
Da ich jetzt fühle Freud' und Rast!*

*Thou hast so richly honored me
Henceforth I feel joy and rest.*

Instead of a liturgical setting, imagine this hymn sung by a family at home—perhaps weeks after the last time anyone received communion—proclaiming its unfading worth. The hymn teaches the Sacrament's value to children who might not receive it for years to come, or, given the high mortality rate, may never have the privilege. The Sacrament's institution alone is declared a grace in and of itself:

*O wundersame Speise,
O süßer Lebenstrank!
O Lieb'smahl, das ich preise
Mit einem Lobgesang!*

*O wondrous meal,
O sweet drink of life!
O love-feast I treasure
With this song of praise!*

Luther said but one opportunity to eat and drink the body and blood given and shed for you offers sufficient strength to go home content and fall asleep in death whenever God calls. If Holy Baptism suffers



no tarnish with time, why would the Lord's Supper lose its power on the way home, or before next Sunday? This hymn fans that flame by proclaiming an enduring sustenance to these pledges of forgiveness, life and salvation:

*Howe'er my course be lengthened,
I now may serve Thee free from fear!*

Some of the largest Lutheran synods now advocate weekly communion, as if "the more the better" could compensate for their doctrinal decline. But hymns like Rist's reveal just how much more time the early Lutherans spent reflecting on the true benefit of the Sacrament than do those in our immediate-gratification culture. In Luther's day and for some time thereafter, city churches may have offered

the Lord's Supper several times each week, but members weren't simply ushered forward pew-by-pew. Luther prepared to receive the Sacrament about once a month. J. S. Bach played for thousands of communion services, yet only considered himself personally prepared at most three times per year. They took seriously the mature exercise of attending the Lord's Supper, bringing a consciousness of sin to this personal encounter with the all-forgiving Savior, with a firm-in-mind resolve to amend going forward:

*Grant what I have partaken
May through Thy grace so work in me
That sin be all forsaken
And I may cleave alone to Thee.*

The key to a deeper appreciation is certainly not receiving the Sacrament less often, but making more of each opportunity you already have. Include communion hymns in your home devotions. Singing about the enduring sustenance of Christ's body and blood not only tides you over in faith toward Him and fervent love toward one another, but also builds an appetite for more.



Timothy Daub is pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church of Hecla, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Aberdeen, and Redeemer Lutheran Church of Bowdle, South Dakota. He also serves on the CLC Board of Missions.

The Eternal Word of Life Was Manifested and Witnessed

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” (1 John 1:1-4 NKJV)

Two major false teachings plagued the readers of John’s day. One was the false belief that Jesus’ physical body, suffering, and death were all just illusions. Another, proposed by the false teacher Cerinthus, taught that Jesus was not born of a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit, but Mary and Joseph were both his biological parents. Cerinthus believed, falsely, that Jesus became the Christ when the Holy Spirit came upon Him at His Baptism, and then the Holy Spirit left Jesus right before He died on the cross as a mere man.

Although contrary to Scripture, these false teachings appealed to imperfect human reason and logic. Evidently, some in John’s day began to doubt the truths they were taught by the apostles, and to question the faith. After all, they reasoned, if Jesus’ life was just some grand illusion, then He wasn’t really born as the Bible teaches. If He wasn’t really born, then He didn’t really die. And if He didn’t really die, then He didn’t really rise from the dead. And as the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians, *“And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.”* (1 Corinthians 15:14 NKJV)

With these opening words of his letter, John takes a sledgehammer of truth to both of these false teachings. Jesus was *“from the beginning”* and was *“that eternal life which was with the Father.”* He is the eternal Son of God. At the same time, Jesus is *“the life that was manifested.”* He was seen, heard, looked upon, and handled with hands. Jesus was no illusion, but had real flesh and blood just as we all have.

Furthermore, several of those eyewitnesses who saw, heard,

and even touched Jesus gave eyewitness accounts to share the truthfulness and reliability of these things. The Apostle John was just such an eyewitness. He was there and experienced with his own senses the many miraculous works Jesus performed. John was there to witness Jesus speak His last words and take His last breath as He hung dying on the cross. John was also there to see Jesus’ empty tomb, including the grave clothes lying where Jesus’ dead body ought to have been! And John was there when Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection with the offer to doubting Thomas to see and touch the wounds in His hands and side.

God did not send His Son to die for you on the cross to then botch the job by giving a poor written account about it all.

There may be times in our own life when the actual truths of God’s Word sound too good to be true, and the lies of false teachers sound reasonable and logical. In those moments, remember that in God’s Word you have written eyewitness accounts of the truthfulness and reality of your Savior and your salvation. The eternal Son of God was really born, really died, and really rose again. That means your sins really are forgiven! God did not send His Son to die for you on the cross to then botch the job by giving a poor written account about it all, or delivering it in some hidden code no one could figure out. God’s Word speaks truth! In that truth you have life and salvation! Believe that, dear sinner, and your joy will be full.



Chad Seybt is pastor of a quad parish that includes four western Wisconsin congregations: Morning Star Lutheran Church in Fairchild, Trinity Lutheran Church in Millston, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Melrose, and Peace with God Evangelical Lutheran Church in Onalaska.

Who Is Going to Speak Up?

Judges Chapter 19 has been described as the most disturbing chapter in the Bible. God included it for a reason. Can we figure out why? As difficult as it may be, let's hear the details.

A Levite (a religious leader) from Ephraim married a concubine (a secondary wife) from Bethlehem. She was unfaithful to him and returned home to her father's house. The Levite wanted her back so he and a servant journeyed to retrieve her. Her father welcomed the Levite into his home and tried to prolong his stay. After several days, the Levite and concubine began heading back to Ephraim. Along the way, his servant suggested they stay in Jebus (a city of foreigners), but the Levite insisted they continue to Gibeah (a town of Israelites from Benjamin's tribe). In Gibeah, no one welcomed them into his home until an old man offered to put them up to prevent them from having to stay in the public square.

Later that evening a mob of perverted neighborhood men arrived and demanded that the old man bring out the Levite so they could sexually assault him. The old man begged them not to do this, and instead offered them his own virgin daughter and the Levite's concubine. The Levite then forced his concubine to go with the men. They took turns abusing her the entire night. At dawn, the woman returned and collapsed at the door of the house. As the Levite set out to return home, he saw the unresponsive concubine at the door. He placed her lifeless body on a donkey and went home. Once home, he took a knife and dismembered her body into twelve pieces. He sent a piece to each tribe of Israel. All who saw these body parts said, "Such a thing has never happened or been seen from the day that the people of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day; consider it, take counsel, and speak." (Judges 19:30)

Is your reaction similar to mine? *What is wrong with these*

people?! A religious leader taking a concubine? A concubine being unfaithful to her husband? An old man offering his virgin daughter to be abused by a mob? A husband forcing his wife

to be assaulted by a gang? A mob of sadists in a Benjamite town? The mutilating of a corpse? Care packages of a woman's remains being sent throughout the country as an object lesson? And all these things being done not by heathen Gentiles, but by those whom God had chosen to be His special people, those to whom the promise of the Savior was given!

How did God's people get so far off track? Perhaps an answer is found in the last verse of Judges, "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25)

I can't help but think that God sees the same thing when he looks at our own society. He sees the breakdown of the family, sexual perversion, pornography, the sacrifice of the

unborn, and the complacency. At what point will we come to the realization that this has gone too far? Who is going to **speak up?**

Just like the Israelites, we have been blessed with the truth of God's Word in our midst. Yet like the Israelites, we take it for granted and often "go along to get along" with the society in which we live. Can people readily identify us as the people of God? Are we lights in a sin-darkened world? It is by God's grace alone that He rescued the Israelites and us in spite of our rebellion. May His Holy Spirit cause us to rededicate our lives to Him and **speak up** against the evils of society!



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



The Levite Discovers His Concubine - Gustave Dore 1880

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.

The Second Epistle of John

"Don't Get Bogged Down"

As winter gives way to spring, the frozen earth is transformed into mud. Those with a more direct connection to the land know that the same mantra applies to the snow of winter and the mud of spring: "Don't get bogged down." Momentum is often the only preventative to getting stuck.

The same mantra has application to our own personal study of God's Word. There's an obvious balance that is necessary between a superficial reading of God's Word and getting stuck on questions that Scripture does not answer. Although John's Second Epistle is the second-shortest book in the Bible (about 300 words in English and about 250 words in its original Greek) there are several opportunities for the reader to get bogged down.

The first is the question of the intended recipient. To whom, in other words, was John referring when he addressed the Letter to "the elect lady and her children." (verse 1) Unlike his First Epistle, Second John reads more like a pastoral letter than a doctrinal treatise. Since the themes of the letter (guarding against false teachers, abiding in doctrine, and walking in truth) are typically concerns that would be directed to an entire congregation, rather than just a household, and since the tone is consistent with how apostles addressed church bodies collectively, it is safe to assume "the elect lady" refers to a specific congregation and "her children" refers to the members of that congregation. Don't get bogged down. Today, *you* are the intended recipient.

The second question which causes readers to get stuck involves John's identification of "the antichrist" as one who "does not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh." How then can the Great Antichrist be the Roman Catholic Papacy, as our Confessions maintain, since Roman Catholic doctrine does not deny the Incarnation? Don't get bogged down. John is describing not the Great Antichrist (compare 2 Thessalonians 2) but the anti-Christian spirit that was, even then, beginning its assault against the fledgling New Testament Christian Church.

The obvious problem with getting stuck is that no further progress is possible. To get bogged down in any one part of this Second Epistle of John is to rob yourself of all else here offered by God the Holy Spirit through that "Apostle that Jesus loved."

John's message is one of truth, love, and harmony among fellow Christians.

John's message is one of truth, love, and harmony among fellow Christians. He reiterates part of his message in his First Epistle that true Christian faith will make itself known through works ("walk according to his commandments," verse 6), but that this is neither a new doctrine nor something that conflicts with what the original recipients had already been taught—that we are saved by God's grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Ironically, John does speak in verse 9 about going "on ahead" (the apparent opposite of getting bogged

down), but in the sense of moving beyond or outside of the boundaries established by the teachings of Christ, which he then forcefully condemns. The Holy Spirit thus warns God's people of the first wave of the devil's unending attacks against God's Church—the idea that what the Savior taught was incomplete and that there was therefore information that they lacked, information that the false teachers offered to supply. John's counsel: "They are wrong. Have nothing to do with them."

Read the Letter for yourself. It is half the length of this article, but the content is immeasurably superior. Be encouraged and strengthened by the Holy Spirit's message, preserved for almost 2000 years and delivered intact to you so that you too might benefit. In Christ you are complete. Walk in harmony with your Savior and your fellow Christians and separate yourself from all that is false or evil.



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



Rev. Bertram J. Naumann
1931-2009

In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor Emeritus James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Rev. Bertram J. Naumann (1931-2009) was involved in the formation of the CLC. He served as pastor at Marquette, Michigan; Hales Corners, Wisconsin; and Lynnwood, Washington. He also served on various boards and committees of the CLC, notably the Board of Trustees and Board of Doctrine. This article is from the Lutheran Spokesman of April 1967. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

"Hear it This Sunday"

Comments on the Historic Lectionary Readings for the Coming Sundays

May 31

The Triune God

The Feast of the Holy Trinity

Some win; some lose. Try to truly understand the great Three-In-One by comparing Him with the three forms of water or with the three intertwined circles and you still come up an intellectual flop. Only the understanding of faith can make sense out of this teaching of the Scripture. God has not lied to us about anything, and we believe this, too. Here we stand. In the face of worldly ridicule and unbelief, there comes the time to keep humming along anyway, as the song says: "If you don't happen to like it, pass me by." You believe, you win; you rationalize, you lose.

June 7

Apostles And Prophets

The First Sunday After Trinity

Three little words supposedly make the world go 'round, but the world does not have the right three. The purpose of the Trinity season, which includes (this year) the next twenty-seven Sundays of the Church Year, is to equip you with the truths behind the three words which the world desperately needs. The Collect for today quickly locates our source of strength: "O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in Thee." The Gospel (Luke 16:19-31) holds before us the result of the three correct words as lived by Lazarus. And the Epistle (I John 4:16-21) gives us those words to contemplate "... that we may have boldness in the day of judgment." Of course: "God is love."

June 14

The Great Invitation

The Second Sunday After Trinity

People generally seek to serve themselves in the frantic scramble to fill up more and more empty, leisure time. But this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 14:16-24) invites you to come where the only action that really counts is to be found. It has to do with the lasting welfare of someone else. Sound dull? Don't you believe it. The action is based on Him who "... never fails to help" (Collect), so you know that this action has depth and backing. Furthermore, this action demands complete commitment and warns of strong opposition (Epistle), since living as a person committed to Christ will lead you into all the action you can handle. Where's the action? For openers, equip yourself this Sunday for getting out into the highways and byways of lost humanity to extend the Great Invitation.

June 21

The Word of Reconciliation

The Third Sunday After Trinity

Natural man has enough of the Law left in his heart to convict him for what he is—a lost and condemned creature. So man seeks a way out for himself, and always fails because the way out from sin does not come from within but from without. Today's Introit from the Psalms shows that God does the turning, not man: "Turn Thou me." The Epistle (I Peter 5:6-11) says it again: "The God of all grace . . . called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus." The Gospel (Luke 5:1-10) pictures Christ seeking out sinners because they lost themselves in sin. The means to the only lasting, satisfying "new experience" cannot be self-induced, but is God-induced spiritually — by the Gospel in Word and Sacraments. Hear it in all parts of the service this Sunday.

Peace Lutheran Church *Mission, South Dakota*

Peace Lutheran Church sits about two miles south of the town of Mission, on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, in southern South Dakota. Each week I drive about thirty minutes north from my home in Valentine, Nebraska, to lead services in the small, metal-sided building our congregation has set apart for worship. Sometimes there are horses in a trailer in the parking lot—for checking cattle after. This is the Great Plains, and this is beef country.

The drive never gets old. After coming up out of the Minnechaduzza Creek canyon, green with ponderosa pines, the view turns decidedly vast. It's always the same: grassland, grazing cattle, windmills pulling water from the Ogallala Aquifer that lies under these fields, and it extends as far



south as Texas. Did I mention the drive never gets old? Sunrise on the plains has something to say about the glory of God, and the work of His hands, each and every morning (Psalm 19:1).

Peace Lutheran Church is part of a tri-parish here in the Sandhills region. About thirty minutes north is our sister congregation of St. Paul's, in White River, South Dakota. And thirty minutes south is our other sister congregation of Grace Lutheran Church and School, in Valentine, Nebraska.

At present, I lead Sunday Worship at Peace at 8:00 am, followed by Bible Class at Grace at 9:30, and Worship at 10:30. In the afternoon we have Bible Study and Sunday School up at St. Paul's (White River) at 4:00, with Catechism Class at 5:00. On the last Sunday of each month, we swap





Members of the ILC Tour Choir warm up before their concert at Peace Lutheran Church

morning church at Peace for an afternoon Communion Service at St. Paul's instead.

Throughout the year, various joint "Tri-Parish" services are held at Grace Lutheran Church in Valentine (Thanksgiving, New Year's Eve, and so forth.)

This past October Pastor Aaron Ude, from Good Shepherd Lutheran in Rapid City, came over for our tri-parish mission festival. During Bible class Pastor Ude led us in a great conversation to discover different ways of sharing the Gospel at home and abroad.

This year the Immanuel Lutheran College Tour Choir also came to visit the Sandhills. On a Saturday in March, they sang a great service at St. Paul's Church, and then another at Peace. The next day they sang at Grace Church also. We were glad to host the Tour Choir and were encouraged by their voices, their joy in coming to visit us, and the message brought by theology student Troyal Mayhew. We look forward to the next time we get to host!

In preparation for the Tour Choir being here, Amanda Jones (Peace) and Stephanie Bernthal (Grace) put together some personal invitations and posters for getting the word out. Members of our churches extended personal invitations, hung posters at local businesses, and posted other invitations online and on a local radio station. We weren't sure if the Tour Choir services would serve more as an outreach event, or a way to reconnect

with folks from our own fellowship. Turns out it was both. Altogether we had 120 people attend our tri-parish Tour Choir services.

None of the tri-parish churches are big. We're small. But so was that one kid's lunch. What was it? Five loaves and two fishes. And in the hands of our Savior, it was enough. With open fields surrounding us all the time, it's easy to be reminded of the Good Shepherd Who sees each individual soul as precious, and goes into the open country if only to gather in one lamb.

May our Savior teach us to value our neighbors the same, and to speak freely and openly of His grace and power with one another—as well as with our friends and neighbors.

"As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to stay with Jesus. But Jesus would not let him. Instead, he told him, 'Go home to your people, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how he had mercy on you.' The man left and began to proclaim in the Decapolis everything Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed." (Mark 5:18-20 EHV)



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

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

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

ANTI-CHRISTIAN VIOLENCE CONTINUES TO IMPACT THE CLC-INDIA

[Editor: The following is a report of events that took place in January in the Church of the Lutheran Confession in India (CLCI). It is written, in his own words, by the indigenous pastor who is our main contact. Names of people and places are being withheld because of ongoing persecution. The report is lightly edited for clarity.]

“For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
(2 Corinthians 12:10)

One evening in mid-January I had gathered with family and church members to celebrate my birthday with a special prayer meeting. The happy occasion, however, was interrupted by a shocking telephone call from one of our CLCI pastors, reporting that he had been attacked and severely injured by a group of Hindu extremists. We immediately rushed there with a few of our church members.

The pastor had been on his way to attend a CLCI church evening service when a group of Hindu extremists came in a minivan and stopped our pastor and attacked him. They beat his legs with iron rods, breaking his right knee. It was by the grace of God that our pastor escaped death.

We lodged a police complaint. The police registered our complaint and took a few pictures of our injured pastor. Since we don't have any witnesses for this attack, there have been no arrests to this point. Our pastor is slowly recovering.

My children were disappointed that a celebratory birthday prayer meeting turned into an occasion of crisis. I told them that doing the Lord's work in the midst of affliction—whether physical, emotional or persecution-based—is a profoundly Biblical method of ministry. Rather than silencing the Gospel, suffering can act as a megaphone that validates our CLCI Gospel message by showing the hope of the victims. The New Testament clearly indicates that suffering for the sake

of Christ is a primary, even necessary, setting for witnessing.

One of the biggest challenges of the church in India in recent years has been the open persecution of the church. Between 2014 and 2025, violence against Christians in India has risen 500%, and there are now restrictive anti-conversion

laws in many states. Currently the CLCI has been facing much persecution during our ministry work in many places. Jesus told us, “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.” (John 15:18)

India is a secular democracy in theory, but not in practice. It is very challenging for Christians to do evangelism work here

in India. These persecutions remind us that we are in the end times and we should expect tribulation, as our Savior Jesus reminds us in Matthew, “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.” (Matthew 24:9)

Our Savior Jesus also told us, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and innocent as doves.” (Matthew 10:16) Yes, it is a great challenge to do mission work here in India, but we are moving forward successfully with faith in the Lord.

Please pray that the Lord may use the CLCI to bring many Indians into His kingdom. Your prayer support will build the CLCI greatly here in India to do His mighty work. May the Lord bless you all. Thank you.



Praying for the injured pastor in the hospital

“BREAD OF LIFE” READINGS JUNE 2026

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
June 1	TLH 334 / LSB 689	1 Chronicles 28	Before his death, David gives instructions to Israel and to Solomon.
June 2	TLH 28	1 Chronicles 29	David encourages the people to follow his example of generosity. David prays to the Lord. Solomon becomes king. David dies.
June 3	TLH 156 / LSB 431	Leviticus 1	The Lord teaches His people how to offer animal sacrifices.
June 4	TLH 441 / LSB 781	Leviticus 2	The Lord teaches His people how to give offerings of grain.
June 5	LSB 777/778	Leviticus 3	The Lord instructs His people regarding peace offerings.
June 6	TLH 394 / LSB 702	Leviticus 4	The Lord instructs His people regarding sin offerings.
June 8	TLH 390 / LSB 560	Leviticus 5	The Lord distinguishes between sins of error and sins of intent. The Lord commands His people regarding guilt offerings.
June 9	LSB 686	Leviticus 6	The Lord commands His people to make restitution to those whom they have wronged, in addition to giving guilt offerings. The Lord instructs His priests on how they are to handle the various offerings.
June 10	TLH 401 / LSB 692	Leviticus 7	The Lord continues instructing His priests regarding offerings. The Lord forbids the Israelites to eat fat or to eat blood. The Lord provides further instructions regarding sacrifices.
June 11	TLH 483 / LSB 682	Leviticus 8	The Lord instructs Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons as priests in a seven-day ceremony.
June 12	TLH 491 / LSB 681	Leviticus 9	Aaron and his sons begin their service as priests. The Lord receives their service with approval.
June 13	TLH 323	Leviticus 10	The Lord takes His Law seriously; Nadab and Abihu offer unauthorized fire before the Lord and die as a result. The Lord provides additional regulations to His priests.
June 15	LSB 558	Leviticus 11	The Lord provides His people with dietary laws, distinguishing between clean animals and unclean animals.
June 16	LSB 863	Leviticus 12	The Lord teaches His people how a woman is to be purified following childbirth.
June 17	TLH 149 / LSB 435	Leviticus 13	The Lord provides His people with regulations regarding leprosy.
June 18	LSB 846	Leviticus 14	The Lord provides a process for the cleansing of lepers and a process for the cleansing of houses.
June 19	TLH 279 / LSB 915	Leviticus 15	The Lord provides laws regarding ceremonial uncleanness resulting from bodily discharges.
June 20	LSB 530	Ezekiel 40	The Lord grants Ezekiel a detailed vision of the new temple.
June 22	TLH 4 / LSB 907	Ezekiel 41	The vision continues as the Lord invites Ezekiel to tour the Holy Place of the new temple.
June 23	TLH 466 / LSB 909	Ezekiel 42	The tour continues back outside of the temple, and the tour guide of bronze continues taking measurements.
June 24	TLH 244 / LSB 506	Ezekiel 43	The glory of the Lord fills the temple. The Lord provides instructions for the rebuilding of the altar.
June 25	TLH 572	Ezekiel 44	The Lord designates the east gate of the temple for the prince. The Lord rebukes His people for their unfaithfulness. The Lord provides regulations for His Levitical priests.
June 26	TLH 400 / LSB 783	Ezekiel 45	The Lord provides regulations to prevent the defilement of His temple. The Lord commands His people to bring offerings to the prince.
June 27	TLH 73 / LSB 340	Ezekiel 46	The Lord gives commands regarding the offering of sacrifices and the celebration of feasts in the new temple. The Lord distinguishes what is holy from what is common.
June 29	TLH 469 / LSB 648	Ezekiel 47	A stream of fresh water flows from the inner court of the temple, turning the water of the Dead Sea into fresh water. The Lord reestablishes the tribal borders of Israel.
June 30	TLH 660 / LSB 748	Ezekiel 48	In His mercy and grace, the Lord restores His people and provides them with a permanent home, where He is present with them. The relationship between this king and his bride serves as a beautiful metaphor for the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church.

Bangladesh Building Project Reaches Final Stage

After months of planning, government approval, and preparation, construction began shortly after Easter 2025 on the Bangladesh Lutheran Church Mission (BLCM) building project in Gopalganj. That project is now reaching its final stage. The Board of Missions recently approved a final MDF-Church Building grant to help purchase the furnishings and fixtures needed to complete the dormitory rooms, classroom and worship space, and residence for Pastor Monotosh and his family.

This building is intended to serve several important purposes for the work of the BLCM. It will provide a place for worship, instruction, storage, and housing. It will also support the long-planned opening of a Bible Institute for the training of future pastors and teachers. Fourteen men have been ready and eager to begin pastoral training once the building is completed. The plan is for a four-year course of study with monthly in-person sessions, combining classroom instruction with practical outreach.

This is the kind of work Paul encouraged when he wrote to Timothy, *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* (2 Timothy 2:2, NKJV) That passage describes well the goal of this project: not simply to finish a building, but to provide a place where the Word of God can be taught, confessed, and passed on to others.

This project is also a good example of how the Mission Development Fund is used. The MDF is intended to help develop mission work. In Bangladesh, that means helping



provide a permanent place from which the BLCM can carry out the work of preaching, teaching, training, and outreach.

The need for this work is clear. Pastor Monotosh is the only ordained pastor of the BLCM. He serves congregations and preaching stations spread across several areas of Bangladesh, while also working with pastors in training, lay leaders, and evangelists. Many BLCM members are new to the Christian faith and were raised in either Hindu or Muslim homes. That background makes continued instruction in God’s Word especially important.

A permanent facility is especially valuable in this mission field. In the past, Pastor Monotosh and his family have had to move several times because neighbors objected to the Christian singing and ministry taking place where they lived. A building owned and used by the government-registered BLCM will allow the church to continue its work with greater stability.

We give thanks that the Lord continues to provide for His Church in Bangladesh. Please pray that He would bless the completion of this building, strengthen Pastor Monotosh and the BLCM, and raise up faithful men to proclaim Christ crucified and risen for the salvation of sinners.



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

Reformation Takes Root

The decade following Luther's posting of the Ninety-Five Theses in 1517 left the Holy Roman Empire in a state of crisis. The Diet of Worms in 1521 had condemned Martin Luther and his theology. However, Emperor Charles V, who was perpetually distracted by wars against France in the west and the Ottoman Turks in the east, simply hadn't the time to attend to German religious affairs. Into this vacuum stepped the imperial Diets—representative assemblies of princes, bishops, and free cities—and it was at the city of Speyer, in 1526 and again in 1529, that the Reformation's political fate began to take shape.

There were actually two Diets of Speyer. The first opened five hundred years ago this month, on June 25, 1526. It resulted in an unexpected gift to the Lutheran Reformers.

The Edict of Worms had proven impossible to enforce, so strong was the influence of the Reformation in Saxony and neighboring German principalities. The military, furthermore, desperately needed the cooperation of all the German princes—not just the Catholic ones—to confront the invading Ottoman Turks.

The Turks represented an existential threat to Christian Europe. That same summer they would crush Hungarian forces at Mohács, killing Hungarian King Louis II along with many of his nobles, and overrunning much of Hungary. As far as anyone knew, Germany would be next. A united Holy Roman Empire was desperately needed to confront this threat, and the assembled estates were willing to offer at least a temporary religious compromise in order to achieve that unity.

The First Diet of Speyer agreed to a remarkable provisional settlement: each prince would govern religious affairs within his own territory. The agreement, expressed in Latin, was *cuius regio, eius religio*; literally, "Whose realm, his religion." It meant that the religion of the prince or elector who governed a region would determine the religion of all his subjects. If the prince were Catholic, the territory he ruled would be Catholic, and similarly for the Lutheran princes.

This new agreement, though still seen as provisional and temporary in 1526, was an important milestone for the Lutheran church. It represented the first practical legitimization of evangelical reform,

and gave the Lutheran regions breathing room to consolidate their gains, organize church visitations, and begin institutionalizing the Reformation.

However, there were a multitude of trials yet in store for the fledgling Lutheran church. The Second Diet of Speyer, in 1529, would effectively erase the gains of the First. With the Turkish threat momentarily receding and Emperor Charles V's position looking stronger, the Catholic majority at the Second Diet would vote to rescind the 1526 settlement and reimpose the Edict of Worms. Martin Luther would again be an outlaw, and the Lutheran theology once more officially condemned. Even this setback, however, would lead to a salutary outcome: on April 19, 1529, fourteen free cities and six Lutheran princes—including Elector John of Saxony and Landgrave Philip of Hesse—would formally protest the Diet's decision. "In matters concerning God's honor and the salvation of souls," they declared, "each one must stand before God and give an account of himself." This wasn't just Lutheran self-interest; it was a confessional claim about the limits of human authority in divine things, grounded in the Reformers' conviction that Scripture must be the final authority of all things to the church. Their written "*Protestatio*" gave a permanent name to the movement: *Protestants*.

What is the takeaway for us 21st-century Lutherans? *Confessional faithfulness sometimes requires institutional courage*. The church must be willing to take a stand against the majority whenever the Word of God is at stake. In the final analysis, the church is not answerable to human councils or synods, far less to the cultural trends currently in vogue in society, but to the Word of God alone. Speyer is a historical monument to the seriousness with which the Reformers took that conviction, and a reminder to us to take it no less seriously today.



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Lutheran Spokesman

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Installation. In accord with our usage and order, **Thomas Naumann**, who was called by Grace Lutheran Church in Fridley, Minnesota, to be their pastor was installed on April 26, 2026. Participating in the service were fourteen pastors, active and emeritus (photo, with new pastor in front).
-Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer



SEEN IN PASSING

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

Finland Supreme Court Says Historic Christianity is Hate Speech. Finland's Supreme Court has blurred the line between peaceful Christian expression and hate speech. The recent case centers on government minister Päivi Räsänen, who was prosecuted for quoting Scripture and authoring a 2004 church pamphlet on marriage and sexuality. Although lower courts twice acquitted her, the Supreme Court reversed one charge in a narrow 3–2 decision. The author contends that the ruling reflects "moral blindness," treating orthodox Christian teaching as though it were inherently harmful. The piece warns that broader European efforts to criminalize "hate speech" risk equating violent extremism with mere theological disagreement. Inglese, Daisy Mae. "When Christian Conviction Becomes 'Hate Speech.'" *Faith and Family*. Restoringthewest.com, 31 Mar. 2026. Web. 5 May 2026.

Dwindling Number of Speakers of the Language of Christ. *National Geographic* profiles Maaloula, a small Christian village in Syria where residents still speak Western Aramaic, the same language spoken by Jesus and His disciples. In 2013, jihadist fighters seized the village, forcing most residents to flee and

leaving behind bulletscarred buildings and looted churches. Despite the devastation, locals continue using Aramaic in daily life, preserving a fragile linguistic heritage. The community is slowly rebuilding, restoring churches and teaching the language to younger generations. Biller, Ryan. "This WarTorn Village Is Fighting to Keep Christ's Language Alive." *Culture*. NationalGeographic.com, 16 Mar. 2026. Web. 5 May 2026.

Gen Z's Quiet Return to the Pew. A *USA Today* article notes that many young Americans are rediscovering faith, despite cultural assumptions of growing secularism. Studies indicate that Gen Z is increasingly drawn to spiritual practices for meaning, stability, and community in an anxious age. Some churches offering enduring answers to Gen Z's questions are experiencing surprising growth. At the same time, experts observe that resurgence is uneven and not always tied to institutional religion. Overall, the column frames Gen Z's spiritual curiosity as a hopeful sign. "Gen Z Isn't Losing Faith, Even Amid Modern Distractions." *Religion and Belief*. USAToday.com, 8 Feb. 2026. Web. 5 May 2026.