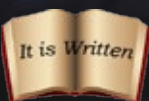


Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

"Engage Others with Jesus."



"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

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From the President

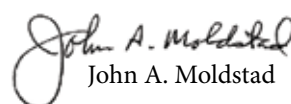
Dear members and friends of our ELS:

Our *Lutheran Sentinel* previously noted this year marks the 200th anniversary of a well-known American Lutheran, Dr. C.F.W. Walther (October 25, 1811 to May 7, 1887). Walther, president of the Missouri Synod for many years and also the first president of the Synodical Conference in 1872, was known for his superb ability to divide Law and Gospel. His major writing on this subject, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, continues to serve as a standard text at our seminary. While Walther wrote many articles on doctrinal issues, he was also recognized as a good preacher. This can be seen especially in his Christmas Day sermons. We provide here a citation from one of those sermons delivered on the familiar text of Luke 2:1–14.

We learn from the incarnation that God has created this presently troubled world because He wanted to transform this showplace of sorrow into a showplace of His mercy, and because this same world should finally give way to a better world in which righteousness and blessedness would dwell. In no way did God ordain man to sin or to misery so that He might extend to him more glorious mercy. But God did not prevent man, created free, from voluntarily falling into sin and from losing his concreated glory. He had decided not only to bring some good from evil, but also to prepare for man a greater glory than that which was lost, through a fathomless, eternally adorable miracle of His divine love. So He would make of lost man a more

blessed creation than he would have been had he not fallen into sin. In the light of God's incarnation, the night of all human misery appears only as the prelude to the eternal day of jubilation; man's tears only as the material for the pearls of eternal glory; the whole world with its pain and woe only as the temporary scaffolding for the eternal mansions of the blessed. (from *The Word of His Grace*, ELS Board for Publications, 1978, pp. 199–200)

We wish all a truly blessed celebration of the Incarnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This amazing intervention of Christ in the history of sinners gives us reason to celebrate life to the fullest!


John A. Moldstad



God's Gift That Keeps on Giving

Many years ago my wife gave me a simple gift, a letter opener. It was a one-time gift, yet it continues to serve me faithfully to this day. It not only has opened thousands of letters, but also has helped me by weighing countless letters to see if they need more postage! You see, it is designed so that if you put a letter in the slot on the handle's end, the knife "tips" that direction if the letter is over one ounce and needs more postage. If it does not tip, then the single stamp is sufficient. Wow! Talk about a gift that keeps on giving—this one certainly fits the description. Every time I use it, I am thankful to my wife for giving me this unique item.

Around 2,000 years ago, God gave us a unique gift also. This once-in-a-history gift is like no other! It was the gift of His Son to be our Savior. Each year we celebrate the giving of this gift in our churches, nations, families and as individuals in our hearts. We decorate our homes, and we give and receive gifts as symbols of that one "totally special" gift.

Similar to my letter opener, God's gift was not intended for a one-time use. It was meant to be there for our use every moment of our lives and even into eternity. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is there continually as a multi-purpose gift that is much more useful than the one I received.

Perhaps you remember a time you were hurting because of a problem in a relationship? You hurt inwardly and cried a lot; then did you turn to Jesus and ask for His help?

Do you remember your shock when someone you loved deeply was suddenly, unexpectedly taken from this world? Do you remember the countless tears? Hopefully,

you also had an assurance of their salvation through Jesus. Yet the hurt inside continued for a long time, didn't it? How many, many times with this sadness did you not reach out and grab Jesus as your anchor?

What happened when you suffered a disaster such as a storm, a loss of job, a loss of investments, etc.? Again you hurt inside and went through a period of shock, disbelief and anger. And then you turned to your friend Jesus for comfort and help, didn't you?

Perhaps there have been sad times when you realized that you had once again sinned against God and His holy Law, even though you had promised both yourself and Him that you would never do that thing again! The shame became overwhelming, the tears both of regret and of repentance flowed. And there you were, reaching out to that "gift"—that Savior—as knowledge of His forgiveness was proclaimed to you in God's Word. Thoughts flashed through your mind of your unworthiness, of His holiness, of His suffering and death that He willingly endured to give you this forgiveness. Then, to have this sorrow later turn to overwhelming joy as you worship and praise Jesus with your fellow believers.

Yet God's gift is not finished. When our last moment approaches and an uneasiness of the unknown fills us, Jesus is there to comfort us and to stay by our side as we travel through that valley of death. Then as we enter His visible presence, He fills us with joy, peace and love beyond our human understanding.

I cherish the simple gift my wife gave me and use it daily. Make sure you thank God for His precious "Gift that keeps on giving"—Jesus Christ your Savior—and use this gift continually, remembering to share your gift with others also.



Pastor Dennis Schmidt is a retired ELA pastor living in Monticello, Minnesota.

Christmas Symbols Pointing to Christ

It's December! Have we already brought out the boxes and totes that we use once a year—the Christmas decorations? Why do we put them up every year, only to take them down again a month later? Is there a purpose to these decorations or are they just a custom?

As Christians, we have a very good reason to get out the Christmas decorations every year. Many of the Christmas decorations we use to beautify our homes are symbols that point to Jesus Christ. Let us look at just a few of them.

Is your Christmas **tree** decorated yet? Just as the lights and many of the other decorations on that tree are symbols pointing to Christ, so is the tree itself. Legend says that about the year A.D. 1500, Martin Luther brought a small fir tree indoors and decorated it with candles in honor of Christ's birth. Since that time, the Christmas tree has been used to remind us that Jesus was the promised branch of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1), that Bethlehem's Baby would die on the life-giving tree of Calvary after He had lived a perfect life for us (John 19) and that through faith in His death on the cross we have access to the tree of life in heaven (Revelation 22:2).

Whether you put them on oak trees, fir trees or palm trees, Christmas **lights** remind us of our Savior's words, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). The white lights also symbolize the glory of Jesus as the Son of God and the glory of the angels who announced His birth to the shepherds.

Christmas and **bells** seem to go together. We sing the *Carol of the Bells* and *Silver Bells*, we make bell-shaped cookies and we wear Christmas dresses with bells attached to them. Although bells symbolize the joy of Christmas, they more importantly remind us that Jesus is our Great High Priest. The Old Testament high priest's garments were adorned with golden bells (Exodus 28:31–35). Therefore, bells symbolize the purpose of Christ's advent: "For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:26–27).

Did you put an **angel** on top of the tree, in the nativity, or on a shelf? God's messengers played an important role in announcing the birth of Christ:



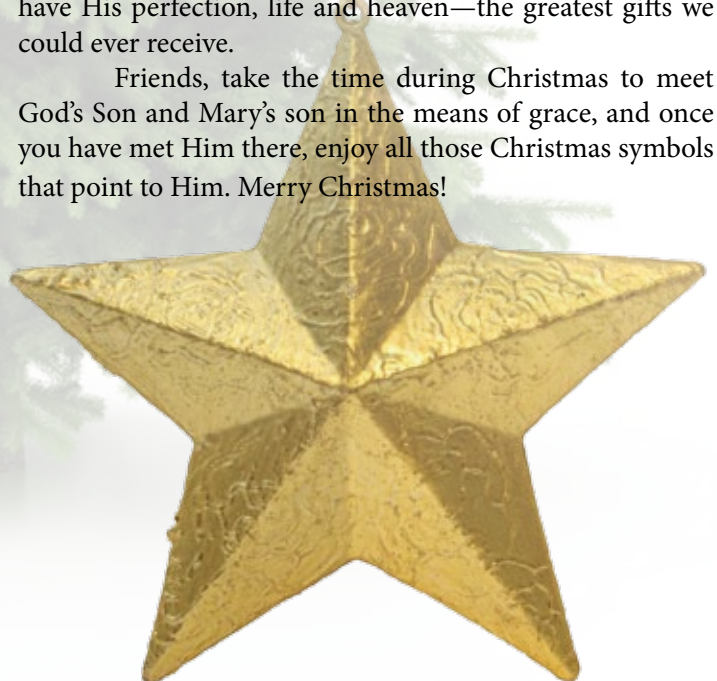
Andrew Schmidt is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in Lakeland, Florida.

Gabriel told Mary that she would be the mother of our Lord (Luke 1:26); an angel appeared to Joseph to assure him that Mary's baby was the promised Messiah conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20); the angels proclaimed Christ's birth to the shepherds: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:9–11).

When you were unpacking those boxes and totes, did you find the Christmas **cookie cutters**? Christmas cookies are more than sweet treats and unneeded calories. Christmas cookies symbolize the fact that Jesus is the Bread of Life (John 6:47–51) and that Bread of Life is offered to us at the Lord's Supper where, in and with the bread and wine, you and I are given the same body and blood that were once born of Mary.

Of all the Christmas symbols that point to Christ, perhaps one is the most important—the **star**. During the Advent/Christmas season, Christians may be tempted to think that they are too busy to go to every Sunday morning service **and** Advent service. Activities can easily move the focus of Christmas away from Christ towards friends and family, parties and presents. Some people even justify this shift in focus by saying, "I'm surrounded with symbols that remind me Jesus is the reason for the season, and so if I miss one service, what's the big deal?" Well, just as the Wise Men could not find Jesus by following the star alone, you cannot find the Christ Child with your Christmas symbols alone. The Wise Men found their Lord and Savior only when they turned to His Word, and you find your newborn Savior when you turn to His Word. In these services, we hear again that Jesus became poor and lowly to raise us to His divine, eternal glory. He took on our sin, death and hell, so we could have His perfection, life and heaven—the greatest gifts we could ever receive.

Friends, take the time during Christmas to meet God's Son and Mary's son in the means of grace, and once you have met Him there, enjoy all those Christmas symbols that point to Him. Merry Christmas!



Living for Jesus:

In the Light of God's Greatest Gift

On December 25, the Christian world celebrates "God's greatest Gift," which is God's Son being born in human flesh at Bethlehem long ago. Jesus' birth is the wonderful cause for our celebration!

As we hear again the story of Christ's birth, we stand in awe of God's amazing love for us, that He would send His Son to be our Substitute who would live in perfect obedience to God's Law for us. As we gaze into the manger in Bethlehem through the eyes of faith, we also know that Jesus came to be our sacrifice, to lay down His life willingly, as the innocent Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the whole world—yours and mine, too. And through faith in the life, death and resurrection of this little Baby, we know that we have a forgiveness and salvation that are certain and complete in every way. Such amazing love of the Father for you and me, shown in His greatest Gift to us, is also the motivation and the power for all we do for Him in our daily lives.

One of the best-known Bible verses is: "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Please notice the progression of Jesus' words: **first**, God's greatest Gift is given in love for the whole world; **then** comes the response of Spirit-worked faith, believing in Jesus as God's Son and our Savior.

In the Christmas season, where love is so often shown most lavishly to those who already love us, may we stand in awe of the Father's Gift of Jesus—His greatest Gift. That Gift was given to the whole world before any of us loved Him, whether or not we would receive His Gift in faith and love Him in return. This passage from John also contains a promise, that when the Spirit creates in our hearts faith in the salvation of His greatest Gift, God promises to give us eternal life in heaven!

Since Jesus was born as God's greatest Gift to the whole world, God desires that the world knows about His Gift and the salvation He brings. Love to others means telling the people around us about the great love God showed them by sending His Gift to save them from sin and death. Through our words, the Holy Spirit can create faith in God's Son and give them the forgiveness and love of Christ that make Christmas worth celebrating.

What does Christmas mean to you? Whether you celebrate the birth of your Savior and Lord as God's greatest Gift to you in the blessing of the Holy Spirit, or you hardly know Jesus and have not really stopped to consider Him: may the blessings of this Christmas season—His joy and peace—be yours now and always through Jesus, God's greatest Gift.



Bradley Kerkow is a home missionary in Austin, Texas.

Lutheran Mission of Salvation—India

Part 2



India (LMSI). It has prospered well under the supervision of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) in the past years. The following paragraphs will give you a little view into this mission field which is made up of three districts, Rajahmundry, Hyderabad and Jabalpur.

The Lutheran Mission of Salvation is blessed by having four ordained pastors to guide and teach the workers in the mission. Pastors Solomon Mamidi and Ananda Raju received their seminary training at the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) Seminary in Guntur, India, and Pastor Kalyan Gollapali and Pradeep Lingala attended Bethany Lutheran Seminary and were ordained by LMSI. This team of four pastors conducts the seminary classes of twenty-three students held regularly each month either in Hyderabad or Rajahmundry. They also make trips to Jabalpur to teach and train the workers there.

The president of the largest district, Rajahmundry, is Pastor Ananda Raju. Pastor Solomon Mamidi is president of the Hyderabad District. Vijay Sidney is the president of the Jabalpur District and is also one of the seminary students. It was his father who began the mission work in Jabalpur. Each district brings its workers together for a two-day workshop, where they receive instruction and guidance in their preaching and teaching ministry. At the close of the monthly workshops, all workers receive their small subsidy.

LMSI has many workers, called elders, serving as pastors for their congregation. Some congregations have a church building, others only a thatched roof structure and still others meet in a home or outdoors. One of the greatest needs of the mission is the construction of more permanent church buildings. These local congregations all use the same hymnal, liturgy and sermon pericope. To see these Indian Christians crowded into their worship area, sitting on mats and



Shawn Kauffeld is pastor of St. Katherine's Lutheran Church in Menomonie, Wisconsin.

God has richly blessed the spread of His Word in India through the Lutheran Mission of Salvation,

raising their voices in songs of praise accompanied by drums, is quite a moving experience. There are about 250 elders and congregations with a total of about 22,000 members.

Because LSMI works with the poor, there are some special needs. One of the needs is to have orphan homes connected with the congregations. Most of the orphan homes care for about 20 orphans. These children may be total orphans, or they may have a mother or father who is unable to care for the child or children. The orphan home provides this needed care, giving them shelter, food, clothing, an education and above all the opportunity for them to know Jesus their Savior. Cross-stitch has generously provided funds twice a year, at the beginning of the school year in June for clothing and school supplies, and again at Christmas. There is a total of 20 orphan homes with 300 children in LMSI. It is striking to see how happy and content these children are while having so little. All their worldly possessions fit inside a small box about the size of a large fishing tackle box.



Orphans in the Hyderabad District

There are three parochial schools: St. John's Lutheran School in Jabalpur has 220 students, Grace and Truth Lutheran School in Rajahmundry has 241 students, and another school in Koyyaladum in the Rajahmundry District has 50 students. The schools receive a monthly subsidy for the teachers. You may have seen pictures of the children in their uniforms in *Mission News*. These schools and the orphanages provide a tremendous mission outreach into the heathen Hindu community.

Bible women also have a special place within the mission. They serve as Sunday School teachers, care givers in the orphan homes and outreach into the Hindu community. These women are very important in outreach because they can go into the homes of the women where men would not be able to go. As one would expect, there are many elderly and very poor widows needing care and support. The orphan home in Rajahmundry also provides a home for widows. In this way, the widows not only receive care for their bodies and souls, they also are able to fill a void in their hearts by helping in the orphan homes.

Truly so much work is being done and yet so much more still is needed. May God fill our hearts and their hearts with His love, grace and mercy until we all are united together in heaven where we can see how God wove the giver and the receiver together to the building up of His kingdom.

Biblical Paradoxes #10

God's thoughts are not our thoughts. His ways are often beyond our comprehension. Yet God has communicated His thoughts and ways through His Word, written in the Bible. God's ways are so different from ours, they often appear as logical paradoxes to our finite minds. True paradoxes are two statements that appear to be logically contradictory, and yet both are nevertheless true. It is important to our study of the Bible to be aware of these paradoxes and to confess them according to God's revelation.

God Doesn't Need Our Service; Still He Uses Us to Proclaim Christ

Late in the night, under a sky filled with stars, one shining brighter than all the rest, shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks. Suddenly, the sky opened and an angel appeared right in the middle of the sky. The angel proclaimed Good News of great joy, “which shall be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.’ Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men’” (Luke 2:10,11,13,14).

It's very obvious that angels are an efficient means through which to announce the Gospel. They never get the message wrong. They attract and hold attention. They travel more efficiently than we do. We could go on about potential advantages.

And yet God only used angels as messengers on very few, select occasions—such as at the birth of Jesus. Within an hour or so of that majestic announcement, we hear that God has reverted to the standard method of sharing the Gospel—through the human voices of ordinary believers: “And when [the shepherds] had seen it, they made known

abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds” (Luke 2:17–18).

We might wonder why God chooses not to use angels to proclaim the Gospel. For one thing, they always needed to calm their listeners down by saying, “Fear not!”

Meanwhile St. Paul, acknowledging his obvious human weakness as God's messenger, said: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. It is written: ‘I believed; therefore I have spoken.’ With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak” (2

Corinthians 4:7–13).

It is so obvious that God could get all His work done without us. But like a tender father who has his little boy stand between his arms and push the lawn mower or snow blower and then gives his son credit for his great accomplishment when the job is done, God chooses to work through our weak human hands and lips to do His works and share His Word.

What an honor! What a high privilege! How wonderful it is for God to use us! How overwhelmingly tender of God to make our service valuable—the good works that He prepared in advance so that we “may walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). How fantastic to

be allowed to give a cup of cold water to Jesus, to come and visit Him in prison and to give Jesus something to eat on earth, before He feeds us at the eternal feast in heaven!

But how foolish it would be to brag, as though God could not possibly accomplish His tasks without us. How offensive it would be to act as though our human strength and cleverness enabled God to get His message out. God wants us to use the gifts He gave us faithfully, and He makes use of our faithful labor. But it's a relief to know that, when we are less than

we ought to be, we are only God's little boys and girls, “pushing” things along between His powerful arms that are really doing all the work. God's Word is powerful. Our lips and throats simply vocalize the Gospel that God compels us to speak.

And when all our work—empowered and used by God—is done, He will generously bestow on us the honor of hearing Him say in loving, fatherly tones: “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:23).



Next month begins a new series, “Learn to Engage Others With Jesus.”

Timothy H. Buelow is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Carthage, Missouri.



On the Synodical

Violinist Honors the Late Melvina Aaberg



Miriam Welde (third from left), the fifteen-year-old daughter of the Rev. Tor and Rieko Welde, gave an excellent performance at Bethany Lutheran College's Trinity Chapel on October 13, 2011. Bethel Balge of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, was the accompanying pianist. The concert was given in memory of the late Melvina Aaberg. Pictured at right are the daughters of Melvina: Sarah Mehlberg and Marie Aaberg. Rev. Tor Welde serves a church of our fellowship located in Avaldsnes, Norway.

Czech Lutherans Celebrate 20 Years of Mission Work

One of many ELS and WELS members to serve or volunteer at Martin Luther School in Plzen, Czech Republic, Lucy Tillman (Holton Lutheran Church, ELS, Holton, MI) is seen with Pastors Petr Krakora (left) and Martin Vrsecky (right). On October 23, 2011, the 20th anniversary of mission work in Plzen was celebrated at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. The special service was marked by participation of representatives from ELS, WELS, the Czech Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church of Sweden and the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Germany. Greetings were printed from pastors and teachers who had served in Plzen over the past two decades.



A Funeral for an ELS Soldier

Sergeant Matthew Harmon was killed in Afghanistan by an improvised exploding device (IED). On August 20, 2011, hundreds of people from the Bagley, Lengby and Fosston communities lined the sides of Highway 2 to pay their respects to the sergeant, who was laid to rest in the St. Paul Lutheran Church cemetery in Lengby, Minnesota.



In order to accommodate all the people attending the funeral for Sgt. Harmon, the service was held in the gymnasium at Fosston High School on August 20, 2011. He was a life-long member of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Lengby, Minnesota. The Rev. Mark Faugstad, pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church, officiated at the service and conducted the committal service.

Matthew Allen Harmon was born on March 1, 1982, in Bagley, Minnesota, to Thomas and Irene Harmon. He was baptized and confirmed at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Lengby, Minnesota. Graduating from high school, Matthew entered the Army National Guard. He was married to Nicole York on August 9, 2003, at his home church. The couple lived in Grand Forks and God granted them three children.

Matthew enlisted in the United States Army in 2004. He completed two tours of duty in Iraq and had just begun a 12-month tour in Afghanistan when he was killed.

Scene...

Koren Family Visits Bethany Campus

Forty members of the U.V. Koren family line made a special visit to our Bethany campus in Mankato, Minnesota, on October 17, 2011. The Norwegian delegation traveled to the United States in connection with the 150th anniversary of Luther College in Iowa. While at our own Bethany College and Seminary, the group made a gift presentation to our synod. Pictured here are Petter Ulvik Koren and Kristin Klokkehaug (wife of Rev. Vemund Koren, who was leading the group) with the photographic portrait showing Rev. Ulrik V. Koren at the moment he received the Cross of the Order of St. Olav, an award bestowed for remarkable achievements on behalf of Norway and humanity. The picture of Koren will be displayed in the Ottesen Museum (4 Browns Court, Mankato, Minnesota).



Pastor Ulrik Koren (1826–1910) is often called “the father of Norwegian-American Lutheranism,” and the leading theologian of the old Norwegian Synod, the predecessor church body of our ELS. Koren was ordained in Norway in 1853, the very year that the Norwegian Synod was organized here in America. He started 22 congregations in Iowa, of which three are in existence for our ELS today. We thank God for his stalwart confession of salvation by faith in Christ alone and his commitment to the entirety of God’s holy Word.



ELS Christian Day School Teachers Meet at Bethany

The teachers from our ELS schools in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa attended the joint ELS/WELS teachers’ conference at Bethany Lutheran College (BLC) in Mankato, Minnesota, on October 20–21, 2011. The theme of this year’s conference was “Rekindling Our Commitment to Lutheran Education.” In addition to attending the joint conference, the ELS teachers met for a business meeting and had an opportunity to hear reports from President Moldstad, Silas Born (Director of Christian Education) and Allen Labitzky (Secretary of Schools). After the meeting BLC Professor Erling Teigen gave a presentation on the history of our synod. The officers for this year’s ELS teachers’ conference were Shu-Ting Lai (President), Jon Matzke (Vice President), Linda Marozick (Secretary/Treasurer) and Beth Krause (Assistant Secretary/Treasurer). Next year the conference will be held at Wisconsin Lutheran High School in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Pastor, I Have a Question...

What About the Rapture?

Question: *I heard something about this “rapture.” I am not sure about this going up in the air, and who is left behind? I am confused because Scripture and other people tell me these things but I do not know what to believe.*

Answer:

Paul wrote: “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17). This is God’s truth.

Some trace the word “rapture” to the *Vulgate* (a Latin translation of the Bible). In it Jerome translated “shall be caught up together” as *rapiemur*.

On the last day, the Day of Judgment, heaven and earth will pass away (Luke 21:33). Jesus will bring with Him the souls of all those who died in faith, resurrecting their bodies. He will gather together believers who remain on earth. Our bodies will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:50–57). He will take us to be with Him in heaven (John 14:3). Those who lived and died in unbelief will hear His dreadful words: “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’” (Matthew 25:41). They will not be left behind. They will be condemned for eternity for rejecting the atonement God’s Son accomplished for them by His death and resurrection.

Believers have nothing to fear. The Lord who came in humility on Christmas to earn for us forgiveness, life and salvation, encourages us concerning His return, “When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28).

Today, “rapture” means something more, something not found in the Bible. This writer saw a bumper sticker something like, “In case of the rapture the driver will be taken.” This year, a prominent religious radio personality set a date for the rapture. It came and went. Nothing happened. He reset the date for October. If you are reading this, he was wrong again.

In 1830 a Scottish girl had a vision. She was sick and thought she was dying. She saw Jesus return and rescue certain Christians, taking them to heaven early and leaving the rest of humanity to suffer something called “The Great Tribulation.” This notion was made popular among certain English churches by preachers who visited her. These false teachings are called Dispensationalism and Millennialism. Recently, these false teachings were spread with the publication of the *Left Behind* series of books written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins. Some of these books became movies infecting many souls.

People talking about the “rapture” today no doubt are talking about this false doctrine. Save yourself the anxiety. You know what to believe. Examine the Scriptures. Consult your pastor for passages. Ask your pastor to conduct a Bible class about the end times. Then do what the faithful Bereans did: “Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:10–11). In this way, Jesus will comfort you with His Good News including the good news about His promised return. You will know exactly what to believe. You will be able to discern God’s truth from false teachings.

Send your questions to:

Pastor Charles Keeler
117 Ruby Lake Dr.,
Winter Haven, FL 33884

Charles Keeler is pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Winter Haven, Florida.





Cross Currents

A Dent in the Externals

For many years the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) have carried on some church-related work together, a practice otherwise known as “cooperation in externals.” One of these cooperative efforts has been the training of military chaplains. In the coming year, 2012, the LCMS is scheduled to terminate this particular practice. LCMS president, the Rev. Matthew Harrison, announced to his church the widening gap between the two church bodies: “Today, like two ships at sea sailing apart on different compass headings, the ELCA and the LCMS have lost sight of each other.” He explained that a contributing factor to this widening gap was the ELCA position on same-sex unions. Ending this chaplain training will only make a dent in these externals, for the two church bodies intend to continue cooperative efforts in Lutheran World Relief, Disaster Response and the like.

For many years these two church bodies, indeed “like two ships at sea,” have been sailing more or less side by side on the unsettled waters of “cooperation in externals.” Sometimes, because of this cooperation, the image of the two ships has become blurred. This happens, despite the differences they may have in “compass headings.” As the ELCA ship follows the compass heading away from Scripture, we can only hope that the LCMS (“Big Mo”) will thrust its ship’s engines into reverse, so as to distance itself more and more from a church body that is truly awash at sea. In so doing, the LCMS will avoid being carried under by the backwash of an erring ship.

Rebirth of a P.K.

“Promise Keepers”—remember them? News of this organization has been rather quiet for some time. We heard a good deal about it after it was first founded in 1990 by former football coach Bill McCartney. Off to a roaring start in the early 1990’s, the movement featured stadium rallies that would draw up to 50,000 men for a weekend of preaching, prayer and Bible study. It reached its peak in 1997, when at least half a million men gathered for a rally on the Mall in Washington, D.C. After that, the movement began to slowly decline for various reasons, one of them being financial difficulties. It suffered a major blow in 2003 when its founder, McCartney, stepped down as its inspirational leader.

However, religious news accounts report that Promise Keepers (P.K.) may be experiencing a rebirth. McCartney has returned to the speaker’s platform and smaller-scale rallies are being organized. The new aim of these rallies is not only to benefit men spiritually, but is meant also to benefit their families. As one

spokesman explained, “All the things that are killing men are killing their families. We need to strengthen our men, and Promise Keepers is designed to do just that.” Another P.K. spokesman, commenting on the “rebirth,” said: “Now that he [McCartney] is back, we are retooling the ministry and expanding from just being a ministry for men. We believe the Lord wants us to do ministry for the whole family.” The organization has also changed its motto from “What Makes a Man?” to “Ignite and Unite.”

Lutheran Christians will have confessional issues with this organization. We nevertheless can share the concern it has for the spiritual welfare of the families and homes in our country. The preaching and teaching of Law and Gospel as proclaimed in our synodical churches provide the greatest spiritual strength and sustenance for families and their homes.

Reviving the Faith?

It caught my eye—this heading for an article in the local newspaper: “Pope tries to revive German faith.” It was referring to his recent trip to that country in which he called for a spiritual renewal among the people of Germany. He had good reason to be alarmed at the trends, for German Roman Catholics had been quitting the church in large numbers. Just this past year 180,000 people had left, following the clerical-abuse scandal in Germany.

In his parting words before leaving for Rome, Pope Benedict wished his Roman Catholic audience “strength and confidence” in their faith. His attempt to revive their faith brought to mind another attempt at revival almost 500 years ago, only that was more than a revival—it was a Reformation. The “strength and confidence” to which Martin Luther directed the Church were not to be found in papal decrees and man’s efforts to save himself, but in God’s Word and Sacraments, which give the grace of God through the Redeemer Jesus Christ. The message from the Vatican can offer no true strength or confidence. This, as Luther well knew, could only come from the saving Gospel that was proclaimed by the apostles and prophets. Roman Catholics looking for revival of their faith would do well to heed the message of the Reformation.



Paul Madson is a retired pastor living in North Mankato, Minnesota.

2011 Reformation Lectures Held in Mankato, MN

The forty-fourth annual Reformation Lectures were held at the Ylvisaker Fine Arts Center, Mankato, Minnesota, on October 27–28, 2011. These lectures are sponsored jointly by Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The theme of the lectures was “Lessons from the Laypeople of the Reformation.” The first lecture, given by the Rev. Jerome Gernander, pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Princeton, Minnesota, was titled “Laypeople of the Reformation.” The second lecture, presented by Dr. David Schroeder, a professor of history at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, was titled “Civil Leaders of the Reformation.”

The Reformation Lectures were a study of contributions by Christian laypeople in the Reformation era. The history of the men and women around Luther and the Reformation presents a fascinating picture. Throughout his life Luther did not only associate with theologians and churchmen, but he also had many contacts with laypeople from all walks of life. There were relatives and friends in Mansfeld and Eisenach, associates and fellow citizens in Erfurt and Wittenburg and individuals from other parts of Saxony and the empire. Many of them became ambassadors of the good news who spread the Gospel throughout the land. Each one furthered

the Gospel in his own way, in government, in business and in society, through art and literature, or by various other means.

The complete lectures will be published in the March 2012 issue of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*.



Left to right: ELS Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary President the Rev. Gaylin Schmeling, the Rev. Jerome Gernander and Dr. David Schroeder

National Bethany Auxiliary Celebrates 60 Years

The Bethany Lutheran College (BLC) National Auxiliary celebrated its 60th year of assisting the college at the annual Auxiliary Day on Monday, September 26, 2011. Nearly 60 friends of Bethany spent the day on the Bethany campus and were treated to a variety of musical performances and presentations.

Several faculty and staff members from the college and synod made presentations to the group. The attendees were also treated to performances by the BLC Concert Choir, the Mary Martha Singers and student instrumentalists.

What a blessing the Bethany Lutheran College Women's Auxiliary has been for so many years! In earlier times, members of the Auxiliary spent hours on the campus prior to each year's school opening to paint and varnish the facility. This Auxiliary, along with the area auxiliaries, is one of the most consistently supportive support-groups the college has ever seen.

Each year the Auxiliary visits the campus in late September and chooses over \$10,000 worth of projects to support. The group has helped purchase many items through the years including:

- Choir robes
- Campus furnishings
- Kitchen items
- Artwork for the campus
- Funding of the Dorothy Theiste Auxiliary Scholarship Fund

Without the generous support of the Bethany Lutheran College Women's Auxiliary so many projects would go unfunded. The prayers of the hundreds of Auxiliary members help support even more than the monetary needs of the college.

Bethany Lutheran College is grateful for all the Auxiliary does to make the College a truly special place.



Pictured is a painting by Bethany alumnus Jonathan Mayer. The painting, titled “Heavier Than It Looks,” was purchased by the Auxiliary and now adorns the North Lantern of Honsey Hall.

Christian Outreach Through Christmas Cards



Christmas is a time when we can all witness for Christ. One way we can do this is by sending Christmas cards to relatives, friends, neighbors and others. Christ-centered Christmas cards can lift people's hearts and remind them of the true meaning of Christmas—the birth of our Savior.

A faithful and efficient secretary had set aside the afternoon for addressing Christmas cards for her boss. On her desk were two stacks—one religious and one general. After addressing a dozen or more greetings, she approached her boss with the question: "Which kind of card should I send to Mr. Jones?" After a long moment of thinking about it, the man behind the large desk replied: "He's a new client, and I don't know much about him. Better send him the 'general Christmas.'"

So, instead of getting the warm greeting: "May the Christ of Christmas bless you!," Mr. Jones received the Christless message, "Holiday Greetings!" Mr. Jones, no matter who he was, needed the intercessory prayer of his friend at Christmas: "May the Christ of Christmas bless you!"

We can let our light shine (Matthew 5:16) by sending cards with a Christian message, or by adding a Christian message to ones that have none, or by including in our Christmas letters a message about what Christmas means to us. Even though most of the people to whom we send cards may already be believers in Jesus, we are still witnessing our faith in Christ to others with a Christmas message included. A Christian bookstore, such as our Bethany Lutheran College Bookstore, would be a good place to find Christ-centered Christmas cards.



Tosten D. Skaaland is pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Elderon, Wisconsin.

Treasurer's Report

Summary of Income from Congregations

Budget	Actual	Balance
\$725,000	\$552,426.42	\$172,573.58

Contributions for October 2011:

Congregations - Budget \$56,197

Designated Contributions

Synod Fund	\$3,727
Home Missions	\$850
World Needs	\$475
Disaster Aid	\$62
India	\$2,243
Peru	\$878
Chile	\$7,266
Korea	\$4,300
Lutheran Schools of America	\$35
Cross-stitch	\$10,595
Thoughts of Faith	\$11,189

Other

Estates	\$2,160
Helping Hands	\$5,130
Subscriptions	\$3,261
Publications	\$4,893
Misc.	\$1

Total \$113,261

Keith Wiederhoeft, Business Adm./Treasurer
6 Browns Court Mankato, MN 56001

Gifts Received for the Synod in Memory of Memorial by

- Melvina Aaberg**
Harriet L. Handberg – Tacoma, WA
- Marlin Born**
Silas & Mary Born – Mankato, MN
- Ervin Junkans**
LuAnn Sting – North Mankato, MN
- Stella Haugen**
Norseland Ladies Aid – St. Peter, MN
- Marian Wilson**
- Bill Cregg**
Ever Ready Circle – Holton, MN

Gifts Received for the Synod in Honor of Given By

- Sigurd Lee – 85th Birthday**
Silas & Mary Born – Mankato, MN

Gifts Received for the Seminary in Memory of Memorial by

- Melvina Aaberg**
Daniel & Laura Bobbe – Laona, WI
- Ruth Hassler**
Carlin & Joanne Wiemers – Mankato, MN
- Alice Olson**
Agnes Andersland – Emmons, MN

Bethany Lutheran College Report

By Lance Schwartz
Director of Marketing and Public Relations

Building Renamed in Honor of Rev. Tweit

The Bethany Lutheran College Board of Regents unanimously resolved at their August 2011 meeting to name the former Seminary/Bethany Communication Center in honor of the Reverend Milton E. Tweit. Tweit, who was ordained in 1936, served as a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and was a Bethany Lutheran College Regents member for 56 years (21 years as chairman). Both are records for board service.

Tweit also served as the chairman of the building committee that authorized and oversaw the construction of the building



now bearing his name. The building, an important space on the Bethany Lutheran College campus, is a multi-use facility serving both the art and health science departments. Naming a building in Tweit's honor is also significant because it marks the first time a Bethany facility has been named for someone that has not been directly employed by the college.

At the time of his death in 2005, an article in this publication spoke of Tweit's dedication to Bethany Lutheran College. "Pastor Tweit worked tirelessly for his Lord and Bethany Lutheran College. His support for Bethany occurred on many levels. His service to the College speaks for itself, he supported the school through financial gifts, and was an excellent recruiter for the school." Former Bethany President Marvin Meyer noted, "No matter where he was serving, you could always expect that (Bethany) would have students from his congregation."

Members of Reverend Tweit's family, friends, alumni and faculty and staff of Bethany Lutheran College gathered on September 17, 2011, as the former Seminary and Communication Center was officially renamed Milton Tweit Hall.

President Dan Bruss said of the naming, "It is indeed a fitting honor for a man who dedicated his life to the ongoing welfare of Bethany Lutheran College."

New faculty and staff at BLC

A number of new faculty and staff members have been hired at Bethany Lutheran College during the past several months. Collectively, these individuals bring a great deal of experience and knowledge to the College.



David Balza
Head Coach Men's
Basketball



Michael Butzow
Assistant Director of
Christian Education



Daniel Gerdts
Admissions Counselor



Zachary Herd
Admissions Counselor



Rev. Phillip Lepak
Religion and Physics
Faculty



Brittany Nash
Coordinator of
Career Services and
Internships



Kirk Meyer
Institutional
Technology



Amanda Quist
Creative Services
Specialist



Linda Smith
Assistant to the
Registrar



Renee Tatge
Math Faculty and
Head Softball Coach

FROM THE EDITOR...

Celebrate the Birth of Christ

This June, the convention essay described the Person of Jesus Christ with the title “Who Do You Say I Am?” by Prof. Michael Smith. It is vital that we know the correct answer to this question. The devil greatly desires that we accept any of the false answers he has devised. For if we believe that Jesus is neither God nor man in one Person, we have no savior. The Christian Church confesses the true doctrine in the Athanasian Creed: “For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world...” (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, p. 30).

While the mystery of Christ’s Person is proclaimed by His death and resurrection, our celebration at Christmas presents an even clearer testimony of the Redeemer whom God sent to ransom the world from sin and death. For God clearly describes to the people involved whom He is sending so that they are prepared to appreciate His Christmas gift. Those descriptions are available to us and are read each Christmas season so that we and others may know why Christmas is such an important day of worship.

As Zacharias ministered in the Temple, the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that his son “will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:16–17). Gabriel was referring to God’s promise to send a forerunner before the Messiah comes (Malachi 4:5). Note that this forerunner will turn hearts to the “Lord their God,” a description of Jesus. Zechariah understood what the angel told him, for when he was able to talk again, he said, “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people” (Luke 1:68), which is a clear reference to Jesus as God.

Gabriel went into greater detail when he told Mary that God would give her a son: “That Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). He proclaimed that her Son would have two natures—a son who is born and will receive the throne of David and the

Son of God who shall reign forever. The words are clear, but they remain a mystery as to how God can take on a human nature and be one Person.

The message was repeated to Joseph as he considered what to do with Mary. The angel quoted the prophecy of Isaiah, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which means ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23). Joseph was to understand that Mary’s child was God Himself, as Isaiah declared.

And when that Baby was born, the angels once again announced to the shepherds the great mystery of God’s gift, “For there is born to you this day in the city of David

a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11). The baby is both the promised Messiah (Christ) and the Lord (God). This God–man is born “for you” because Jesus must be “born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law” (Galatians 4:4–5). Jesus came to establish our righteousness by obeying God’s Law that we had broken and by suffering the curse of God’s Law in our place. Jesus also had to be true God in order to keep God’s Law perfectly for all people and to fulfill righteousness for all people.

St. John adds his declaration, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of

the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). John already stated that the Word was God who created all things. So our Creator took on human flesh and lived in this world to provide the ransom needed so that God would forgive our sins.

With all these clear testimonies about who Jesus is and what He came to do, Christmas presents a wonderful opportunity for us to tell others about His Person and work. Consider ways in which you can tell about the peace Jesus won before God for us.

“For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world...”
(Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary, p. 30).



Theodore Gullixson is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Madison, Wisconsin.



Mission Rally Meets in Port Orchard

Bethany Lutheran Church, Port Orchard, Washington, hosted the 34th annual Women's Pacific Northwest Mission Rally, with 76 persons in attendance. The Rally theme was "Angels and Ministers of Grace Defend Us!"

Pastor Tony Pittenger, from Bethany Lutheran, opened the rally with a devotion telling what the Bible says about angels. The assembly sang "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" and "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today."

The Rev. Steven Petersen, Board for World Outreach Administrator, showed an exciting slide presentation of our missions in various parts of the world. The Rev. James Krikava spoke about his recent mission journey to the Czech Republic and the Rev. Daniel Basel showed a DVD on planned giving. The Rev. James Wilson from North Bend, Oregon, told about what had been accomplished through the mite offerings given to their mission church this past year. Connie Davis from Parkland Lutheran told of her experiences in Peru when she traveled there for her son's wedding.

During the business meeting, Rally charter members Wanda Seals and Faye Walker from Port Orchard, Sharon King of Parkland and Barb Cogswell from Myrtle Creek were introduced. There were 15 ladies who were first-time rally attendees.



Officers of the Women's Mission Society

Mites for 2011 will go both to Cross-stitch and to Resurrection Lutheran Church in North Bend, Oregon.

New officers elected are: Vice-President Jan Sparley (Grants Pass, Oregon); Treasurer Susie Rathke (Yelm, Washington); and Kay Kassulke (Medford, Oregon) as Christian Growth Chairman. They will serve with current President LaVern Suhr Brown (Sutherlin, Oregon) and Secretary Cindy Black (Myrtle Creek, Oregon).

Current Christian Growth Chairman Kathy Kahler sent her message through newly elected Kay Kassulke reminding us we should take time to read, learn and pray. Information on a "Monthly Missions Minute" was shared: You can use a toll free number to pray for our missionaries by calling 866-906-0040, code 4059585, at 1:00 p.m. on the first Monday of each month.

Vicar Luke Willitz closed the rally with a devotion on angels. He asked why we always assume that angels are in the sky. They often stand before people. Angels are around us here on earth. They come to protect us physically and spiritually.

The 2012 Mission Rally will be held at Christ Lutheran Church in Sutherlin, Oregon, on September 29. The theme will be "Soldiers of the Cross Arise."

PERIODICAL

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