DECEMBER 2026 VOL. 69 NO. 6

Lutheran Spokesman

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



**I wait for the Lord,
my soul doth wait,
and in His word do I hope.**

–Psalm 130:5 KJV



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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

Editor: Paul Naumann, 3732 Claymore Lane, Eau Claire, WI 54701, E-mail to paul.naumann@ilc.edu; Assistant Editor: Craig Owings; Art Director: Art direction and graphic design by Pipestone Publishing Co.; Proofreaders: Vance Fossum and Paula Naumann; Staff: James Albrecht, David Bernthal, Timothy Daub, Michael Eichstadt, Wayne Eichstadt, David Fuerstenau, Mark Gullerud, Richard Kanzenbach, John Klatt, Joseph Lau, Nathanael Mayhew, Drew Naumann, Karl Olmanson, John Pfeiffer, Nathan Pfeiffer, David Reim, Peter Reim, Michael Roehl, Robert Sauers, David Schierenbeck, Chad Seybt, Mark Weis.

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: Beth Sandeen. Individual subscriptions: $30. Group subscriptions through congregations: $27.

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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Where There Is Trust, Waiting Is a Blessing



Waiting has never been the strong suit of sinful human beings. Abraham and Sarah stumbled when they contrived a way to have a son through Hagar instead of waiting for God to give them Isaac (Genesis 16:1-4). The people of Israel grew restless and idolatrous while waiting for Moses to return from the summit of Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:1).

If waiting patiently has always been a challenge, then it has become only more difficult in a world where we tap, swipe, and pay to have a purchase arrive at our doorstep within hours. Impatience is accelerated in a society that is strung out on instant gratification and an ever-shrinking attention span.

Waiting for God to send the Messiah is complete. *"The Word became flesh"* (John 1:14) two thousand years ago, but now we await His second coming on the Last Day. It would be sinful for us to impatiently take matters into our own hands while waiting for Jesus to return, but equally sinful is it to give up waiting and disregard what is coming. Peter warns, *"They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'"* (2 Peter 3:4)

Patient waiting is possible where there is trust. Abraham and Sarah stumbled in their impatience, yet Abraham fiercely trusted God's promises, and it was counted to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6), and *"Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise."* (Hebrews 6:15)

Abraham and other faithful Old Testament believers trusted what God promised. They trusted that God would send the Savior from sin and, in the certainty of God's faithfulness, they trusted that their sins were forgiven. Then, in the fullness of time, God sent Jesus, and the waiting was over (Galatians 4:4, Ephesians 1:10). Anticipatory waiting that trusts what is coming may be just as difficult as any other waiting, but the struggle does not come from an impatient sinfulness. Rather, the difficulty comes from excitement and growing joy for what is coming.

We are waiting for Jesus, our Bridegroom, to return (Matthew 25:1-13). The waiting can be difficult, especially when the struggles and sorrows, the wickedness and dangers, the darkness and unbelief of this world press upon us. It is also a challenge not to lose interest and watchfulness because we are busy in the world, earthly blessings appeal to our flesh, and we are easily distracted.

The good news is that while waiting for Jesus' return on the Last Day, we don't have to wait for Jesus to come to us. He continually comes to us through His Word.

"Jesus comes again in mercy when our hearts are bowed with care;

Jesus comes again in answer to an earnest, heartfelt prayer . . .

Jesus comes to hearts rejoicing, bringing news of sins forgiven;

Jesus comes in sounds of gladness, leading souls redeemed to heaven . . .

Jesus comes in joy and sorrow, shares alike our hopes and fears;

Jesus comes, whate'er befalls us, glads our hearts, and dries our tears." (TLH 56:2-4)

Waiting is a challenge to our weak selves, but remember: the waiting for salvation to be accomplished is over. We are able to celebrate that every day, especially on Christmas. Jesus actively comes to us day-by-day through His Word and He is ever-present with us—no waiting needed. And while we wait for Jesus to return, we know that He will come again because He has promised to do so. *"Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. . . . Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."* (James 5:7-8)

With eyes focused on Jesus and hearts trusting His Word while we work in His Kingdom, it is an eager, busy waiting with expectation. We are blessed to be among the ones who wait.



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

The Great Forerunner of the Promised Christ

John the Baptist was a notable ambassador of Jesus who was highly distinguished among ministers of the Word. Before he was born, the angel Gabriel said of John to Zechariah, *"He will be great before the Lord."* (Luke 1:15) When speaking to the Jews, Jesus told them about John, *"What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. . . . Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist."* (Matthew 11:9,11) As a prophet, in a sense he bridged the Old and New Testaments.



St. John the Baptist by Titian

This great forerunner of the promised Christ was foretold in the Old Testament, and his ministry was recorded in the Gospels. Isaiah prophesied concerning John, *"A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'"* (40:3) Malachi testified of John's coming in the spirit and power of Elijah (see Luke 1:17), quoting the Lord saying, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers."* (Malachi 4:5-6)

Looking at the region and conditions under which John worked, we see that he wasn't concerned about creature comforts, nor was he interested in being a fashion trendsetter. Matthew writes, *"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. . . . Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey."* (3:1,4)

In order for John to prepare human hearts for the coming of the Lord, it was necessary for him to preach a message of repentance. It is not an easy thing to call out sin and reprove sinners for it, since the fleshly nature causes people to resist and be offended by reproof. Nevertheless, John didn't curry favor with people or try to gain their acceptance, because he cared more about their souls' salvation. And so, we find him exposing the tax collectors' sin of demanding more than authorized, and the Roman soldiers' practice of extorting money from the Jews. (Luke 3:12-14) John was even so bold as to admonish King Herod for marrying his brother's wife, though it meant John would be imprisoned and executed. (Mark 6:14-29)

Once his hearers were crushed by guilt over their transgressions, John comforted them with the soothing Gospel, pointing to Jesus, saying,*"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29) He also baptized them to receive the blessed gift of forgiveness. (Mark 1:4) John even baptized Jesus, even though He had no sin to wash away. But this was necessary for Jesus to fulfill all righteousness. (Matthew 3:15)

As a result of John's ministry, he had followers known as disciples of John. But he didn't want to be an influencer who had a following. He said of Jesus in relation to himself, *"He must increase, but I must decrease."* (John 3:30) John the Baptist showed his desire for his disciples to become followers of Jesus when, in prison, he sent them to Jesus in order to learn for themselves that He was the promised Christ sent to save them from their sins. (Luke 7:18-23)

Although Jesus said there is *"no one greater than John the Baptist,"* He also proclaimed, *"Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* (Matthew 11:11)



Mark Gullerud is retired from the pastoral ministry. He lives in Sunnyvale, California.

To practice apologetics means to defend the Christian faith, especially before unbelievers. In this series, apologist James Arndt explores the why's and how's of Christian apologetics.



Worldviews
EVERYBODY HAS ONE

***"But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."* (1 Peter 3:15)**

The apostle Peter instructs us to always be prepared to make a defense of our faith to anyone who asks (1 Peter 3:15). The Greek word for defense is *apologia* which is where we get the word *apologetics*. But before we begin to defend the faith, we need to recognize the nature of the debate. It won't do to enter a conversation without knowing the rules.

Everyone has a way of viewing the world, or what we will call a *worldview*. To help illustrate this, consider the question, "What is a woman?" A progressive liberal is likely to answer that differently from a conscientious Christian. But their answers come from their own presuppositions. Prior to this question, they have already decided whether we have the authority to *define reality for ourselves* or if we are obligated to live within a *reality that has already been defined* for us. Like a pair of colored glasses affecting whatever you see, your worldview will affect how you interact with all new ideas, and which you will eventually accept or discard.

There are many beliefs which make up a person's worldview. These beliefs are not a gathering of bits and pieces where each can be examined individually. Instead, they are more like the strands of a spider web where all one's beliefs are connected in some way. Some of your beliefs are at the periphery and could be changed with little effect on your day-to-day life. Just think how easy it would be to correct your belief that it is raining right now (you can check just by looking out a window). Other beliefs are more central to your worldview, and changing them would have radical downstream consequences to how you look at and understand the world. Just imagine how difficult it would be for someone to convince you to believe you don't have any legs and how your life would change if you started believing them!

All worldviews have a central Ultimate Authority. It is the place beyond which you cannot go any further. It is the original starting point, and everything else is derived from it. Therefore, this is the part of your worldview most resistant to change.

As Christians, our Ultimate Authority is the triune God, as He has revealed Himself in His Word. God tells us, *"I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols."* (Isaiah 42:8) There is no one or nothing beyond God. Therefore, what He says goes. When faced with questions like "Where did we come from?" "Where are we going?" "What is wrong with us?" and "How shall we live?" Christians will answer them all according to God's Word.

Your opponent also has a worldview made up of many interconnected beliefs where some are held loosely, and others are held tightly. He also has an Ultimate Authority by which he will answer questions like where we came from, where we are going, and how we should live? Furthermore, he will be as resistant to changing his Ultimate Authority as you are with yours!

This leaves us in a bit of a conundrum. Since both sides have an Ultimate Authority and don't want to budge, how can we possibly have meaningful conversations with others that won't devolve into a tennis match of "I'm right and you're wrong" and "No, I'm right and you're wrong"? Some suggest the Christian should temporarily step out of his worldview, adopt a position of neutrality, and argue from there toward the truth of Christianity. We can use the facts and the evidence to show our opponent the truth of the Bible. This may sound reasonable or even beneficial. In reality, it is a myth, and we will learn why in the next article.



James Arndt of Rosemount, Minnesota is a frequent presenter at Christian apologetics workshops. He is a member of Berea Lutheran Church of Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota.

LOVE NOTES

"I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one." **(1 John 2:12-14)**

The apostle John had just reminded his readers of the love they are to have for one another. He would soon warn them about that which they should not love at all. In between, we have these interesting little love notes to different groups of believers.

I believe it would be a mistake to think that John is strictly writing to three different age groups, even though he uses terms that seem to indicate such. Perhaps rather think of a Christian's walk in life. The "little children" are new to the faith, the "young men" are those who are growing in the faith, and "fathers" are the ones who have been long in the traces; those we consider mature Christians.

What peace and comfort should wash over our lives with the sure knowledge that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake!

The first love note to the young in faith is the best of all and one that all new to the faith must embrace. Not we, the holy angels, nor God Himself could give better news! What peace and comfort should wash over our lives with the sure knowledge that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake! This is the news that makes us children of God and keeps us in His good grace unto our end.

"Middle-aged" Christians, like middle-aged people in general, are usually in the middle of things. Family commitments, job requirements, and church obligations all vie for one's attention. And just as in the Parable of the Sower; birds, thorns, and lack of root are a threat to the Christian's faith. (Matthew 13) The note of love and comfort from John is this: *"I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one."* (verse 14) No matter how things may appear in this world, Satan is defeated. He has no hold over us; no control. Jesus defeated our enemies once and for all with His sacrifice on the cross. Moreover, John shows us the full battle equipment we need to withstand the devil. We have the Word of God abiding in our hearts. This is strong encouragement for hearing, studying, and committing to memory the Holy Scriptures.

The "older folks"—both in faith and age—have seen and been through a lot. We have seen warranties, policies, politicians, friends—and nearly all else—disappoint, betray, and leave us heartbroken and disillusioned. John lovingly writes to these individuals a short message repeated for emphasis. *"I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning."* (verse 13) Our Savior, Jesus, was present before time began. It was then that God chose us to be His very own. He has promised to be with us in every situation. He has been with His people in the past, He is with us now, and there is no reason to doubt His promise to be with us to the very end.

Thank God for the love He has shown us in the blessed sacrifice of His Son!



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

Atonement Made Simple

"He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering so that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf. He shall slaughter the young bull before the Lord. Then Aaron's sons, the priests, shall present the blood and splash the blood against all the sides of the altar at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting." **(Leviticus 1:4-5 EHV)**

For a German Lutheran such as myself, there are few things as frustrating as a task made more complicated than necessary. Why have a meeting that could simply be an email? Why pack a whole suitcase for an overnight trip? Why garnish your meal with a sprig of thyme when you're just going to take it off before you eat it anyway?



Maybe you've felt some similar frustration if you've tried to read through the book of Leviticus and seen all of the incredibly specific requirements of the animal sacrifices. There were four regular sacrifices (not relating to the Day of Atonement) that the people of Israel were to make in which animals were offered: the burnt offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering. The blood was splashed against the altar. The fat, the kidneys, the liver, and the other entrails were burned. The burnt offerings had to be male without blemish. Why such specifics? Wouldn't it have been simpler and made the same point to just burn the nearest whole animal and have done with it?

If you recall, these Old Testament animal sacrifices were intended to help point Israel ahead to the coming Messiah. Consider His sacrifice for a moment: was it simple? At first blush it might seem that way. Jesus died on the cross to pay for sin. Yet, think of the complexity of the preparations for this sacrifice. Jesus had to be perfect, keeping every law of God down to the letter; never allowing even sinful thoughts and intentions to enter his heart. Nothing could have been more complex, nor more difficult to achieve! When was the last time you went a single *hour* without sin? The suffering Jesus underwent may have been simple—agonizing, but not complicated. But the righteousness He gained for us was neither simple nor easy to achieve.

Now, because He accomplished His mission to achieve perfect righteousness for us (His resurrection assures it), our salvation could not be simpler. *"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."* (Mark 16:16) We never have to wonder if our sacrifice was carried out the correct way, if it was worthy, if it was acceptable, if it was effective to cover all our sins. Our sacrifice is the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. By simply believing the words which Christ spoke when our atonement was made—*"It is finished"* (John 19:30)—we have full and free salvation assured.

The Old Testament animal sacrifices were a complicated and graphic affair. They required choosing the perfect animal for the appropriate sacrifice, butchering correctly, washing, burning flesh, and disposing of unused portions. The end result of each sacrifice was death. But thanks be to God that our once-for-all sacrifice has been made to make us right with God and inheritors of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

To that dear Redeemer's praise,
Who the cov'nant sealed with blood,
Let our hearts and voices raise
Loud thanksgivings to our God. (OSC 197 v. 3)



Drew Naumann is a pastor at Messiah Lutheran Church of Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

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

The Gospel of Luke

We speak about the four gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In reality they are more like four facets of the one Gospel of Jesus Christ, orchestrated and directed by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit used those writers to present Jesus in the full spectrum of divine color and glory.

Matthew, writing primarily to a Jewish audience, traces Jesus back to Abraham (the father of the Jews) and shows Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, proving that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Mark presents Jesus as the almighty Son of God, and demonstrates His power by what He did more than by what He said. Yet He established God's Kingdom, not by His power, but through His suffering. John introduces Jesus as the eternal Word Who created all things and Who became flesh and dwelt among men. His account soars above the others by focusing on Jesus' teaching.

Luke shows Jesus Christ as the universal Savior of all humanity.

Luke addresses his Gospel account to the *"most excellent Theophilus"* (a Greek of high standing, Luke 1:3) and to a broader Gentile audience. Therefore, he often explains Hebrew names and customs and uses the Roman way of telling time. Luke shows Jesus Christ as the universal Savior of all humanity, tracing His ancestry all the way back to Adam, the father of all people. He shows Jesus' special love and care for the marginalized. He especially shows Jesus' attention to women, the poor, tax collectors, Samaritans, and outcasts. Luke records Jesus praying more frequently than the other synoptic (from the Greek word σύνοψις, meaning "seeing all together") Gospels. The Apostle Paul calls Luke *"the beloved physician"* in Colossians 4:14, which explains why Luke takes a more detailed interest in the physical ailments that Jesus healed. As a well-educated doctor, he writes with a more sophisticated Greek.

Luke was not an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry, but he states in his opening verses that he has closely followed or investigated the accounts of the eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2-3). Luke was a companion of the Apostle Paul, joining him in Troas on Paul's second missionary journey. Of course, Paul was not an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry either. However, we know from Acts 21:1 that Luke accompanied Paul to Jerusalem. At Jerusalem a riot arose and Paul was taken into custody. He spent about two years in prison in Caesarea before he appealed to Caesar. Then, in Acts 27, we see that Luke also accompanied Paul to Rome. That gave Luke two years in which he could consult with the other Apostles and eyewitnesses. It is altogether possible that Luke sat down with Mary herself to hear the account of Jesus' birth. Or if Mary was gone by then, he certainly could have consulted with John, who had taken Mary into his own home after Jesus' crucifixion.

Luke did all this careful investigating in order that Theophilus and we would *"have certainty concerning the things you have been taught."* (1:4) Perhaps that is why Luke pays such careful attention to historical details, connecting the events of Jesus' ministry—and later, in Acts, the spread of the Christian Church—with rulers and events in history. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Luke's attention to such detail has also helped bring many skeptics to faith when they discovered the absolute accuracy of all his references.

Paul indicates that Luke was still with him when he was held under house arrest in Rome. Later, when Paul was again arrested and condemned to death by Nero, Luke was the only one who stood by his side at great danger to his own life (2 Timothy 4:11).

Luke was a faithful servant of God, and the Holy Spirit used him to preserve for us a precious account of our Savior from His humble birth to His reigning over all things from His throne in heaven.



David Reim is pastor of Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Vernon, British Columbia.



Pastor Ruben Ude
1923-1970

In this series we are reprinting Spokesman articles by early leaders in the CLC. Pastor Emeritus James Albrecht is the curator of the series. Pastor Ruben Ude (1923-1970) was a naval aviator in WWII and a graduate of Bethany College. He was involved in the formation of the CLC, and for the last four years of his life served as chairman of the synod's Board of Missions. This article is from the Lutheran Spokesman *of December 1962. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.*

Nurturing Tender Plants

Is More Than Providing Them with All Material Blessings

The Holy Scripture describes Job as a man that *"was perfect and upright and one that feared God, and eschewed evil."* (Job 1:1) Job was honest and above board in all his dealings. He avoided evil. He was diligent to do good works. He was quick to make an honest confession of all his sins. He did not claim merit or worthiness for his good works but trusted alone in the promised Redeemer for forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation. Job had an honest love for God and as he was in his heart, so he lived.

Have you ever noticed how the Holy Ghost proves His description of Job by going on to show what kind of father he was to his children? Job had seven sons and three daughters. Job also had riches so that he was *"the greatest of all the people of the east."* (1:3) Job was not the kind of man who would withhold his material blessings from his children. No doubt he, according to his means, provided his children with the necessities and godly pleasures of this life. His sons each had his own house and they took turns giving feasts for all their brothers and sisters.

Job could give his children many material things because God had given him much. But it was not Job's real concern that his children should have every material blessing. Had God given him less he could have been content to give his children less and would have urged them to be contented. Job's real concern was that his children should have every spiritual blessing, especially peace with God through the forgiveness of their sins. After each of their parties he would get up early in the morning, so as not to delay this very important matter, and would call all of his children together for a special worship service. He would offer a burnt offering for each one, *"for Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.'"* (1:5) Job had trained his children well, and he was confident that they would not willfully sin against God in words or in deeds. But he also knew that they still had a sinful old heart and that in the excitement of a party this old Adam could stir up sinful thoughts and desires in their hearts. Job was concerned that his children should also confess and have absolution for such secret sins.

This Job did continually. It was his chief and constant concern that the hearts of his children be right with God. This should also be the chief concern of every parent. We should be unselfish and provide our children with earthly blessings according to our God-given means. But it should not be our chief concern that our children be rich in earthly blessings. If God has not given great wealth, then both parents and children should learn to be contented with less than "everything." Our real concern should be to give them every spiritual blessing. As Job rose up early to provide spiritual blessings for his children, so we should always be busy praying for our children and help them to find peace with God through an honest confession of sinfulness, and a humble faith in Jesus for forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Redeemer Lutheran Church
Bowdle, South Dakota

The little town of Bowdle no longer has a high school or grocery store, but by God's good grace, the everlasting Light still shines! At 4:00 P.M. every Sunday, the dozen remaining active members of Redeemer Lutheran Church gather to uplift the saving Gospel of the Child born of Mary Who gave His life for ours.



Our German-Russian immigrant roots run deep. Church dinners include foods you will find at no other CLC potluck: *barushka, knoepfla, halupsi,* and *kuchen*. Desserts made with dates, raisins, or prunes disappear faster than any chocolate chip cookie!

At Christmas, we still sing German carols which bring tears to the eyes of members who either only learned English after they started school or at least remember German being spoken and sung at home and church: *Ihr Kinderlein Kommet, Gott ist die Liebe,* and *Stille Nacht.*

The human eye looks at our empty parsonage and assumes a bleak prospect for the future, but faith perceives no lack of blessings and opportunities from the Lord.



Sanctuary at Christmas time



Friday VBS at Redeemer





Above and Right: Friday VBS at Redeemer

Without the regular expense of a resident pastor, the congregation has been able to fund several lingering structural issues with ease. Last summer, steel roofing was installed over the parsonage and fellowship hall. In a small town like Bowdle, where locals go on daily drives to check out what's happening, the new roof has sparked the beautiful rumor that Redeemer must have no thoughts of closing—and we don't!

A few years ago, former Pastor Zachary Sippert and wife Dannie organized a most successful VBS. Last December, we decided to leverage the connections they had made with local families and invite them back to a Christmas VBS, and another at Easter, each with an impressive turnout. Since Bowdle Elementary now has a four-day school week, we decided to begin offering a one-day VBS one Friday afternoon each month.

The children especially look forward to a scavenger hunt based on that day's lesson theme, which we set up throughout the parsonage. Empty no longer, at least once a month it's filled with the delight of children learning of their Savior.

Just a handful of us, most old enough to be great-grandparents, chasing after sixteen preschoolers—what do we think we're doing? The joy and honor alone to welcome Bowdle's littlest lambs to Jesus is all the strength and reward we need.

What will come from any of this over-the-top effort? The Lord answers any doubt with a rhetorical question of His own: *"For who has despised the day of small things?"* (Zechariah 4:10 NKJV)

Throughout Scripture, the Lord drives home the theme of how He makes big things happen out of very little: *"God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty."* (I Corinthians 1:27 NKJV)

And there might be no greater example than our Savior's lowly birth as His grand entrance to conquer sin, death, and the devil: *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."* (Micah 5:2 NKJV)

Since 1962, well over one hundred members of Redeemer Lutheran Church have been called to glory. The dozen of us left in Bowdle are committed to keep preaching, singing, and living the good news of Christ and Him crucified as if there were still two hundred of us sitting in these pews. There is no reason your little flock can't do the same: *"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much."* (Luke 16:10 NKJV)



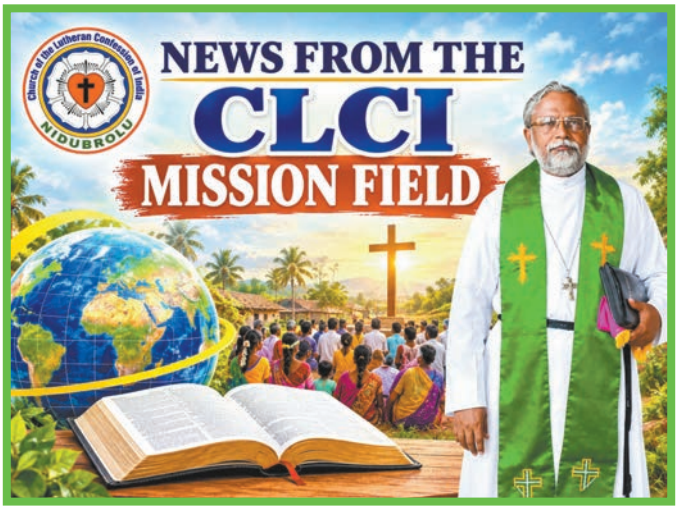
Timothy Daub is pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church of Hecla, Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Aberdeen, and Redeemer Lutheran Church of Bowdle, South Dakota. He also serves on the CLC Board of Missions.

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

Beneath the Shadow of the Cross:

Faith, Baptism and Wedding of Two Hindu Converts

[Editor: The following is a report from our principal contact in Southeast India, in his own words, about current activities in the Church of the Lutheran Confession in India (CLCI). The report is lightly edited for clarity.]



Recently, I had the profound privilege of officiating a wedding that was far more than a simple exchange of vows. It was a public declaration of warfare against the powers of this world, and a beautiful manifestation of Christ's victory.

Conversion

The bride and the groom were both born and raised in devout Hindu families. Separately, they were brought to the breaking point of their lives, where the empty promises of idols failed them. For the groom, conversion came after a period of intense personal crisis and physical brokenness. When local temple rituals and traditional remedies left him empty and bankrupt, he heard the Word of God that I preached once in a village called Mannava and the Holy Spirit worked through that Word through diverse means, *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28)

For the bride, the journey was one of intense spiritual liberation. She suffered from deep spiritual oppression and fear, a common affliction in environments saturated with idolatry. She also heard my preaching in a public Gospel meeting. At the end of the Gospel meeting, she came forward for prayer. When I prayed for her in the powerful name of Jesus, she experienced immediate, undeniable deliverance and peace. The Word of God took root in her heart. She recognized her own sin, the insufficiency of her works, and the profound gift of justification by faith alone through the blood of Christ.

When these two individuals met, they found in each other a shared, unwavering devotion to the Savior. They were determined to build a home rooted entirely on the rock of Christian Scripture, refusing to compromise by entering into an unequally yoked marriage with non-believers, despite the intense pressure from their respective extended families.

Baptism

In the confessional Lutheran tradition, we understand Holy Baptism to be a means of grace—a divine act in which God claims His own, washes away sin, and implants the Holy Spirit. In the West, Baptism is frequently celebrated in the presence of a smiling, supportive congregation with post-service receptions. In rural and urban India today, adult Baptism for a Hindu convert is akin to signing a social death warrant. Because of the volatile environment created by local radical groups, we had to conduct the adult Baptism with immense caution, yet without sacrificing the public solemnity of the sacrament. Under the watchful eyes of a community hostile to the Gospel, we gathered in our "Vernon Gladys CLCI Church" at Mannava village, which was a relatively safe place, to conduct the Baptisms of these new believers.

Wedding

A few days after their Baptisms, the time came for the wedding. In India, a wedding is rarely just about two individuals; it is a massive communal affair involving entire villages and extended kinship networks. This wedding was fraught with tension. Local extremist informants frequently monitor churches, looking for opportunities to disrupt services. Despite the threat of disruption, we proceeded with a fully Christ-centered liturgy. The chapel was small, but it was filled with the palpable presence of our Lord Jesus, protected by the prayers of local church elders and believers.

I preached the wedding sermon on Ephesians 5, highlighting how Christian marriage is a living reflection of Christ's sacrificial love for His Church. This message carried a piercing relevance for this young couple. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her; similarly, this bride and groom were being called to love one another in an environment where they might literally have to suffer physical harm for the sake of the name of Christ.

May the Lord bless you all. Thank you.

"BREAD OF LIFE" READINGS DECEMBER 2026

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

Date	Hymns	Reading	Comments
December 1	TLH 514 / LSB 765	Job 26	Mankind cannot even begin to comprehend the majesty of the Lord.
December 2	TLH 395 / LSB 696	Job 27	Job continues to maintain confidently that his present suffering is not punishment for past wickedness.
December 3	TLH 247 / LSB 505	Job 28	All attempts to acquire wisdom by human reason or strength will fail. The Lord reveals to us true wisdom by His Word.
December 4	TLH 430 / LSB 730	Job 29	Job recalls the old days, during which he enjoyed wealth, honor, dignity, and respect. He recalls his faithful service toward others.
December 5	LSB 763	Job 30	Now, in contrast, Job suffers destitution and dishonor. Job wonders why the Lord would cause him such suffering.
December 7	LSB 777/778	Psalm 120	The psalmist, desiring peace, prays to the Lord for deliverance from false accusers.
December 8	LSB 889	Psalm 121	With the almighty Lord, Who has created the universe, as our helper and our keeper, we need not fear any harm or danger.
December 9	TLH 639	Psalm 122	As David loved visiting the temple in Jerusalem, we love encountering the Lord in His Word. As David loved his fellow Israelites, we love our brothers and sisters in the faith, gathering with them regularly to hear the Word of the Lord.
December 10	TLH 6 / LSB 942	Psalm 123	Similarly, we pray, "Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us."
December 11	TLH 267	Psalm 124	Without the Lord, we are no match for our enemies. Our enemies, however, are no match for the Lord. We are safe in the protection of the Lord.
December 12	TLH 520 / LSB 754	Psalm 125	By faith in Christ, we rest on a firm foundation.
December 14	TLH 428 / LSB 729	Job 31	Job argues on the basis of his outward righteousness that he is not deserving of the suffering that he has experienced.
December 15	TLH 529 / LSB 719	Job 32	Elihu begins to rebuke Job and his three friends for their incorrect responses to the suffering of Job.
December 16	TLH 371 / LSB 563	Job 33	Elihu rebukes Job for speaking against the Lord. Worldly suffering is not necessarily a sign of the displeasure of the Lord.
December 17	TLH 528 / LSB 724	Job 34	Elihu rebukes Job for presuming to question the justice of the Lord.
December 18	TLH 3 / LSB 902	Job 35	Elihu accuses Job of unbelief, evidenced by his questioning of the Lord.
December 19	TLH 30 / LSB 811	Psalm 126	The Lord provides deliverance and refreshment in his own good time. Plead to the Lord in time of trial and praise Him when He provides.
December 21	TLH 621 / LSB 858	Psalm 127	Without the providence of the Lord, all of our plans must fail. With the providence of the Lord, all things must succeed. Children are a great blessing from the Lord, to be received with thanksgiving and with joy.
December 22	LSB 866	Psalm 128	A life lived in the fear of the Lord is a blessed life. Marriage, children, and family life are great blessings from the Lord.
December 23	TLH 77 / LSB 360	Psalm 129	Our worldly afflictions are temporary. The Lord delivers us out of them all.
December 24	TLH 329 / LSB 607	Psalm 130	In this, the sixth of the seven "penitential psalms," David pleads to the Lord for mercy. Out of His unfathomable grace, the Lord has sacrificed His Son to redeem us from all our iniquities.
December 25	TLH 393 / LSB 713	Psalm 131	*"Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 18:3-4) We pray to the Lord for childlike humility.
December 26	TLH 469 / LSB 648	Psalm 132	The Lord fulfills His promise to David not in the reign of Solomon, whose kingdom has come to an end, but in the reign of Jesus, Whose kingdom is established forever.
December 28	WS 764 / LSB 850	Joshua 1	After the death of Moses, the Lord appoints Joshua to lead the Children of Israel into the land of Canaan.
December 29	TLH 237 / LSB 947	Joshua 2	Joshua sends two spies to Jericho. Rahab hides the spies and helps them to escape from Jericho.
December 30	TLH 54 / LSB 918	Joshua 3	Led by the Ark of the Covenant, the Children of Israel cross the Jordan River on dry ground into the Promised Land.
December 31	TLH 568 / LSB 785	Joshua 4	The Israelites set up a monument of twelve stones at Gilgal to memorialize their miraculous crossing of the Jordan.

Every other month our CLC Board of Missions updates us with recent news from various mission fields.

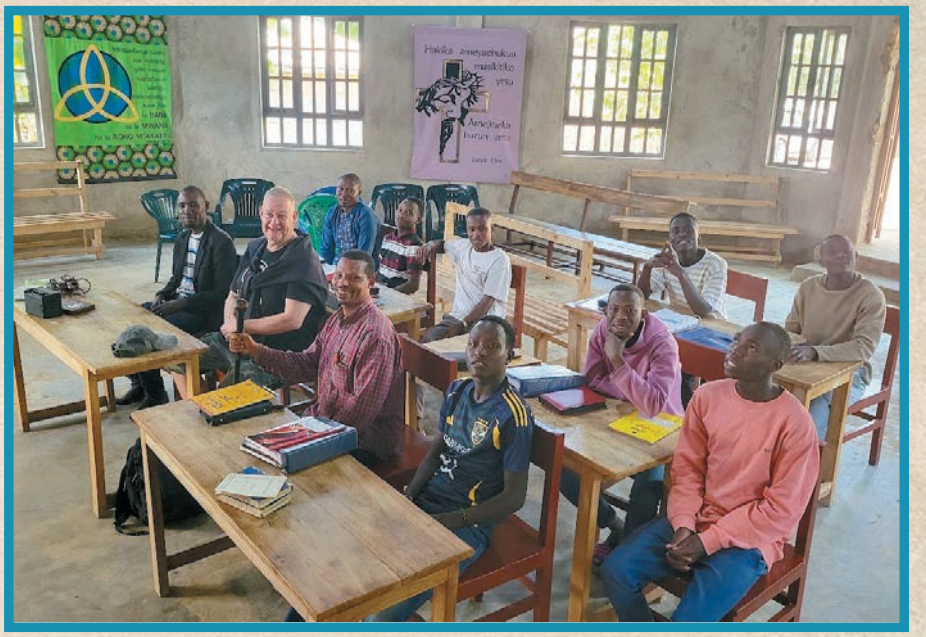
PROJECT KINSHIP:
Sharing Our Blessings by Sharing the Gospel

***"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction."* (James 1:27)**

"December is a season of giving. We gather with family and friends, exchange gifts, and celebrate the greatest gift ever given: God sending His Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior.

As we rejoice in this priceless gift, we remember the many opportunities our Lord gives us to share His love and His saving Word with others.

Through Project KINSHIP, members of the CLC are helping children, seminary students, widows, families, and others in need throughout our foreign mission fields. Currently, KINSHIP helps provide sponsorship support for eighty orphans and 130 seminary students, with individual sponsorships averaging around $50 per month.



Students at Wittenberg Lutheran Seminary - Arusha, Tanzania

In addition to individual sponsorships, KINSHIP provides funding for two Christian Day Schools in Kenya, the Women's Project in Nepal, Children Against Forced Labor (CAFOL) in Liberia, and widow support as needs arise throughout the mission field. KINSHIP also provides humanitarian assistance following disasters, including the recent flooding in Nepal.

At Christmas, KINSHIP provides special gifts to staff members serving in our schools and orphanages, and graduation gifts are given to seminary students as they complete their studies and prepare to serve the Lord.

At present, additional sponsors are needed. When sponsorships fall short, the KINSHIP General Fund keeps this important support going.

Jesus encourages us, *"Freely you have received, freely give."* (Matthew 10:8 NKJV) Having been so richly blessed through our Savior, we have the joyful privilege of sharing our blessings with others.

As we consider this Christmas the blessed Gift of His Son that our Heavenly Father gave us, please prayerfully consider becoming an orphan or seminary student sponsor or supporting the KINSHIP General Fund through your congregation or at LutheranMissions.org in the coming new year.

The Lord has given us the opportunity through KINSHIP to share the Gospel of Christ, the Good News we celebrate at Christmas, with children, adults, and those in need throughout the year.



Theodore Quade, Jr., is a retired teacher. He lives in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

The Gift of Christmas: **Perfect Peace!**

"But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart." **(Luke 2:19 NKJV)**

"You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You." **(Isaiah 26:3 NKJV)**



One of the more unforgettable scenes from the Nativity is that of Mary pondering the miracle of that first Christmas. There was no sentimental romanticizing over what had just taken place. Christmas for Mary was nothing like a Hallmark commercial. No "dreaming of a white Christmas" for her. No pretty bows or giftwrap. No eggnog or "Yuletide cheer." There, in a humble stable—with all the sights, sounds and smells common to such a place—the young virgin found what so very few in this world ever find. Though there was an evil and troubled world outside of the stable, Mary, on that first Christmas, found real peace of heart and mind. As she pondered over and set her mind on the Child in her arms, God gave her perfect peace, the kind of peace which surpasses all human ability to produce or attain.

What about you and me? Perhaps we often find ourselves chasing after peace in the very things Mary lacked: financial security, perfect holiday settings, modern-day luxuries, or all of the above. But real peace does not come from an easy life or comfortable circumstances. Nor can it be bought, wrapped, or manufactured. It can only be received as a gift from God.

Where is the gift of peace to be found? Exactly where God has placed it: in Bethlehem's dark and dingy stable. For there, cradled in Mary's arms, is God in the flesh. The Almighty Creator—wrinkled, wet, and newly born—had come down from heaven to save us all.

One day this Child would face the agonizing death of the cross, where He would bear the punishment for all sin. Sin is the ultimate peace destroyer, for it separates us from God, the only true source of peace. But the blood of Christ has cleansed us of all sin. In Christ, God has made peace with the world. That peace is ours through faith in the Gospel promises of His Word.

If your life doesn't feel much like a pristine postcard this Christmas season, if you are feeling anything but peaceful, take heart. Christ did not come for those who have it all together. He came for the weary and brokenhearted. He came for sinners. So, turn your eyes away from this shallow world's idea of peace. It will only leave you disappointed and frustrated. Look instead to the Baby of Bethlehem and to the Man on the cross. Listen as He says to you: *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* (John 14:27 NKJV)

True, while you remain here on earth, dear Christian, you will continue to have many troubles. But, with joyful anticipation, you can look forward to the day when you will experience Christmas peace to the full. For when Jesus comes again, all your sorrows and sighings will flee away forever. In the meantime, join Mary this Christmas. Ponder with her the wonder of a Savior born for all. Realize that, no matter the state of the world or the outward circumstances of your life, Christ has promised to keep you in perfect peace as your mind is stayed on Him.



Michael Wilke is pastor of Gethsemane Lutheran Church in Saginaw, Michigan, and President of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

Lutheran Spokesman

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New mobile classroom provided by the EduK8 Fund to St. John's Lutheran in Clarkston, Washington



Minnesota Pastoral Conference Hutchinson, Minnesota October 12-14



Attendees at the 2026 CLC Teacher's Conference in Saginaw, Michigan, October 14-16



Southeast Pastoral Conference, Pana, Illinois, October 6-8