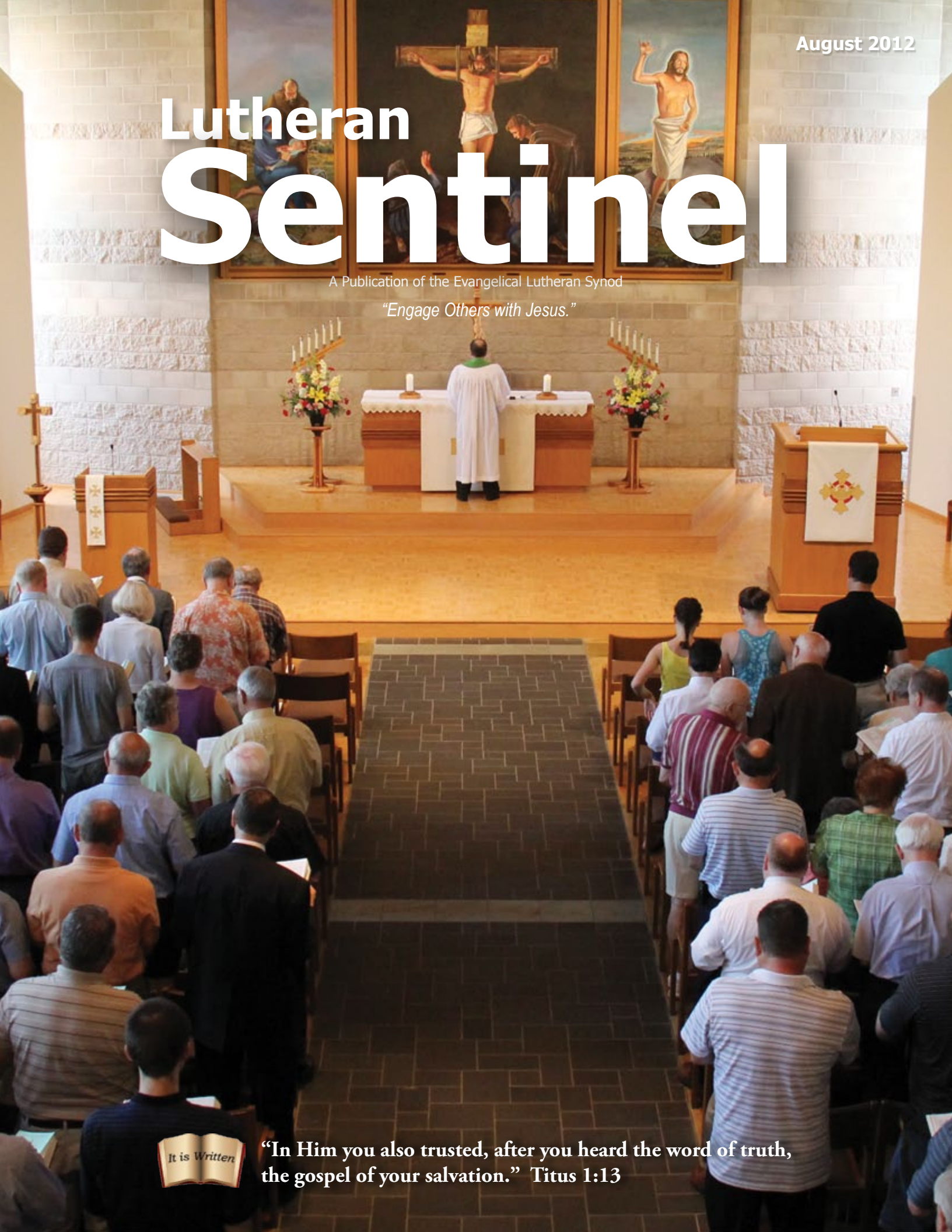


August 2012

Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

"Engage Others with Jesus."



**"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth,
the gospel of your salvation." Titus 1:13**

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Staff

Theodore G. Gullixson Editor
Robert Harting Assistant Editor
Arline Walker Business Manager
Wayne Halvorson Managing Editor
Jessica Fries, Erica Jacobsen Proofreaders
Paul C. Fries Graphic Designer

Contributing Editors

Paul Madson, Charles Keeler, Daniel Madson, James Olson.

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Address Editorial Correspondence To: Rev. Theodore G. Gullixson, 5530 Englewood Drive, Madison, WI 53705.

Address Circulation Correspondence and Address Corrections To: Rev. Wayne Halvorson, Box 185, Albert Lea, MN 56007.

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From the President

Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

A small but significant resolution was adopted by our synod at the June convention. The resolution stated, "That we accept the report of the CEW as the answer to the 2010 convention resolution and thank the committee for its work." The resolution referred to the work of the Committee on ELS Worship (CEW), a six-member panel appointed by the president that first reported to the General Pastoral Conference (GPC) in 2011. The committee dealt with questions that arose in connection with the following: 1) The synod from its earliest days sought unity of liturgical form by its member congregations; 2) Liturgical forms are to be orthodox; 3) There is confusion regarding the meaning and application of Bylaw Chapter I of the 1986 ELS Constitution.

The final point refers to a rubric whereby "the Synod recommends to its congregations that they use the Order of Worship based on the Danish-Norwegian liturgy of 1685, or the Common Order of Worship, as each congregation may decide." This resolution from the convention encourages congregations to engage in a careful and thoughtful evaluation of the bylaw and its underlying theological principles (good Law/Gospel emphasis, sacramental reverence, etc.).

In accepting the report originally presented to the GPC (and unanimously received by the same), the convention noted "the Christian freedom that is acknowledged in this report." In other words, worship forms based on or derived from the recommended orders of worship—even if not precisely reproduced—are expected to retain in a "clearly recognizable way" these three biblically-based features of Lutheran worship (i.e., the concluding summary of the CEW's report): 1) Conserving and testifying to "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), setting forth unambiguously the changeless Gospel of Christ; 2) Establishing a framework for a clear proclamation of the Gospel and a reverent administration of the Sacraments; 3) Serving a proper catechetical purpose, instructing people and also guiding in prayer, so that they are led to desire all the more the blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

We know that no humanly-devised ceremonies or liturgies may ever be imposed in order for sinners to receive justification for salvation. All is completed only and always in the atoning work of our crucified and risen Savior. Yet, as a synod, we can expect to encourage one another for the sake of solid Lutheran doctrine and unity to treasure and to use worship forms in line with that above.



Day of Atonement: Gift of God's Forgiveness

There's an interesting scene described for us in the letter to the Hebrews: "Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat" (Hebrews 9:1-5, emphasis added).

Now, if you were to compare that picture to how the Holy of Holies normally looked you would see something that was out of place. There, behind the second veil of the Tabernacle, along with the Ark of the Covenant, stands the golden censer. This is the incense burner that was brought into the Holy of Holies but once each year—on the Day of Atonement. Now, though, the letter-writer says that it is permanently there.

Consider these verses from the Revelation given to St. John: "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Revelation 5:8) and "Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand" (Revelation 8:3-4).

The "prayers of the saints," in other words, are now always before the Mercy Seat of God, the place once upon which the blood of bulls and goats was sprinkled as the yearly payment for the sins of the children of Israel. Always, as in, "not only once each year." No longer is there a veil between God's people and His mercy; that veil has been torn

in two and the way to the Lord's grace is left open because, on the ultimate day of atonement, the blood of the Lamb of God was sprinkled and thus were cleansed all the nations.

St. Paul wrote: "For he [God] says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

This is God serving you on your own personal Day of Atonement—which is today! It is He who comes to you to bless you with His mercy. It is He who comes to clothe you with the holiness of Jesus so that you are therefore declared "not guilty." It is He who takes away not only your sins—they are gone!—but also the death sentence in hell that you earned for breaking every single one of the Lord's commands.

The way is open. Your prayers, "I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended... But I am heartily sorry for them, and sincerely repent of them; and I pray You of Your boundless mercy, and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being," rise before Him as

incense and are heard in your heavenly Father's ear. Then, into your ears, the voice of the Crucified and Risen One—Jesus Christ, His Son—declares you forgiven through His servant, your pastor.

With Gospel and Sacraments, you are put ever before the Mercy Seat of God. Through them, as through means, your day of atonement comes every day as you are made one with God through Christ Jesus, your Savior.



Jim Braun is pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Yelm, Washington.



“Learning to Engage Others with Jesus”

Evangelism and the Keys

Keys have really changed over the years. In many cases, that little piece of metal with all the right notches and grooves is unnecessary. Now you simply need a piece of plastic with the properly-encoded magnetic strip or the correct PIN to punch in on a keypad or your fingerprint or your retina or your voice to gain access through locked doors.

But the most important keys will never become outmoded or unnecessary, at least not while we're still on this earth. After Peter had confessed that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16), Jesus not only blessed him but He also said to all His disciples (and thus to all the church, including us), “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). What precisely these “keys” are is described well by Dr. Luther in his *Small Catechism*:

“The Office of the Keys is the special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth: to forgive the sins of the penitent sinners, but to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent.”

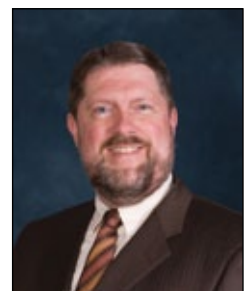
So what do these “keys” have to do with evangelism, with telling others about Jesus and what He has done for them? Everything! Your unbelieving friend is locked up in prison. His unforgiven sin keeps him under the curse of God. Paul talks about this: “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them” (Galatians 3:10). If you are under God's curse, it means that you are locked up in prison, sitting on death row, waiting for the sentence to be carried out. There is no way for your friend to escape, at least not on his own. This fact may be news to your friend, that they are condemned because of his sin, but it's vital for him to know. Telling your

friend this bad news is what Jesus referred to as “binding” sin on earth.

It's such a blessing and joy to be able to share some good news with your unbelieving friend also! When your friend admits that he recognizes his sin, when he confesses that he has sinned against God, then you get to use the “loosing” key with him: “Your sins are forgiven!” You are privileged to tell your friend that instead of remaining under God's curse, someone else took his place and therefore took away his curse: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). Because Jesus took our place, because He took our punishment for our sins, the doors of our prison are unlocked and the very doors of heaven are opened to us.

As you continue to “engage others with Jesus” in your daily life, keep that picture of using the keys in mind. We have known this message

of marvelous freedom since the time we were baptized and the gates of heaven were unlocked for us. Every day we are blessed to live in freedom from the curse of sin as we await the day of going to our true home of heaven. How many people do you know that need their prison door unlocked? With how many of your friends can you share the best news of all, the news that Jesus has freed them from sin, death, and hell and opened heaven to them? When you engage others with Jesus, you do use the keys He gave you.



Michael K. Smith teaches at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota, and serves on the Board for Home Outreach.

Our Comfort from the Exaltation of Christ

For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more then, having been reconciled to God, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:10).

Some people might think that Jesus did not want to die for us, but it would be impossible to think that Jesus does not want to live for us!

It is this thought where the exaltation of Jesus' human nature gives us great comfort. If Christ's humiliation consisted of His not always using His divine attributes and powers, the exaltation is just the opposite—Jesus' human nature now uses all the attributes and powers of God at all times. Jesus visited hell to address Satan and show His victory. Christ's body, which Satan had so buffeted and tortured in his fight against our Lord, is now glorified and exalted.

Who won this terrible battle at the cross? Did Christ win with only His human nature or only with His divine nature? Scripture teaches that both human and divine natures were involved: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His [God's] Son, cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

So Christ's divine nature, which at His conception had filled every part of His human nature and which Jesus did not always use during His earthly life, now shone forth in glory as the sun from His resurrection to all eternity.

Jesus Christ comforts us because His human nature suffered for our sins, and Christ knows what our suffering and afflictions are like. Can He not sympathize with our trials and does He not hear our prayers and help us?

Who else would we want to defend us and be our mediator before God? No one but Jesus, the exalted God-man, is more qualified.

Does our almighty Savior also provide for our needs and help us in life? Is the Chief Shepherd of all believers guiding His Church? Is Christ, according to both natures, preserving all things for our good?

The answer to all these question is: since Jesus did not remain in the grave, but rose from the dead and remains alive—YES!

Consider the wonderful consolation of these Scripture passages: "[Christ] preserves all things by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3); "I am the good shepherd, and know

my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:14-15); "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalms 23:1); "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away" (1 Peter 5:4); "The rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed [Jesus] ... He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision ... You shall break them with a rod of iron" (Psalm 2:2,4,9); "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28); and "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

Because Jesus is our risen and exalted Savior, He has gone before us into heaven to guide us to His eternal home. From heaven, Jesus rules over all things for the good of His Church, He continues to send out ministers of the Gospel, and He comes to us with His body and blood in the Lord's Supper. He promises to return, raise all the dead, and take to heaven those who believe on Him as their Lord and Savior, true God and true Man, who was crucified and raised and glorified. What comfort we have because our Savior was exalted to the heavens.

James Olsen is an ELS pastor emeritus living in Ontario, Wisconsin.



Giving and Happiness

In case you missed it, a new survey has shown that there is an undeniable connection between giving and happiness. Of course, that is no surprise for many of you who already give of your time and talent in love and thankfulness to your Lord and His Church. Your Lord Himself has said, “Blessed are the merciful” (Matthew 5:7). The word “blessed” means “happy.”

So now that the secular authorities have picked up on this connection, one has to ask, “What has taken them so long?”

Dr. Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, explained at the university’s commencement just this past May:

“When asked in surveys, most Americans believe that spending money on personal desires brings greater satisfaction than giving it away. But, when participants actually were given the chance to do that, to spend \$20 on themselves or give it away, it was the act of generosity that led to greater happiness. To care is good.” (Dr. Dacher Keltner, commencement address at UC Berkeley on May 14, 2012).

“To care is good.” That quote is simply a reworking of what we already know. It affirms what we confess and sing in E. S. Alderson’s hymn, *Lord of Glory, Who Hast Bought Us*: “That more happy and more blessed ‘Tis to give than to receive.” (ELH 459:2)

At times, we may give out of guilt, fearing that we may be punished if we do not give. Sometimes we might think of our giving to our church as “dues,” as if we were members of a club. Other times, our motive may be to make sure that we don’t give it to someone or something else. Sometimes our giving can be motivated by pity and then we narrowly look only at gaining that “happy feeling” rather than considering the wider picture of “Am I really helping them in the long run with my charity?”

Not all of these thoughts are in themselves wrong to consider as responsible stewards of our Lord’s gifts. The exception would be if we think that our giving in some way gains for us God’s favor and, ultimately, a place in heaven. Such a motive would place our salvation on very shaky ground indeed. For it would deny God the glory and would cast aside the main Bible teaching that we are saved by grace alone through faith in Christ Jesus. Isaiah warned us of this possibility when he wrote by inspiration, “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

Granted, our motives for giving are not always pure. Yet our best motive for giving is most soundly based in a heart that gives in love for the One who first loved us (1 John 4:19). The only way we are brought before our Lord as cleansed and spotless servants is when we approach God’s throne of grace with nothing other than the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ given us by the cleansing of the holy blood of God’s only-begotten Son

in Baptism. He alone is our High Priest who has gone before the throne and offered Himself as the all-sufficient sacrifice that paid the penalty of our sin, including our sinful motives for what we do in life. But since our Lord has accomplished this full redemption we can now take the words of Hebrews to heart: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

As we give gladly of what we have out of love for our Lord, whether through our acts of mercy or in support of the Gospel, we also have a profound mystery to consider as we show mercy to those in need. Our Lord Himself has revealed this profound truth and it is described in the words of Alderson’s hymn:

“Wondrous honor hast Thou given To our humblest charity. In Thine own mysterious sentence, ‘Ye have done it unto Me.’” (ELH 459:3).

As we view and witness the profound sorrow and suffering that are all around us in the world, we will never lack the opportunity to help. Yet we note that the greatest suffering of all is to be lost to heaven. Simply put, that makes the sharing of the message of salvation in Christ the most merciful, charitable, and loving act of all.

As we learn from the Word of God, it is a profound confession to say that all our time, talent, and earthly treasures are gifts from God. In our worship of God—including our worship in tithes and offerings—we show our trust and love for our Lord and His divine providence. It is trust in our Lord that enables us to give a portion of our Lord’s gifts back to Him and to His church.

Yet it is also with a smile and a feeling of joy, that we recall our Lord’s words “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the **least of these** brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40, emphasis added).

Again, how might we do this? Alderson’s hymn shows us that we do this through our “gifts and offerings.”

As we have learned from both our study of God’s Word and through our experience, there is indeed a flip side to the coin of Christian giving. It is the joy we share in seeing suffering relieved. It is the joy we share with the angels in seeing yet another sinner repent. It is a joy we share in knowing that as each sinner repents we gain a Christian brother or sister for eternity.

Thus our prayer through the words of our hymn writer can be,

“Give us faith to trust Thee boldly,
Hope to stay our souls on Thee;
But, O best of all Thy graces,
Give us Thine own charity.”
(ELH 459:5)



Daniel Basel is the ELS Giving Counselor and lives in Mankato, Minnesota.

The Supreme Court and the HHS Mandate

The June 28, 2012, ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court (5–4) upholding the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) does not affect our synod’s strong opposition to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate that even religious institutions cover abortifacients in health care plans. Some may wonder: what does the Supreme Court ruling mean in relation to the controversial HHS mandate?

If anything, the ruling underscores the importance of speaking out all the more on this unwarranted intrusion of government on the exercise of religious and confessional freedom. Will penalties be imposed on tax-free church entities that for reason of conscience refuse to comply? Clarity on this will need to come in the months ahead. We urge all to pray for strength in our confession of the truth and for God’s protective providence.

Will the ruling upholding the health care plan enacted by Congress be interpreted to say that the contraception/abortifacient mandate issued by the HHS stays in effect even for all the religious organizations who have objected to the coverage? It would be easy to surmise the administration now is able to press forward unimpeded with the HHS ruling. On the other hand, it appears the U.S. Supreme Court will have to take up the matter separately at some point in time, presumably its next session. So, how will the ruling go?

There is no use speculating. Praying, yes; speculating, no.

Here is a question worthy of consideration by all Christians who take life in the womb seriously. Even if the court or the administration decides to overturn the HHS mandate for the religious institutions conscientiously objecting, should this somehow diminish our concern? Will the exemption do the job? Rev. Robert Fleishmann, National Director of Christian Life Resources, who also addressed our ELS convention in June, recently wrote on this subject. His comments are worth digesting, as hard as it may be to swallow the consequences for our confessional commitment:

“What about the unborn children who will still die once this provision is enforced? Will Christians still bask in their exemption? You and I are not supposed to sin. We do not take the lives of unborn children. But we are also tasked to care for others and speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Religious agencies may finagle a way to exempt themselves from paying for abortifacients as part of their insurance premiums, but this does not mean we win. Quite the contrary. History unfortunately shows that we tend to follow the path of least resistance—to the peril of those left behind. There is a place for government to respect the religious convictions of people. But if the conscience is only sensitive about oneself and not about others, then we fail miserably. If we who know better do not speak up—who will? Don’t settle for the easy way out. This provision of the national health care plan is flawed in its essence, and we need to speak against it” (Clearly Caring, 2012 Volume 32, #1).

Scripture states: “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the right of the poor and the oppressed” (Psalm 82:3). If this applies to the people who are poor and downtrodden, how much more does it apply to the helpless of the helpless—children yet in the womb but who are given no chance for life on this earth because of elective and deliberately abortive procedures resulting in their deaths? Scripture also states: “To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice” (Proverbs 21:3). This isn’t just doing right when inside the tabernacle or the temple; it is doing right even in the civic realm, with the understanding that “righteousness exalts a nation” (Proverbs 14:34). That involves a convincing discourse based on the reality of natural/moral law. The Bible governs where hearts are moved by the love of the Savior. In the kingdom of the world, appeal is made to consciences created under the governing of natural law.

But here is the quintessential point. What is it all about? Without the end goal—love and concern for the eternal well-being of every soul, born or unborn—no amount of protection for temporal life on this earth will suffice. Believers in Christ desire for every sin-tainted life entering our world via the womb the connection by faith to the great work of our redemption. This comes through Baptism and contact with the Word. Apart from such Spirit-worked faith, only eternal destruction awaits. But with this faith, there is hope and purpose for every newborn soul! “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

No wonder it was said so long ago of those who are Christians, “They marry like all other men and they beget children; but they do not cast away their offspring... Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven” (Epistle to Diognetus). Cast away offspring? Perish such a thought! Christ has redeemed their souls no less than ours!

“He wants all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

[Our synod in convention adopted this resolution on June 20, 2012:

Resolution 4: Health and Human Services (HHS) Ruling

Whereas, the Doctrine Committee has been instructed to keep the membership of the synod informed about issues in government, law and society which may encroach on religious freedom, and

Whereas, the recent HHS ruling is an incursion into religious liberty, because it requires that all private health care plans, including those of institutions and individuals who object on religious grounds, must cover sterilization, abortifacients, and contraception, therefore,

A. Be it resolved, that the delegates of this synod convention be encouraged to inform the membership of their congregations about the issues and challenges of the HHS ruling, and,

B. Be it resolved, that the synod president be directed to produce a statement about the HHS ruling for the August issue of the *Lutheran Sentinel*.]

2012 Convention Essay: “Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works”

Lutherans, with their emphasis on justification by grace for Christ’s sake through faith alone, have often been accused of being opposed to good works. However, Christ’s religion teaches that while God demands an absolute perfection, which sinful man can never produce, God has secured righteousness freely for all sinners through the person and work of His Son. While sinners cannot produce the righteousness that will save them, God intends that His people serve Him in righteousness here in time and hereafter in eternity. These truths are taught in Ephesians 2:8–10, Luke 1:74–75, and Titus 2:11–14.

Some object that salvation by faith alone gives Christians a license to sin, but the Bible teaches, “God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7). After Martin Luther’s death, Lutheran theologians also struggled with the role of good works—some saying that good works are necessary for salvation and others saying they are injurious to salvation. Both statements were condemned by the *Formula of Concord*, which taught that salvation comes through faith in Christ alone, but that believers are to exercise themselves in good works out of gratitude to God.

Lutheran worship abounds with prayers and exhortations that desire believers to see godliness increase in their daily lives. Similar expressions occur in Luther’s *Small Catechism*, especially in the Table of Duties. However, the Law should not be preached as moralism so as to make people think that they can become righteous before God by a proper behavior. Only the Gospel about Jesus’ atonement gives people the strength to fulfill God’s will.

The Gospel is not always fully proclaimed, for many Christian preachers speak about Christ’s passive obedience (His death on the cross) and say nothing about Christ’s active obedience (His keeping God’s Law perfectly). When only half of the Gospel is heard, the believer is given the mistaken impression that something is lacking, that is, a life of righteousness before God. But true righteousness before God can only be found in Jesus Christ, not in a combination of the works of Christ and of the believer.

The believer is righteous before God through faith in Jesus and is called a saint. The exhortation to live holy lives follows faith, as a privilege and honor.



photo by the editor

Essayist, the Rev. Glenn Obenberger

Apart from Christ we can do nothing.

In the sight of God, our righteous acts are unacceptable to Him apart from Christ. The sinner has no power to produce good works without sinful motives. For “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

Spirit-wrought good works are not done to receive glory or reward by the doer, they are done to glorify God and benefit one’s neighbor. Because the sinful nature still clings to the believer, he needs constant instruction about what is a good work. Bad good works only have the appearance of being good, such as the Pharisee who boasted in the temple (Luke 18:12). Bad good works are not works of faith. They have value only on earth, not in eternity.

Faith without works is dead; works without faith in Christ are equally dead. To God, the works done in the church in Sardis were dead works (Revelation 3:1–6). Christ told them, “Remember what you received and heard” (Revelation 3:3). Through the Gospel message from God’s Word, you have been made alive in Christ and therefore you will produce fruits of faith, which then give glory to God.

When did we see You hungry and feed You?

On Judgment Day, the righteous will ask Jesus, “When did we see You hungry and feed You?” (Matthew 25:37). Jesus will point to the works that believers do in their vocations (that is, God-given callings) as parents, citizens, church members, etc. (read 1 Corinthians 7:17 and 1 Thessalonians 4:10–12). Good works are mostly done in vocation.

Believers see in their neighbors the needs of Jesus, and they respond as Jesus’ lips, eyes, hands, and feet. Through the farmer, rancher, grocer, tailor, shoemaker, carpenter, plumber, banker, trucker, governor, mayor, soldier, police officer, firefighter, doctor, nurse, therapist, lawyer, teacher, mother, father, and children, God is hidden as He does His work among us. God uses believers and unbelievers in their vocations to serve the human race.

Care must be taken so that “church work” is not elevated to the neglect of other God-given vocations. Godly lives show forth the love of Christ in the world. The believer lives a merciful life toward others in the home, workplace, congregation, and community. However, it is the Lord who is at work and is glorified through this life of self-sacrifice (see 2 Corinthians 5:14–15). The common, ordinary works done in Jesus’ name will be revealed in the final judgment as evidence of faith in Christ.

Proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you.

Good works are to be accompanied by good words, as in 1 Peter 2:9. Believers proclaim the excellencies of God in corporate

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2012 Synod Sunday Services



The Rev. Cory Hahnke (left) was the preacher and the Rev. Daniel Faugstad served as the lector.

Synod Sunday Service

The traditional annual Festival service on Synod Sunday, June 17, was held at Trinity Chapel on the campus of Bethany Lutheran Church at 3:00 p.m. The Rev. Daniel Faugstad, pastor of the Belview and Rock Dell, Minnesota parish, served as liturgist and Prof. Dennis Marzolf was the organist.

The Rev. Cory Hanke, pastor of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Cold Spring, Minnesota, preached the sermon entitled “Jesus is the Good Samaritan” based on the text Luke 10:25–37. He noted how easy it is to use the Good Samaritan parable to teach law and demand that God’s people help the poor. They often do drive by people in need. But Jesus is the Good Samaritan who kept the law and died for all people. He gives His grace in Word, Baptism and Lord’s Supper so that believers are well supplied with forgiveness, life and salvation. As a result, Jesus causes us to share His love with people in need.

Bethany Lutheran Seminary Graduates Five Men

Four men stood up to receive their diplomas from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in a 7:00 p.m. service at Trinity Chapel. A fifth classmate to graduate, Peter Heyn, is serving in Australia and could not attend. The four who were present were: Nathanael Abrahamson, Timothy Grundmeier, Matthew Moldstad and Luke Willitz.

Prof. Adolph Harstad served as the liturgist, and John Baumann was the organist, with Pres. Gaylin Schmeling preaching. He spoke on the text of Psalm 121 under the theme “Maintain and Proclaim.”



(Left to right): Seminary Pres. Gaylin Schmeling, Nathanael Abrahamson, Prof. Thomas Kuster, Matthew Moldstad, Prof. Adolph Harstad, Tim Grundmeier, Prof. Michael Smith, Luke Willitz and Rev. Joel Willitz. Not Pictured: Peter Heyn.

President Moldstad's Annual Message

In 2011 our synod adopted a strategic plan to “engage others with Jesus.” We might think of this as being in a courtroom, serving as a witness. All Christians are called to be witnesses of something wonderful that happened inside God’s courtroom where God has acquitted all people. The Bible says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

Consider what it means to serve as a witness for God. St. Peter stated, “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). We know that “salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

God made us witnesses who possess the truth. We need to listen to the Gospel message daily so that we are better able to assist others to know about Jesus. The Holy Spirit has equipped us as witnesses with the message of Christ’s free salvation for sinners and gave us baptism, God’s Word, the Lord’s Supper and Absolution so we know the truth.

Witnesses are duty bound to tell the truth. The world around us has little time for exclusive truth. Witnessing for the truth also involves “apologetics,” that is, the defense of the Christian faith. Our Doctrine Committee has produced a fine statement on this subject. Witnesses need to know where salvation for sinners is found. On the outside of its academic hall, our Bethany Lutheran College has engraved the words, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

God’s witnesses speak two messages: Law and Gospel, one that condemns sin and the other that exonerates the sinner. It is vital for God’s witnesses to know the difference between God’s condemnatory statements and His prevailing statements of grace. For a very good reason, our ELS motto is not “Engage others with Moses,” but “Engage others with Jesus.”

Witnesses in a courtroom face close examination. But we have an advocate (1 John 2:1) who stands between us sinners and the Judge Himself. The Judge is holy. He has a perfect love for the truth and for all people. He died on the cross that we might live. He is also glorified and lives forever. Do these truths not give us courage as we step into the witness stand? For, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

God’s witnesses are eager to share the testimony. They are moved to serve, as Paul says, “For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15).

Our convention theme, *Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works*, is drawn from Ephesians 2:10. The Holy Spirit has given us differing abilities for use as God’s witnesses. In the vocations and outside interests that we have, as individuals and as members of congregations, we can encourage each other in our calling as witnesses.

We show forth God’s glory as we show forth God’s love in our lives towards our neighbors. God gives us many roles to fill and provides many avenues to help others in Christian love. St. Paul urges us: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Witnesses are under God’s protection. In the near future in our country, Bible-believing Christians may pay a hefty price for being witnesses about Jesus. In the 2,000-year history of the Christian Church and in many nations today, many Christian witnesses have given up their lives rather than deny their Savior. But God has promised to protect them from spiritual and eternal harm.

May God grant us courage to ascend His witness stand as we have opportunity to do so. For Jesus said, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad,” says Jesus, “because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11, 12).

Finally, let us thank God for the blessings we enjoy! We have our places where we worship God—where our souls are fed with Word and Sacrament. God has given us dedicated pastors, teachers and missionaries; a beloved college and seminary and those who teach and work there. We especially praise God for His gospel message that is proclaimed in its truth and purity and for the Sacraments that are rightly administered. With all these blessings, we can be witnesses to God’s truths and promise of salvation.

The President’s message was redacted by the editor.



God made us witnesses who possess the truth. We need to listen to the Gospel message daily so that we are better able to assist others to know about Jesus.

2012 Convention Resolutions

President's Message and Report

President John Moldstad Jr. was thanked for his faithful service to the ELS. It was noted that he, along with his Communication Committee Advisors, has enabled a new website to be initiated. ELS information is now on YouTube and Facebook. Those methods of communicating the message of Christ to the world are to be encouraged in this modern age.

The *Lutheran Sentinel* has now also become an online communication in half of the months of the year. The published copy has now been reduced to six months of the year, with four additional pages. The president was asked to review the publication method and report to the 2013 convention. The publication of the theological journal the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* has been transferred to the Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

Doctrine Committee

The delegates resolved to adopt these statements by the Doctrine Committee: 1) Biblical Teaching Concerning Apologetics, 2) Marriage Penalty in the New Health Care Law, and 3) Health and Human Services Ruling. The Committee was directed to continue its study of Bible translations.

Fellowship with many church bodies throughout the world, through the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is a blessing and is to be continued.

Finances

The delegates adopted a 2013 budget of \$750,000 to come from congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Other funding will come from special gifts and grants of \$350,000. The total expected expenditure for all of the budgeted boards and entities was set at \$1,100,000.

Higher Education

The Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary reports of enrollment and activity were adopted. The Rev. Dr. J. Kincaid Smith's Type "B" appointment to the Board was ratified.

Home Missions and Evangelism

It was resolved that the board call an Evangelism/Missions counselor to guide the Synod in the task of "Engaging others with Jesus." That individual will be then guiding the regional Evangelism retreats. Congregations were encouraged to use the recently produced DVD's, "In the dark about Jesus" and "In the dark about the Bible" are now available to congregations for use in their outreach efforts. Further such productions were encouraged to be produced. The 2013 salary schedule for home missionaries was adopted.

World Outreach

The support of the outreach into the world to "Engage others with Jesus" is encouraged. One method to become acquainted with people in foreign lands, is by teaching the English language. From the students of ESL (English as a Second Language), come many prospects for the churches. One such teacher, Chelsea Dietsche, presented a review of her work in Linares, Chile.

The convention took special note of the celebration of 20 years of Humanitarian aid in Ukraine through the Gift of Life program, where medical and dental clinics on wheels have treated thousands of patients. Each visit also includes the message of the love of Jesus and eternal life through Him.

What an awesome blessing the Evangelical Lutheran Synod has been given, to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to seven foreign countries.

Elementary Education

The Board for Lutheran Schools of America was asked to study its financial models with the goal of retaining the best Lutheran school teachers. The Board was asked to develop a reporting form to show how ELS schools are engaging others with Jesus. The synod thanked Mr. Silas Born for the many years of service in the area of Christian education.

Parish Services

It was resolved to accept the report of the Committee on ELS Worship regarding Bylaws, chapter 1 on liturgies. ELS congregations were encouraged to

use the Members Assistance Program of counseling from Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Services. The memorial to establish a monument for ELS members killed-in-action was referred to the synod president for study.

Synodical Membership

The following pastors were accepted into permanent synodical membership: The Rev. James Kassera, pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Albert Lea, Minnesota; the Rev. David Locklair, pastor of Richland Lutheran Church, Thornton, Iowa; the Rev. Matthew Moldstad, pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, Kissimmee, Florida; the Rev. Mark Faugstad, pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Bagley, Minnesota; and the Rev. Randy VanMehren, pastor of Grace Ev. Orthodox Lutheran Church, Redmond, Oregon. Also, Grace Lutheran Ev. Orthodox Lutheran Church was accepted into synod membership. The Rev. Greg Sahlstrom and the Rev. Carlton Sielaff were granted their request to remain on the Clergy Roster of the synod.

Planning

The convention resolved that the Board for Home Outreach be authorized to call a Evangelism Missions Counselor. It was also resolved that the Board of Trustees call a Communications Director. Guidelines were adopted for: 1) the new Committee for Communication, 2) the Board for Youth, 3) the Giving Counselor, 4) the Planning and Coordinating Committee, and 5) the Board for Home Outreach.

Miscellaneous

The delegates resolved that the 2013 convention meet on June 16 through June 20 at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota. The report of the Centennial Committee was adopted.

Received into ELS Membership



Left to Right: Rev. Mark Faugstad, Bagley/Lengby, MN; Rev. Matthew Moldstad, Kissimmee, FL; Rev. Randy VanMehren, Redmond, OR; Rev. David Locklair, Thornton, IA; Rev. James Kassera, Albert Lea, MN.

Essay: Created in Christ For Good Works, continued from page 8

worship (Colossians 3:16) and in their daily interactions with each other (Colossians 3:12–14). They also engage those outside the Church by acts of kindness and mercy.

Every Christian is part of the mission of the Church. God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. As the Gospel is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit works to create faith in the hearers. The command to speak the word of our Lord is present in the vocation of a brother or sister in the faith (Matthew 18:15–20). The Bethlehem shepherds and the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well are examples of a spontaneous proclamation of the Gospel (see Luke 2:17–18 and John 4:29). All believers are to be prepared to know how to answer each person (Colossians 4:6 and 1 Peter 3:15).

However, consciences are not to be burdened under a moralistic law message filled with guilt convincing people that they must tell the Gospel to others. All Christians are to support the mission of the Church and use opportunities to speak the Gospel. However, they primarily engage the unbelieving world through their vocations as they show their love for Christ in helping others. Jesus is the servant of all servants. Believers get to show humility of service while having all that they do hidden in Him.

As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them

The New Testament has many explicit calls for Christians to live godly lives in their vocations. Acts of charity are never the Gospel, but they are connected as fruits of faith. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches what it means to love one’s enemies (Luke 6:27–36). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus calls upon believers to show mercy, first, to fellow believers and then to those outside the Church.

Stir up one another to love and good works

The 2011 Strategic Plan goal says: “View each congregation in the synod as a mission congregation.” This will involve some in local evangelism work. But the members also need to be encouraged to naturally serve their neighbors in love through their vocations and thereby engage them with Jesus. Neighbors can see how believers deal with crosses in trials as they trust in God. Believers can send letters and cards, include them in prayers, help with meals and transportation, visit people with gifts, or comfort the sick and dying. They can seek out needs in the community that are not being met—food, care for the disabled, help for the blind or deaf, etc.

The mission of engaging others with Jesus is intimately connected with the life in this world of the Christian who is called by the Lord to serve his or her neighbor in Jesus’ name. Christian service and evangelism work together as believers engage others with Jesus in word and deed.

When the topic of good works is considered, there exist many dangers to faith in Jesus because the sinful nature desires to make good works contribute to salvation. However, this danger cannot excuse us from practicing good works. God has made us privileged children who have been created, redeemed, and sanctified for good works. We now get to be our Lord’s heart of grace and mercy, His hand of kind service, and His mouth of peace and comfort. The Bible urges us to consider “how to stir up one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24).

The Convention Essay was delivered by the Rev. Glenn Obenberger, co-pastor of Parkland Lutheran Church in Tacoma, Washington. The essay was redacted by the editor.

Convention Anniversary Service



Rev. Rudolph Honsey
70 years



Rev. Paul Madson
60 years



Rev. Robert and Doris Carter
55 years



Rev. Adolph and Helen Harstad
40 years



Rev. Mark Bartels
25 years



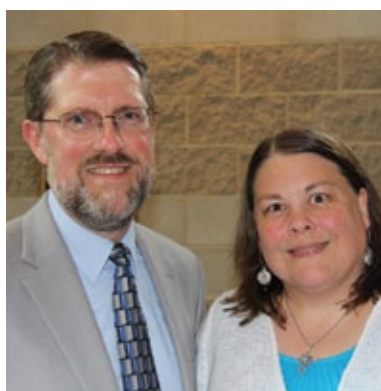
Rev. Tim and Sarah Buelow
25 years



Dawn and Rev. Robert Harting
25 years



Rev. Nathan Krause
25 years



Rev. Michael and Anita Smith
25 years



Rev. Joel and Dawn Willitz
25 years

Not Pictured:
Rev. Emil C.F. Stubenvoll,
60 years

Rev. Herbert Larson,
55 years

Rev. Larry Vinton,
40 years

2012 Youth Honor Choir



Special Convention Presentations

Evangelism and Home Missions

The Rev. Tim Hartwig, spoke to the delegates about the plans for seven regional retreats on evangelism for pastors and key leaders and their wives from each congregation. The retreats would teach evangelism motivation, overcoming fears, what to say, nurturing prospects, and demographic studies. This information could then be brought to congregation members.



Christ in Media Institute

Dr. Thomas Kuster spoke about the work of bringing the Gospel to the masses of people who do not know Christ. Christ In Media enables people to produce well-done media messages. They have planned a conference for October 12 to 14, 2012, at Bethany Lutheran College to talk about seven challenges to doing media work well. The conference will invite media leaders, missionaries and professors to discuss these issues.



Bethany Lutheran College Reports

Dr. Dan Bruss, college president, spoke about how the college developed student potential in skills, knowledge and activities. In the Fall of 2011, 572 full-time equivalent students were on campus: 72% were Lutherans and 42% were from ELS and WELS congregations. He spoke about the spiritual work being done on campus. Some students go abroad for studies, others work through Travel Canvass Witness, S.T.O.R.M., adult instruction classes, and Stone Path Studios. All these impact the community at Bethany and in the world.



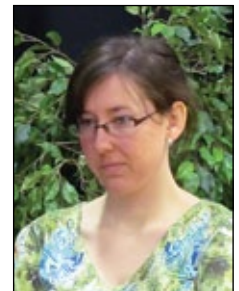
Faith Mission Society

Mr. Marlin Goebel spoke of the Society's start under the late Rev. Robert Moldstad with the goal of making mission work known to people in the ELS through its publication of Mission News. The Rev. Jeff Longren is now president of the Society and the Rev. Shawn Kaufeld is producing Mission News. Last year the Society gave \$33,000 to mission projects.



Board for World Outreach

Miss Chelsea Dietsche, a graduate of Bethany Lutheran College, spoke about her work teaching English as a Second Language classes in Linares, Chile, for one year. This is an effective means of reaching middle-class people with the Gospel. She taught 22 students during the year. Her work can be followed at www.FollowChelsea.com.



Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

President Gaylin Schmelting called attention to the Good Shepherd stained glass window in the seminary chapel. It reminds people of God's love for sinners and that He sends men to feed the flock of God. The seminary trains men who love the voice of the Good Shepherd and who have a love for souls.



Several Seminary courses emphasize evangelism work: Mission applications, history and theology of missions, a presentation by the Board for Evangelism, and a field program where students are involved in a congregation. He reported that this fall there will be six new students. The Bjarne Wollan Teigen Reformation Lectures for 2012 (formerly Reformation Lectures) will be on "Luther as Translator," presented by Dr. Cameron MacKenzie and Prof. Paul Wendland.



Christian Life Resources

The Rev. Robert Fleischmann spoke about the work of Christian Life Resources, which began in 1983. Since 1993 over 200 mothers have been helped at their home for single mothers. There are 27 resource centers in the United States and 6,500 women have been helped. Their web site has document samples for Christian Medical Direction statements.



Special Convention Presentations

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

The Rev. Mark Schroeder, president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), noted how the two synods are joined in a partnership of belief and mission. He spoke of the visible partnership that both synods had in the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC). At a recent regional meeting of five African synods, he noted the zeal of the missionaries who attended. He spoke about a long-range plan for mission work, based on confidence in God's grace and an optimism for the future. He noted that discussion on translations will take another year.



Lutheran Home Association

Pastor emeritus Dennis Schmidt noted that this association began in 1898 with a home for the elderly. The program has expanded to include Jesus Cares for special people. Recently the association built a home for independent living in Florida.



Wisconsin Lutheran Family and Child Service

This counseling service has 150 contact places in the United States, noted Mr. Joshua Mears. Since 2005, this organization has provided counseling for families of pastors and teachers. They are able to provide counseling via the internet and Skype.



ELS Giving and Stewardship Counselor

The Rev. Daniel Basel reported that he works to promote giving to the synod, Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary, Lutheran Schools of America, home and foreign mission work and Thoughts of Faith, Inc. Under stewardship, he spoke about the materials offered through the Estate Planning Seminars. He is also working on promoting the special anniversary offering that will be gathered from 2016 to 2018. He invited congregations to have him preach and conduct seminars.



Board for Christian Service

This board is responsible for many programs, noted the Rev. Piet VanKampen. The board members administer the Health Insurance Plan, the Shepherd Plan and the match program for pensions, the Clergy Assistant Program for counseling, the World Needs Fund and the clergy widows support program. He encouraged local congregations to be involved with helping people: distributing food and gas cards, donate food to the seminary students, jump rope for heart, volunteer to help, participate in a walk for a charity. These are opportunities to thank God and to engage the community with the Gospel.



Thank You for Service in Education

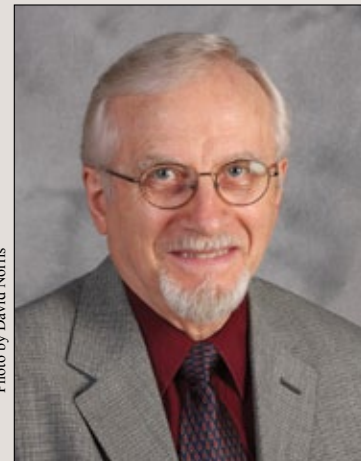


Photo by David Norris

Professor Silas Born

President Moldstad led the convention delegates in applause to thank Prof. Silas Born for the many years and the great effort that he has given in the area of Christian education. He was principal of Holy Cross Lutheran School, Madison, Wisconsin, for many years. He next helped get the Martin Luther School going in Plzen, the Czech Republic. For the past 15 years, he has been greatly involved in establishing the Christian education curriculum at Bethany Lutheran College. In addition, he has served as superintendent of Christian education for the ELS.

Cross-stitch Meeting: ESL in Chile

Seminarian Paul Lange opened the meeting with a devotion based on Acts 16:25 speaking about how God guides events and people to proclaim the salvation that Jesus won on the cross so that people may be filled with joy through faith in Him.

Cross-stitch President Mrs. Anita Smith spoke about the silent auction with a variety of items from India, the Czech Republic and South Korea. She also listed the places to which the gifts to Cross-stitch were distributed. She then introduced Chelsea Dietsche as the main speaker.

Chelsea described her work as an English as a Second Language teacher in Chile. There are four congregations in Chile with about 120 members. She illustrated her work with a picture of farming. It is important to know who one is working with and their culture before planting seeds. She noted that three others have taught ESL classes before her: Bill and Krug, Rachel Meiers and Samuel Gullixson. Chelsea has four levels of classes for people ages 17 to 65 in the city of Linares. Each of the classes generally has three to four people. The cost for the classes is \$90.00 for three months. At least three people from her classes started attending worship services. She spoke of how gifts to the ESL work can be used for scholarships for people in need.



Miss Chelsea Dietsche speaking about her ESL work in Chile.

After her presentation, Samuel Johnson played several piano pieces.



Mr. Samuel Johnson as he played piano during the meeting.



Convention organist John Baumann.



Delegates walking to the opening service at Trinity Chapel on Monday.



Pastors and delegates in the convention hall.



The truly brave Rev. Carlton Sielaff.



The Rev. Joel Willitz served as convention chaplain.



Laura Lillegard and Mrs. Norman Holte at the memorial service.



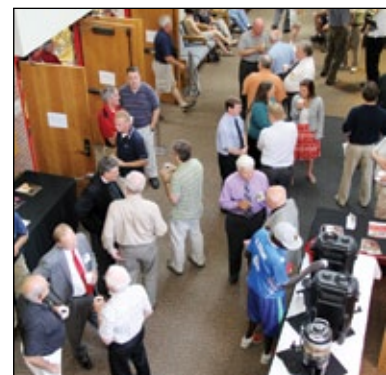
Principals Allen Labitsky and Larry Rude speak with Elisabeth Nitardy



Pages at the 2012 convention.



Recording the Youth Honors Choir concert.



Coffee and fellowship time.



On the Synodical Scene...

Faith Lutheran Hosts a Festival of Hymns

After a year of work putting together 1,853 pipes and an equal number of other pieces of their new organ, Faith Lutheran Church, Carthage, Missouri, held a Festival of Hymns dedication concert for their new organ. Their parking lot ran out of space as 200 people attended the concert. Most of the people were non-members. They heard Mrs. Buelow play the organ concert with hymn selections that proclaimed the Gospel about Jesus.

Later the story about the organ dedication was broadcast on the local NBC television station, which gave the community more reasons to hear the organ in a worship service.



Mrs. Sarah Buelow with the new pipe organ.

Ordination of Nathanael Abrahamson

Abiding Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove, Wisconsin celebrated the ordination and installation of Candidate of Theology Nathanael Abrahamson on July 1, 2012, at 2:30 p.m. The Candidate's father, the Rev. Harvey Abrahamson read the Scripture lessons and the Rev. Nate Krause, pastor of Abiding Shepherd, served as the liturgist. The Rev. Daniel Basel, godfather of the candidate, preached the sermon.

The Rev. Kenneth Mellon, alternate Visitor of Circuit 5, performed the rites of ordination and installation. Also participating in the service were the Reverends Theodore Gullixson, William Grimm, Bradley Homan, Carlton Sielaff, and Bernt Tweit.



(L to R): The Reverends Bradley Homan, William Grimm, Thomas Heyn, Nathan Krause, Nathanael Abrahamson, Bernt Tweit, Theodore Gullixson, Harvey Abrahamson, Kenneth Mellon and Daniel Basel.

Andrew Schmidt installed at Immanuel Lutheran, Mosinee, Wisconsin


The Rev. Andrew Schmidt was installed as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Mosinee, Wisconsin, on July 15, 2012. The Rev. Jon Hadler served as the liturgist, and the Rev. Samuel Schmeling served as lector. The Rev. Gaylin Schmeling preached the installation sermon based on Luke 10:16 with the theme "Christian Proclamation is the Voice of the Savior." Rev. Robert Wilke performed the rite of installation. Mrs. Dorothy Sparby served as organist.

After the service the members of the parish served an excellent dinner to the many members and guests that attended the service.



(Back Row, L to R): Reverends Daniel Solofra, Jon Hadler, Robert Wilke, Herbert Prahl, Nathan Wilke, and Robert Oberg.

(Front Row, L to R): Reverends Scott Wolfram, Jeffrey Mahnke, Daniel Hartwig (ELS), Samuel Schmeling (ELS), Andrew Schmidt, Gaylin Schmeling (ELS), Walter Davidson, Nathaniel Biebert, Richard Winters [all others are WELS].



Youth Notes

Building a Life Worth Living **Building Knowledge**

These days, when searching for knowledge I don't possess, more often than not I turn to the Internet. It's always there for me, it's always turned on, and it's rare that I can't find what I'm looking for. I wanted a good recipe for baking sea bass. CLICK. Found it! I needed help organizing storage on my laptop hard drive. CLICK. Figured it out! Granted, not every piece of information available online is useful or accurate, but it's never been easier to gather knowledge.

Building faith-based knowledge is more than a casual pursuit for Lutheran Christians. It's the response to a demand that God made long ago in the Old Testament: "Impress them [these commandments] on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

I hope it doesn't come as a surprise to readers of the *Sentinel*, but the Holy Bible remains the primary source for knowledge about Jesus. If you are still in school, it may sometimes feel like this knowledge is being forced on you in the form of

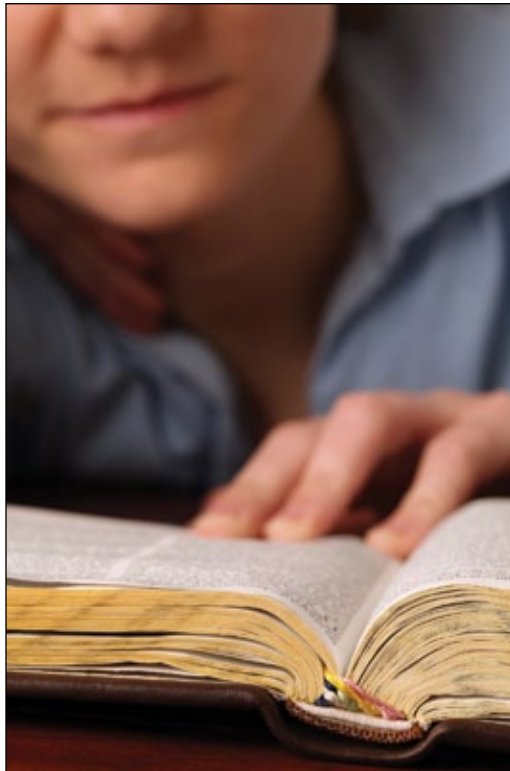
Bible history lessons, Catechism memory work, hymn study, etc. Your instructors are simply complying with the command cited above!

No matter your age, the search for knowledge requires certain attitudes—a heart that longs for knowledge, a mind that values knowledge, and a love for instruction. A person with these attitudes will make daily Bible reading a priority, utilize opportunities to study the Word of God alone and with others, and not take such opportunities for granted.

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul encouraged his young friend to pursue diligently knowledge of the Scriptures. He said, "Be diligent in these matters" (1 Timothy 4:15). If you, like Timothy, make the study of the Bible a priority, progress will be evident to you and to others. Of course, the reverse is true as well.

With the Bible as your primary resource, you can find innumerable supplements to help strengthen and focus your knowledge of Jesus and the salvation He offers to all believers. They may come in the form of commentaries, Bible storybooks, relevant articles in Christ-centered publications, or other people who are more knowledgeable than you.

For those of you who prefer reading the Bible online, there are plenty of good choices in different versions and languages. CLICK. BibleGateway.com is the one I use!



Daniel Madson is a former school teacher and a member of Abiding Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove, Wisconsin.



ELS Historical Society 2012 Meeting

Prof. Mark Harstad called the 16th annual meeting of the ELS Historical Society to order. He noted the deaths of three individuals who had taken active roles in the Society: Pres. Norman Holte, who helped start the Society; Melvina Aaberg, who helped set up the Ottesen Museum; and Albin “Red” Levorson, who served as the Society’s treasurer and was on the original board.

The Rev. David Lillegard opened the meeting with a devotion. He read John 3:16–17 and spoke about “God and People.” God loved the world because He made it and controls all things for our good, because He sent His Son to rescue us from our sins and weaknesses and because He sent the Holy Spirit to create faith so that we would believe in God’s love and salvation.

In introducing the speakers, Harstad noted that this year marked the 100th anniversary of the Rev. George O. Lillegard traveling to China as a missionary. Rev. David Lillegard and his daughter, Debbie Blumer, spoke about the pioneering days of the Lillegard family in Bode, Iowa, George Lillegard’s education at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, and his two trips to China as missionary.

From 1912 to 1915, George Lillegard served the Norwegian Synod mission in Kwangchow, China. He returned to the United States and served a congregation in Chicago while furthering his education. He also married Bernice. In 1921, they returned to China as representatives of the ELS and remained until 1927 when war between the nationalists and communists threatened the lives of all the missionaries.



Debbie Blumer and the Rev. David Lillegard



Chinese dress once owned by Mrs. Bernice Lillegard.

After the presentation, president Mark Harstad introduced the business meeting. No elections needed to be held. Treasurer Peter Anthony reported an increase in the bank balance of the society from the past year. Rebecca DeGarmeaux, director of the Ottesen Museum, reported that 400 people had visited the museum, including the Koren family, who traveled from Norway.

The meeting closed with singing “Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide” and with prayer. A delicious dinner was served in Honsey Hall for the attendees, including many descendants of George and Bernice Lillegard.





Treasurer's Report

Summary of Income from Congregations

Budget	Actual	Balance
\$725,000	\$333,673	\$391,327

Contributions for March 2012:

Congregations - Budget \$65,117

Designated Contributions

Synod Fund	\$1,481
Home Outreach	\$106
World Outreach (general)	\$1,400
Chrisitan Service	\$1,379
World Needs	\$1,583
India	\$1,915
Peru	\$65
Korea	\$1,000
Lutheran Schools of America	\$840
Cross-stitch	\$1,256
Thoughts of Faith	\$16,175

Other Revenue

Helping Hands	\$546
Thrivent	\$20,000
MAP	\$130,000
Registrations	\$25,304
Publications	\$28
Royalties	\$131

Total \$268,325

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

Memorials for June 2012

Gifts Received for the Synod in Memory of Memorial by

Marie Zawacki

Rev. Steve and Kathy Petersen - North Mankato, MN

Gifts Received for the Seminary in Memory of Memorial by

Albin Levorson

Judy Levorson - Northwood, IA
Kirsten Levorson - Rosemount, MN
Ruth Levorson - Lake Mills, IA
Phillip and Norma Petersen - Lake Mills, IA
Dale Songstad - Northwood, IA
Norman and Elizabeth Werner - Coon Rapids, MN

George Lillegard

Daniel and Alice Maxfield - Laurel, MD

Martha Mate

Kenneth and Sharon Schmidt - West Bend, WI

Phillip Yagla

Anne DeGraff - Madison, WI
Virgil Miller - Friendship, WI
Angela Roe - Madison, WI
Delores Way - Verona, WI
Joan Yagla - Madison, WI

Pastor, I Have a Question...

Question: *God forgives all our sins, even those we don't remember. Some older folks believe that, after a lifetime of being abusive and cruel, they can speak their minds after a certain age, no matter how cruel their words may be. If they continue hurting people with their words with no thought of repentance, will they be forgiven?*

Answer:

Seniors have many privileges. Businesses grant senior citizen discounts. God would have us respect them (Leviticus 19:32, 1 Timothy 5:1-2). God does not grant seniors permission to sin. God does not grant anyone permission to sin.

Throughout the history of believers, there have been some who believed God's forgiving grace was a license to sin. In His grace, God sent Jesus to rescue us from sin, death and the power of the devil. Throughout His life, Jesus obeyed God's Law without committing one sin. Upon the cross, Jesus endured the wrath of God on behalf of every single sinner. Jesus did this as our Substitute. He stood in for us.

Those who believe in Him are covered in His holiness and enjoy forgiveness. Our church proclaims this great news to all people.

Those who believe on Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit receive His gracious word of forgiveness and have eternal life. God's

grace costs Jesus His life. To us, it is free. We need not and cannot

do anything to merit God's grace. God gives us His grace and the faith by which it becomes our own.

An unbeliever might think God's free grace is an excuse to sin. This attitude is a sign of an unrepentant soul. The Augsburg Confession states,

Now, repentance consists properly of these two parts: One is contrition, that is, terrors smiting the conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, and believes that, for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven, comforts the conscience, and delivers from its terrors. The good works are bound to follow, which is the fruit of repentance (AC, Article XII, emphasis added)

Believers, born anew of water and the Holy Spirit, live a life of repentance. Dr. Luther taught us to live our Baptism, writing: "The old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts; and that a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever." This is written by St. Paul, Romans 6:4, "We are buried with Christ by baptism into death, that just as He was raised up from the

dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

We invite spiritual disaster if we grow careless about sin. By continuing in sin, excusing and defending it, we allow sin to rule in our hearts as when we were unbelievers. To persist in sin, will soon drive the Holy Spirit and faith from our lives. Paul warned, "If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die" (Romans 8:13). Stubborn, willful sin is more dangerous to faith than sins of weakness. For the latter, we flee to Jesus' cross for mercy. For the former, we do not.

This sounds paradoxical but it is true: if we treat sin as the evil it is and run to our Savior's gracious arms, it cannot harm us.

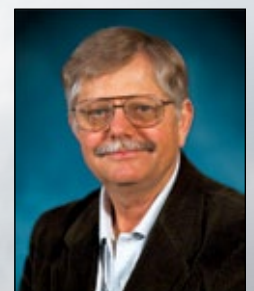
Christ has paid for it all! If we treat sin as harmless and defend and excuse it, we give sin the power to destroy us in hell.

Mature, aging, long-time believers pray for the help of the Holy Spirit to grow in love and mercy. We rejoice that Jesus forgives all sins, even persistent sins with which we struggle but we long for change. St. Peter speaks of our struggle this way: "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." (1 Peter 2:1-3).

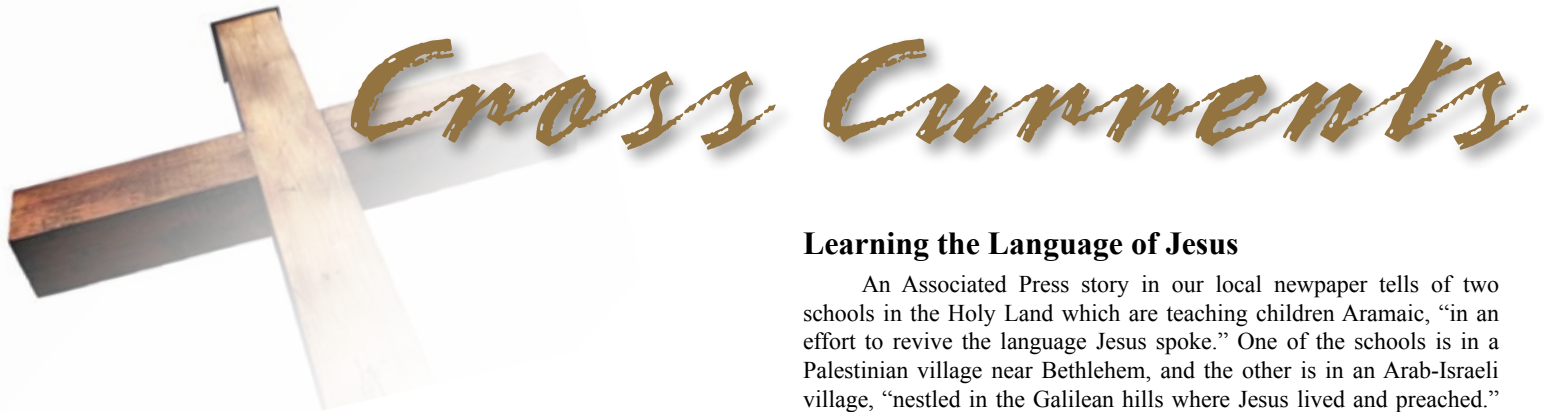


Send your questions to:

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



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



An Atheist “Encourages” Bible Reading

On the surface, an editorial entitled “Why I want all our children to read the King James Bible,” might sound like a good thing. But if the writer behind this bit of seeming encouragement is the noted atheist, Richard Dawkins, the reader may want to exercise a certain amount of skepticism as to his motive. Dawkins was prompted to write the article for the British paper *The Guardian* in response to a proposed plan by the British Secretary of Education, Michael Grove, which would put a King James Bible in every state school in Britain. To sum up Grove’s reasoning for such a plan is best stated in his own words: “The King James Bible has had a profound impact on our culture.”

Dawkins used this proposal (to place a Bible in all the country’s schools) as an occasion to do his customary caustic critique of things sacred. Why, then, would Dawkins want children (or anyone) to read the Bible? His answer: “People who do not know the Bible well have been galled into thinking it is a good guide to morality... The surest way to disabuse yourself of this pernicious falsehood is to read the Bible itself.” He refers to the instances in the Old Testament where God’s people were directed to destroy their enemy and, without any attempt to understand God’s purposes, he adds cynically, “Such wonderful moral lessons: all children should be exposed to them.” He then proceeds to make fun of other examples in the Old Testament by putting the worst construction on them, without trying to understand them or to acknowledge that all people have in them the seed of original sin.

The New Testament does not escape Dawkin’s vitriol either. Here he touches upon the central doctrine of the Christian faith, that God sent His Son into the world to redeem sinful mankind through His suffering and death. Again, Dawkins dismisses this teaching with characteristic sarcasm: “God, the all powerful creator, capable of moving mountains and of begetting a universe with all the laws of physics, couldn’t find a better way to lift the burden of sin than a blood sacrifice.” He calls the Bible “a great work of literature” but “not a moral book,” and says that young people need to know this. As for his negative comments, he claims they are only the tip of “a very large and very nasty iceberg,” which the young readers presumably will discover for themselves.

So much for the vain rantings from a British atheist. Caught up in his own cleverness, he may have outsmarted himself. For what he has not reckoned with is that the Book he so derides, except for what he considers its “literary quality,” is not just any book, but it is the vehicle of the Holy Spirit. Whoever reads this Book, be it for whatever reason, can by the grace of God be made wise unto salvation. Many, like Dawkins, in sinful pride and spiritual blindness refuse to believe. On the other hand, countless others have come to believe the Gospel of Christ, “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). So to the children of Great Britain (and of the world) we say: “Read on!”

Learning the Language of Jesus

An Associated Press story in our local newspaper tells of two schools in the Holy Land which are teaching children Aramaic, “in an effort to revive the language Jesus spoke.” One of the schools is in a Palestinian village near Bethlehem, and the other is in an Arab-Israeli village, “nestled in the Galilean hills where Jesus lived and preached.” It is known that at the time of Christ the Aramaic language was spoken throughout Palestine, and therefore it very likely was the language used by the Lord Himself. He spoke in the language of the people so that they might better understand Him.

As might be expected, there has been some opposition to the teaching of Aramaic in these schools. Thus it is reported, “The issue is sensitive to many Arab Muslims and Christians in Israel, who prefer to be identified by their ethnicity, not their faith.” The Aramaic dialect used in the two schools mentioned above is “Syriac,” and this is said to resemble the Galilean dialect that Jesus would have used. One language expert at Hebrew University in Jerusalem said of Jesus and these school children, “They probably would have understood each other.”

We know that Jesus understands children. What, of course, is most important is that they and all children should learn to understand Him by reading and hearing His Word, for He has said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14).

Migrating Christians—A Possible Blessing

A study by the Pew Forum, tracking the world’s migrating populations, finds that people of the Jewish faith have a 25 percent migration rate, to lead in that category. A distant second in percentage of migration is the Christian population. It is estimated that of the Christians alive today (i.e., those classified as “Christian”) 106 million have switched countries, and their top destination is the United States. Of the foreign-born people living in the U. S., it is estimated that 74 percent (43 million) are Christian. Catholic Mexico rates as the highest “donor” of Christian immigrants to the U. S., but there are many from other countries as well. Buddhists and Hindus rank second and third among immigrants to the U. S., followed by Muslims. The U. S. is also the top choice for immigrants with no religion (4 million) and many of these come from China.

Europe is also a favorite destination for many newcomers, and churches that once had become virtually empty have been given new life. In Denmark, for instance, “once empty church pews ring with children’s voices,” immigrants from Burma and Korea. It is said of Copenhagen that immigrants make up more than half of the church attenders there. As for the country at large, more than 200 migrant Christian churches now dot the landscape. If the effect of Christian migrants upon Denmark is any measuring stick, it would appear that immigration can sometimes bring with it a much needed spiritual “shot in the arm.”



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

FROM THE EDITOR...

Vocation Opportunities

What does God expect us to do in our lives so that we can have salvation? Nothing! Because Jesus has done it all. He has perfectly kept God's Law so that by His obedience Jesus provided the righteousness needed to meet the holy requirements of the Law (Romans 5:19). Then Jesus carried our sins to the cross. As our Substitute, Jesus paid the ransom price of our sins, not with gold or silver, but with His precious blood, as our Passover Lamb, who was without blemish or sin (2 Peter 1:19). Then God sent the Holy Spirit to create faith in our hearts through His Word and Baptism. This divinely-given faith trusts in Jesus as the Savior from sin and death. God declares that those who believe on the Son are justified and forgiven of all their sins. With regards to our justification, God does everything and gives it to us.

In respect to our life as God's children, what does God expect of us? Everything! For St. Paul says that since we have been united with Christ by Baptism, we are joined with His death. "Likewise, you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:11). This means that sin shall not have dominion or rule over us (Romans 6:9). This is the teaching of sanctification, which God works in us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

The problem is that God's justified and sanctified children live in a wicked world, hounded by the devil and troubled by their sinful nature. The Holy Spirit created in believers a new spiritual life that desires to please God and do His holy will. But St. Paul describes the battle that waged inside him: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find" (Romans 7:18). God's children are delivered from this problem by faith in Christ as our death and life.

As Christians, we are to carry out the different vocations that God has given to us. Our first vocation is to be children of God. This means that we follow the voice of our Good Shepherd (John 10:27), proclaim the praises of our Savior (1 Peter 2:9), love one another as Jesus has loved us (John

15:12), continue in prayer for all people (1 Timothy 2:1-2), "put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another...even as Christ forgave" us (Colossians 12-13), and "giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

The above is a rather short list of instructions God has given to His children in how they can serve their neighbors. Through His Word, the Holy Spirit motivates them to show fruits of faith—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness (Galatians 5:22). When God's children carry out their God-

given vocations as spouse, parent, worker, neighbor, Sunday School teacher, choir member, etc., the people are to see God's glory in their lives. They are a light shining on a hill, so that those around us will also glorify and worship God.

Now, our neighbors may be so busy that they don't see our light. Or we may try to hide it so no one thinks that we are too religious. St. Paul urges us, "do not grow weary in doing good" (2 Thessalonians 3:13) even when others do not notice. For God Himself knows all that we do to serve Him in love.

Our worship, our work in vocations, our love for our families, our engaging others with Jesus, and our care for people around us—these activities express our love for God and the salvation He has given to us in Jesus. They are opportunities to work within our vocation as God's children.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE TO CARRY OUT THE DIFFERENT VOCATIONS THAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO US. OUR FIRST VOCATION IS TO BE CHILDREN OF GOD.



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

Log Cabin Presentation



Mrs. Becky DeGarmeaux

The fourth annual Log Cabin event started at 5:15 p.m. on June 17, 2012, on the lawn behind the Ottesen Museum. A break in the afternoon rains allowed a crowd of 150 people to enjoy the late afternoon event.

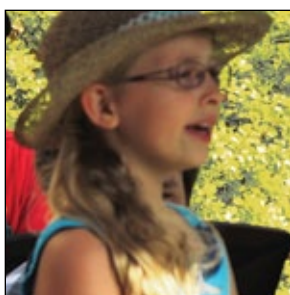
Folk music, prairie flowers, pistols, and folk dance were part of the Synod Sunday Festival program. Prof. Mark Harstad, president of the Historical Society Board of Directors and Becky DeGarmeaux, director of the Ottesen Museum, introduced the different parts of the program.

Mrs. Carolyn Harstad presented information about what the American Midwest prairie vegetation looked like to the pioneers. Daniel Ruiz and Andrew Soule sang a humorous song about the failed attempt by Norwegian violinist Ole Bull to establish a utopian socialist colony in Pennsylvania in the 1850s. Ross Hermanson demonstrated the use of several antique black powder handguns from his extensive collection. Members of the audience were allowed to fire the pistols.

A lively group of musicians made merry music. Playing violins were Lydia Petersen, James and Matthew Strom, and Maddy and Daniel Halvorson. John Halvorson played string bass, while Loren Halvorson and Herman Harstad played guitar and Mark Harstad played mandolin. They also accompanied the six dancers from the Mankato Nordic Dancers and Maddy Halvorson as she sang the Norwegian folk song "Per Spelman."



Prof. Mark Harstad



Maddy Halvorson



Mrs. Carolyn Harstad



Mankato Nordic Dancers



Musicians at the "Log Cabin"



Daniel Ruiz and Andrew Soule singing.



Mrs. Kellar Tjernagel shooting one of Ross Hermanson's black powder pistols.

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