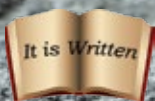


February 2012

# Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

*"Engage Others with Jesus."*



**"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me." (Psalm 51:10-11)**

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## Lutheran Sentinel

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# From the President

Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

Rollercoasters and my stomach do not agree. Yielding to peer pressure as a teen to ride the curvy rails, I was thankful that no videotape documented my white-knuckled grip with eyes glued shut. You, on the other hand, could well have enjoyed such a thrill—at least you *said* you did!

Sometimes our religious or spiritual lives can seem like a rollercoaster ride. This type of ride is never fun. One moment you are at an uplifting church service; a day or two later you are hit with devastating news. One day you are sharing the love of Christ with a needy soul; on another, you might find yourself complaining as if God did not care.

Transfiguration Sunday, February 19, is a high point in our church year. But don't forget the previous week, as explained in Matthew 16. St. Peter was on a spiritual rollercoaster. At the peak, he made a great confession: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus commended this bold affirmation of faith and spoke of giving out the keys of the kingdom. Moments later, Jesus explained how He as Savior would need to suffer, die and rise again. Peter's feelings took a serious dive. He objected to his Lord, “This shall never happen to you!” The coaster sank even deeper when Jesus said to him, “Get behind me, Satan!” Peter wanted glory for Jesus, but did not fully grasp the mission of the cross and what this would mean for Him, for you and me, and for the whole world of sinners. Then, in just a matter of days, Peter's soul coaster was at an apex. Peter, James and John witnessed the brilliance of Jesus' divine majesty on top of a high mountain. What a sight it must have been (Matthew 17:2)! Read what Peter later wrote in 2 Peter 1:16–21.



When we have our own up and down moments, let us not forget the critical juxtaposition of Jesus' description of His death at Calvary—what Peter mistakenly saw as a low point—and the high mountain experience of glory. The One who goes to the cross on His resolute mission to pay in full the price of justice for our sins is the One who possesses the full power and majesty of the universe. If *God* goes to the cross and sheds blood for us, how can we fail to have forgiveness for every sin and the certainty of His everlasting love? This He did for Peter and for *us!* This He did for all.

A Bible scholar classified the Transfiguration of Jesus as a “beacon-fire” moment. In Old Testament times, the Jews had a custom of lighting beacon-fires from hill to hill, announcing to those at a distance from Jerusalem the approaching day of a feast. Alfred Edersheim says, “So does the glory kindled on the Mount of Transfiguration shine through the darkness of the world and tell of the Resurrection Day.”

Can we *engage others with Jesus*, serving as beacon-fires?



*John A. Moldstad*  
John A. Moldstad

# Loving Christ and Living Lent

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The woman just could not help herself. As the crowd watched with astonishment, she rushed forward with a jar of perfume, fell on her knees weeping, “and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.” Some of the onlookers rolled their eyes, muttering. Didn’t Jesus know what kind of woman this was, making such a shameful show with unfurled hair and sobs at His feet?

The Savior knew why she showed such love, “her sins, which are many, are forgiven” (Luke 7:38, 47). This woman had lived a notoriously sinful and immoral life. She knew she could not help herself. She felt her guilt; she knew her well-deserved condemnation. But the Holy Spirit had changed everything by bringing her to repentance and to faith in the Savior. She could not help herself. She would display her unashamed love and devotion at the feet of this Savior who bore her awful load of sins away from her to the cross.

Mary could not help herself, either. Jesus was dining at the home of her brother Lazarus, “whom He had raised from the dead.” To the shock of His disciples, “Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair.” Again, criticism arose at such a show of unfurled hair and emotions—and waste. Judas objected, “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” After all, it was worth a whole year’s wages!

However, the Savior understood why she showed such love: “Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial” (John 12:1–7). Mary had experienced the sorrows of living in a fallen world under the curse of sin; she had seen death up close. She knew she could not help herself. She knew her sin and mortality. But the Holy Spirit had filled her heart with hope as she sat at Jesus’ feet, listening to His words of eternal life (Luke 10:39). She had seen what happened when Jesus spoke His powerful Word and called her brother out of the tomb (John 11:43–44). She could not help herself. She would display unashamed love and devotion at the feet of this Savior who had come to reverse the curse and give eternal life.

During the season of Lent, we join our hearts with these women in the same spirit of repentance, love for the Savior, and unashamed devotion to Him.

For who of us can help ourselves with sin? We all know our personal struggle with sin and we have felt the sorrows of life under its curse. Maybe there are people who know our shameful past and roll their eyes, muttering, “Who does he think he is, going to church?” Maybe there

are memories that are too painful for us to handle. Perhaps no one understands why Jesus is so important to us.

But the Savior understands as we wet His feet with our tears of repentance, for He has born the whole awful load of our sin away from us to the cross. He understands as we anoint Him with the rich fragrance of thankful hearts, for He has anointed us with His priceless blood to declare us redeemed and forgiven. He understands as we bow to devote our heads and our whole life to His service, for He has devoted His head and His whole life to serve us with His victory in eternal life.

We just cannot help ourselves. The more we focus on the sacrificial love of our Savior, the more we are moved to respond by loving Christ and living Lent.



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**Glenn Smith** is pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in New Hampton, Iowa, and Trinity Lutheran Church in Calmar, Iowa.

# Matthew: Jesus Chooses a Tax Collector!

Who hasn't heard a candidate for public office promise to reform the tax code? Citizens and businesses hire professionals who are well-informed about the law and calculate the taxes they owe. In America, tax forms can be complicated. Taxes are nothing new; just read Exodus 30:11-16; 1 Kings 12:4; 2 Kings 12:10, 23:35; Matthew 17:24-27, 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 2:1-5; 20:22; Acts 5:37 and Romans 13:7.

During the days of the apostles, the tax system was no less troublesome. Palestine was occupied by Rome. Tax collectors were issued contracts by Caesar to collect taxes. Tax collectors could tax people for their use of roads and bridges, their goods, their animals and methods of transportation. Some were accused of inventing taxes. Some, like Zacchaeus, were chief tax collectors and were rich. Others, like Matthew, sat in tax collection booths along roads to collect the tolls.

An occupied country, especially that of the deeply nationalistic Jews, resented tax collectors. The Jews often spoke of them in the same breath with sinners. It was assumed that they were dishonest. One of the most often repeated complaints against Jesus was that He was "a friend of tax collectors and sinners." It is very telling that Jesus called Matthew (also known as Levi) to follow Him while he was sitting in his tax office along a trade route that ran past Capernaum (Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27) and chose him to be one of the twelve (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18 and Acts 1:13).

God did use and can still use the skills, talents and treasures of His disciples. They, after all, belong to Him (Psalm 24:1). He can also supply the grace and gifts needed to work His will through His servants. Tax collectors had to be good at writing and keeping accurate records; these skills would help Matthew as he carried out his office as an apostle and evangelist. According to Papias, the bishop of Hieropolis in Asia Minor during the first and second centuries, Matthew made a collection of the sayings of Jesus in Hebrew.

The readiness with which Matthew responded to Jesus' call tells us that he was familiar with Jesus and His teachings, that the Spirit was at work in his heart, and that he treasured his Savior. His subsequent actions provide

insight into his spiritual convictions, his genuine love for his colleagues and the evangelical ministry of Jesus:

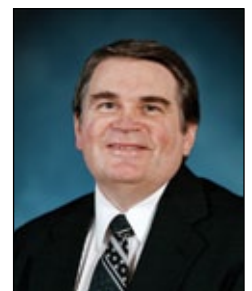
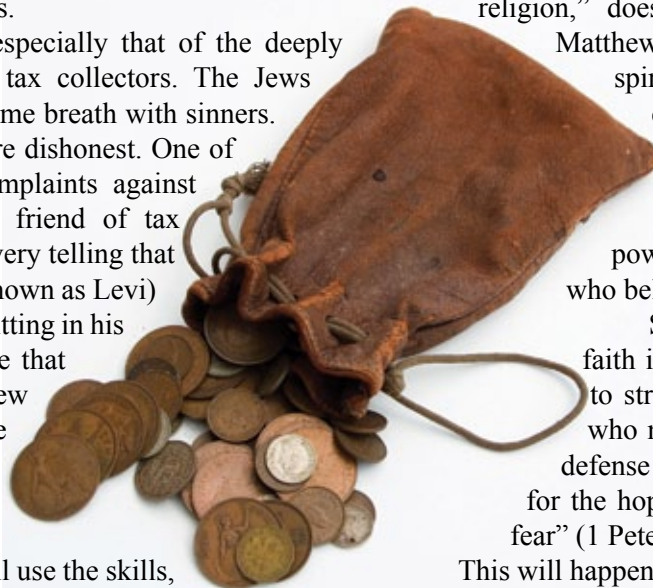
"Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:29-32).

The popular saying, "Never discuss politics or religion," does not seem to be a principle that Matthew embraced. He could not keep his spiritual convictions and his genuine concern for his associates in separate compartments. St. Paul said much the same thing: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

St. Peter tells us that revealing our faith is not always a wooden proclamation to strangers, but a response to the people who notice it: "Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

This will happen naturally when people come to know us. Disciples simply cannot and will not hide their faith (Matthew 5:14-16). Their light shines, not in order to be seen by men for their own personal advantage (Matthew 6:5-18), but that men might "give glory to God."

Matthew had a sincere faith and it could be seen in his Spirit-worked response to Jesus' call. Christ's disciples share in the desire to tell others about Jesus as God gives them the grace and the opportunity to serve Him.



**Thomas Smuda** is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in Deshler, Ohio.

# “Learning to Engage Others With Jesus”

## *Is It Evangelism or Outreach?*

Please peruse the following list and ask yourself this question: Are the activities on the list below evangelism or outreach?

1. Inviting a friend to church.
2. Printing an ad in the local yellow pages.
3. Participating in a local parade.

Evangelism or outreach? We aren't always careful with how we use these terms. They are often used interchangeably. However, an important distinction needs to be made between them. The purpose of this article is to help you distinguish between evangelism and outreach as you engage others with Jesus.

**Evangelism**, in its narrowest definition, is “proclaiming the good news.” The good news, that is, the gospel, is the message that Jesus lived, died and rose from the dead to save all people from their sins. Therefore, any proclamation of this message—whether by means of print or voice—is evangelism.

**Outreach** is, again speaking narrowly, “making contact with people.” Outreach focuses on gaining an audience. By this definition, we may consider outreach to be “pre-evangelism.”

With these two definitions, you can see how closely evangelism and outreach are connected: Evangelism requires an audience, and outreach without a message is pointless. To fulfill the “great commission” of our Lord, the church needs to do both.

Why is this distinction important? Consider the following fictional example:

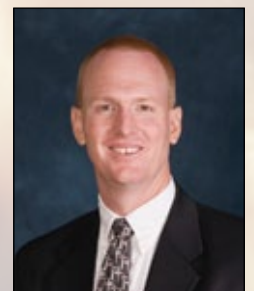
Good News Lutheran Church has a food shelf. It is well organized and stocked. The congregation sincerely desires to make a difference in their community and help those in need. The program has been very successful, gaining the congregation a reputation as “the church that feeds the hungry.” By default, it has fallen to the overworked church secretary to field the requests and distribute the food. She doesn't have the time to dedicate to witnessing the Gospel to the recipients, so they often leave grateful for the food, but without hearing about Jesus.

Is this outreach or evangelism? Clearly, in this example it is outreach without evangelism. The message is missing! The congregation, though well-meaning, is feeding the body but leaving the soul hungry. People are not being engaged with Jesus.

What could be done to realize the full potential of this program? Printed gospel material could be placed in every bag of groceries. A volunteer with time and training could distribute the food and make sure that every recipient is engaged with Jesus. Every food recipient could be added to the “Good News Lutheran Church” prospect list so that a one-time contact turns into a lifetime of invitations and opportunities.

This same analysis can be applied to your personal life and vocation. You may take a plate of cookies to the new neighbors, mow the neighbor's lawn, volunteer at a nursing home or be kind to a coworker—that's outreach. Once you have established a rapport with them, you engage them with Jesus—that's evangelism.

It is important to distinguish between outreach and evangelism. Each has its own purpose. Outreach provides the audience; evangelism provides the message. With these activities properly defined and used, your outreach and evangelism efforts *will* engage others with Jesus.



**Timothy Hartwig** is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in North Mankato, Minnesota.

# The Divine Necessity That Jesus Be God and Man

The sainted Martin Chemnitz wrote these important and precise words for the church of our century to ponder concerning the teaching of Jesus' Person:

It will be useful to keep in mind the reasons why it was necessary for our Mediator, Redeemer, and Savior to be not only God or only man and why the divine and human natures had to be united in the person of the Mediator.

- Because human nature was doomed to eternal punishment in accord with the sentence of divine judgment spoken on the day when Adam fell, therefore the Son of God offered Himself for the assumption of human nature...
- Because human nature after the fall was subject to the wrath of God and damnation, it was necessary that our Mediator make satisfaction for us in the human nature.
- Because human nature...became the body of sin and death, therefore the Son of God, in turn, willed to condemn sin and to abolish death... by going through death to life to restore the human nature.
- Because human nature in Adam... turned from God through sin, therefore the Son of God in His own person again united human nature with the divine nature.

Dr. Chemnitz formulated these powerful thoughts from God's comforting biblical foundation: "For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). Also, "[God] made Him to be sin for us, He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Since the Bible clearly states the reason why Christ's human nature satisfies the law's requirements for saving sinners, why then was it necessary that the divine nature

of God's Son be united with it? For the Bible says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Dr. Chemnitz answers on the basis of Scripture:

- Because there would not have been an adequate ransom for sin and God's wrath, which are boundless.... For this reason, therefore, the price is so great and the merit of the suffering and death of Christ [is so great] that it [the merit] is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. For the Son of God suffered and died in His own flesh.
- Because the creature [Christ's human nature] by itself could not have borne the enormous burden of the wrath of God which was owed for the sins of the entire world. The human nature by itself could not have removed sin, overcome... death, or crushed the serpent's head. These works require divine power.

God has inspired the words of Scripture noted above for the consolation of sinners. They are the very foundation of our faith: "In Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

Quotations are from the book, "The Two Natures of Christ" by Martin Chemnitz, pp. 147-148; transl. by J.A.O. Preus, CPH:1971.



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

# Ash Wednesday: Come In Sorrow and Contrition

**February 22:** On this day the Christian church on earth begins the season of Lent. During the next forty days (plus Sundays) it has long been the custom to recall and contemplate the sufferings and death of Christ Jesus. Needless to say, the mood of the season is one of sorrow and mourning, but the sufferings and death of Christ Jesus are not the reasons for sorrow.

The Christian church calls the first day of the Lenten season Ash Wednesday. As early as the eighth century, Christians have had ashes applied to their heads on Ash Wednesday as a sign of their sorrow and contrition. The abbot Aelfric (955-1020) explained: “We read in the books both in the Old Law and in the New that the men who repented of their sins bestrewed themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins” (Retrieved from: <http://www.orthodox.org/html/ash.html>). The book of Job contains an example of what the Christian church sought to imitate. Having been rebuked by God, Job confesses, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

It may not be our custom today to apply ashes, but the message of Lent remains the same. On Ash Wednesday, God’s Word reminds us that we—as sinners—need a Savior. As we ponder our sinfulness and its consequences, we should be moved to sorrow and contrition before God.

Most people understand that contrition over sin involves feelings of sorrow and guilt. Job expressed such sorrow. Sensing his guilt and shame, Peter went out and wept bitterly (Luke 22:62).

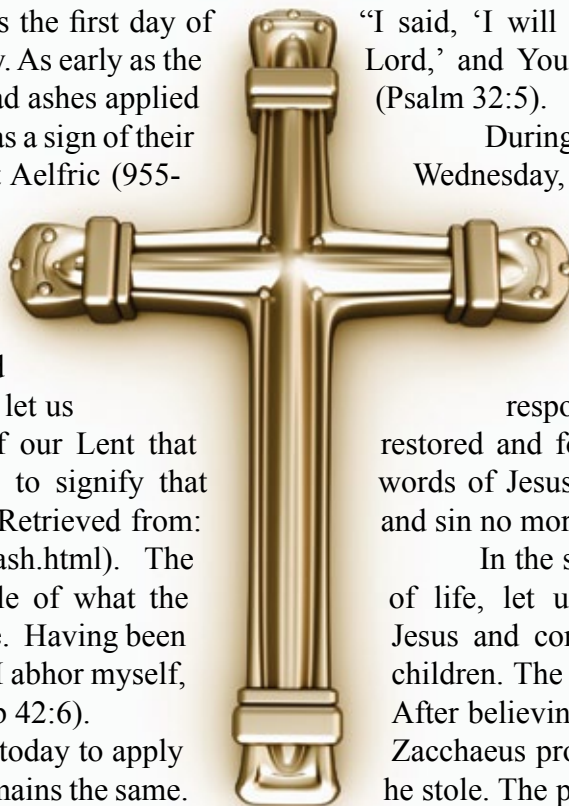
But true contrition involves faith in God’s solution to our sinfulness. The Apostle Paul serves as an example: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world

to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15). Without faith in Christ Jesus as Savior, there is no genuine contrition and the individual remains in sin. Judas Iscariot, the son of perdition (John 17:12), regretted betraying Jesus, but did not believe and committed suicide instead. However, by faith in Jesus, we join with other Christians echoing the psalmist: “I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:5).

During the Divine Service on Ash Wednesday, or prior to Holy Communion, the pastor may ask us, “Do you promise that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will amend your sinful life?” Our answer, “I do so promise,” is the Christian’s response to God’s mercy. Redeemed, restored and forgiven, we are motivated by the words of Jesus, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” (John 8:11).

In the spirit of contrition and amendment of life, let us follow the example of Christ Jesus and conduct ourselves as His own dear children. The Gospels show us many examples. After believing in Christ Jesus, the tax collector Zacchaeus promised to repay those from whom he stole. The prodigal son was willing to humble himself to become a bond-servant. In His *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus urged, “If you...remember that your brother has something against you...be reconciled to your brother” (Matthew 5:23–24).

With all this in mind, may this Ash Wednesday be a grand opportunity for repentance and spiritual renewal in Christ Jesus our Lord.



**Bruce Schwark** is pastor of Pinehurst Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

# A Record to Lose

*"If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" (Psalm 130:3)*

Do you hold any records of which you're particularly proud? Perhaps you were a very gifted student and got straight A's all the way through school. Maybe as a driver, you have never received a speeding ticket or a citation of any kind. Perhaps you were part of a safety record in a manufacturing plant or another place of employment—hundreds of days of operation without any accidents of any kind. Could it be that you were part of a team that amassed a flawless record over the course of a season?

Records are often a source of pride, and rightly so. Other records, however, are noteworthy for less appealing reasons. Mankato, Minnesota, was the site of the largest mass execution in United States history (that record still stands). Frank Tanana, a long-time Detroit Tiger pitcher, is in the record books as third on the all-time list of "home runs allowed" in a career. When I was in high school, a little college nearby hadn't won a game in over 7 seasons, a new collegiate record! That dubious distinction even earned them some ink in *Sports Illustrated* that year.

Some records are much better when they are lost. That is the kind of record the psalmist speaks about—a *record of sins* against the Lord God. Can you imagine what your rap sheet would look like? We should pause to consider, with the psalmist, all of the sinful thoughts that have entered our minds, the wicked words that have toppled off of our tongues, the atrocious actions that have been produced by our hands—and not just today, but a *life-long record*. Who of us could stand before God with such a record of wrongdoing against us? The question requires no answer, of course. Even a record tsunami could not produce a fraction of the destruction that our record of sin deserves. There would be no one left standing before God.

But the operative word from the psalmist is the little one, "if." "If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins..." Did the Lord God lose His homework somewhere? Did He misplace His log-book, His record of sins? While it is true that the record is gone, it certainly wasn't misplaced or lost. It was the Lord's good and gracious purpose that it be lost. "With the Lord there is forgiveness." Forgiveness speaks not to an accidental losing—not to an absent-minded misplacing. Forgiveness says the Lord arranged for this devastating record to be taken away to spare sinners like you and me from destruction and death.



Paul elaborates a bit on the Lord's forgiveness plan, saying, "God made you alive with Christ. He forgave you all your sins...that stood opposed to you; He took it away, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13-14). Our record of sin wasn't

lost, but the punishment of its guilt was lost to you and me. Jesus, the Christ, took it upon Himself. Like the Israelites' scapegoat, Jesus took that sin and guilt away from you and me to a solitary place, to the cross. There He willingly absorbed the punishment of sin for you and me. Your record of sins did not get lost. Look to Christ and His cross—that is where you'll find your record. It has been taken away by the Lamb of God—Jesus Christ!



**Kyle Madson** is co-pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Frankenmuth, Michigan.



# On the Synodical Scene...

## Ordination in Kissimmee, Florida

On Sunday, January 1, 2012, Candidate of Theology Matthew Moldstad was ordained and installed as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in Kissimmee, Florida. Circuit visitor, the Rev. Herbert Huhnerkoch, served as the liturgist; the Rev. Gaylin Schmeling, president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, served as lector; and the Rev. John Moldstad, father of the candidate and president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, conducted the ordination and installation and delivered the sermon based on 1 Timothy 4:16, titled “Inspired Advice for Your Ministry.” Other ELS pastors of Circuit 1 who participated in the laying on of hands were the Reverends Brian Klebig, Charles Keeler, David Lillegard, Matthew Luttman, Andrew Palmquist and Timothy Schmeling. Mrs. Jean McMurdie played the organ and the Peace Lutheran Adult Choir sang.

The “Circle of Peace” women’s group prepared and served a delicious ham dinner. Congregational president Herb Berg emceed a brief ‘roast’ following the dinner.



**(Front Row, L to R):** the Reverends Herbert Huhnerkoch, John Moldstad, Matthew Moldstad, Gaylin Schmeling and David Lillegard. **(Back Row, L to R):** The Reverends Matthew Luttman, Andrew Palmquist, Brian Klebig, Timothy Schmeling and Charles Keeler.

## Elizabeth A. Honsey (1923—2012)



Elizabeth A. Honsey was born in Ichange, China, to the Rev. George and Bernice (Onstad) Lillegard on October 8, 1923. She attended Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota; Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts; and Mankato State University, Mankato, Minnesota. She was united in marriage to the Rev. Rudolph Honsey in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Lord blessed them with five children and 61 years of marriage.

Elizabeth taught at Lutheran Parochial schools in Clinton, Iowa, and Mankato, Minnesota. She was a member of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato, Minnesota. She is survived by her husband, Rudolph Honsey; five children, nine grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren; and two sisters and two brothers, including the Rev. David Lillegard.

Elizabeth was called to heaven on January 10, 2012. Funeral services were held at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota, on January 14 with the Rev. John Petersen officiating.

## Mrs. Harriet Handberg (1926–2012)

Harriet Lucille Handberg died on January 11, 2012. Memorial services were held on January 16 at Parkland Lutheran Church, Parkland, Washington, and at King of Grace Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, Minnesota. She was interred at Crystal Lake Cemetery, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Harriet was born in Madison, South Dakota, on March 11, 1926, to the Rev. Walter Nitschke and Alma Froemming Nitschke. She attended Bethany Lutheran High School in Mankato, Minnesota, and graduated from Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. She was united in marriage to Hugo Handberg on June 30, 1950 and they were blessed with six children. Her husband served the Mayville, North Dakota/East Grand Forks, Minnesota parish; Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota; and Parkland Lutheran Church, Parkland, Washington.



She was preceded in death by her husband Hugo and grandson Nathan. She is survived by her six sons and six grandchildren.

# Pastor, I Have a Question...

## Am I a Goat or a Sheep?

**Question:** *At the end of the church year, I heard a lesson about sheep and goats. I am worried that I am a goat. How can I know?*

**Answer:**

Jesus told us what would happen on the day of Judgment: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” (Matthew 25:31–33).

We should be concerned about being numbered with goats. Goats are people who will not inherit eternal life. They are the condemned. Jesus will pass this judgment on them: “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...And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life’” (Matthew 25:41, 46).

Since Adam’s fall into sin, all people born in a natural way deserve to hear this sentence from God. Created in the image of God, Adam passed on his own image to his offspring and all those born after him (Genesis 5:3). Fallen humanity lives under sin’s curse, punishment and death. “The soul that sins, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4), “The wages of sin are death” (Romans 6:23) and the Bible teaches, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

God teaches these frightening things to call us to repentance, to sorrow over our sins and to confess them before the almighty Maker. In order to prepare the world for Jesus, John the Baptizer preached this message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matthew 3:2). Jesus repeated that message as He began His public ministry (see Matthew 4:17).

God does not want anyone to be a “goat.” He does not delight in the death of sinners (see Ezekiel 33:11 and 1 Timothy 2:4). This is why God’s Son was born and revealed as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

During Epiphany, we learn how Jesus grew to manhood, the obedient child. As Lent begins, we hear how Jesus perfectly resisted Satan’s temptations. For in a garden, Adam fell. In the wilderness, Adam’s greater Son, Jesus, resisted and conquered temptation.

Jesus did all this for us in our place. He obeyed His Father. He completely resisted all evil. He substituted Himself for us. God applies Jesus’ perfection and His holiness to us by faith.

Furthermore, Jesus suffered the punishment we sinners deserve. Jesus became the Goat when Roman soldiers nailed Him to the cross. He was there in our place. Jesus suffered in full for us all the judgment and punishment that “goats” will endure on Judgment Day.

God makes us His sheep by faith in Jesus. We can live and die, confident that we are forgiven and heaven-bound because of all that Jesus did for us. Indeed, we are already eternal by faith in the Savior.

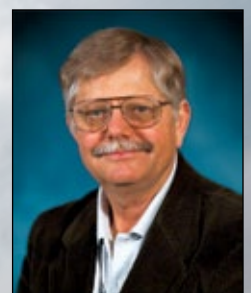
We repent of our sins by giving them to Jesus. We have saving faith when we know God has applied Jesus’ holiness and sacrifice to our account. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16). Jesus said this—Believe Him!

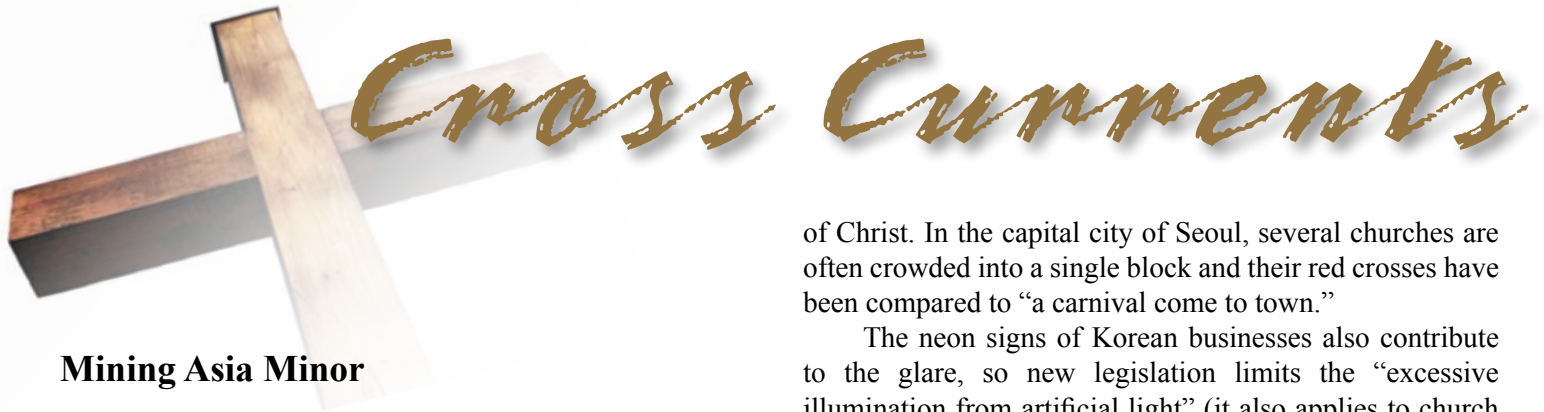


**Send your questions to:**

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

## Mining Asia Minor

Earthquakes are fearsome and tragic, but they may also produce unexpected benefits. The recent 7.2 earthquake in Turkey raised concern over what the earthquake may have done to archaeological ruins in the region once known as Asia Minor. The city of Van, at the epicenter of the quake, has an important excavation that did not suffer quake damage, according to early reports.

A surge of archaeological activity in Turkey has developed recently. The director of the Asia Minor Research Center states that more than 200 excavations existed last year, whereas in 1990 the number was only 38. In the ruins of Antioch of Pisidia, archaeologists found a 4th century church. Pisidia is the city where St. Paul delivered his longest sermon recorded in the New Testament. After speaking about Jesus' death and resurrection, Paul added: "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). When the Jewish hearers rejected this message, the apostle declared, "Behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). The church ruins discovered at Antioch could well represent one of the first communities of Gentile Christians.

Another unexcavated site now drawing the archaeologists' attention is the city of Colosse. At one time, it was a thriving community to which Paul wrote a letter. The hill of grass and flowers now awaits the ongoing process of mining the archaeological treasures of Asia Minor.

## South Koreans Oppose the Red Cross

Why would South Koreans be opposed to the Red Cross agency? In reality, they are not. The "cross" they oppose is the red neon crosses which sit atop many of that nation's Christian churches. The reports state, "tens of thousands of churches dot South Korea, most with their own red neon crosses." The color is red to signify the blood

of Christ. In the capital city of Seoul, several churches are often crowded into a single block and their red crosses have been compared to "a carnival come to town."

The neon signs of Korean businesses also contribute to the glare, so new legislation limits the "excessive illumination from artificial light" (it also applies to church signs) by requiring that outdoor lights be shut off by 11:00 pm. This legislation addresses the complaint that "Churches are ignoring neighbors who struggle to sleep with the red neon lights shining through their bedroom windows." Some feel that churches should be exempt and that dimming the crosses is an attack on religious freedom. A government spokesman replied that the ruling was not meant to be anti-Christian.

We can sympathize with those who find solace in the lighted crosses. As one South Korean put it, "Those crosses are a symbol of hope." For the Christian, of course, the cross of Christ is always a symbol of hope, "the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). No matter what may happen to the neon crosses of this world, the light of that true Cross can never be extinguished.

## No Churches Left

The U.S. State Department reports that no Christian church buildings exist in Afghanistan. The last church was torn down in March 2010. This situation is due to Taliban influence and a lack of governmental protection. Christian groups must endure repression, negative societal opinion and suspicion; therefore, most Afghan Christians refuse to worship openly.

One anonymous informant states, "While the church may be disappearing, the Church is growing." He explains, "It's not easy, and there are no staggering numbers, but there are groups of believers meeting in houses, in parks, in secret. The Church is growing." Thus, while no church buildings in Afghanistan exist, the holy Christian Church remains. Our Lord has said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18).



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

# The “Lutheran Gospel in a Nutshell”

*“I forgive you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

We have all heard of the phrase, “The Gospel in a nutshell.” The origin of the phrase is uncertain, but Christians have been using it in reference to John 3:16 for many years.

However, years before, Martin Luther summed up the Gospel in perhaps the most succinct axiom in the history of the Christian Church: “Where there is forgiveness, there is life and salvation.” These few words stand in the context of the Sixth Chief part of our Lutheran Catechism—the Lord’s Supper (*ELS Catechism*, pg. 201).

While Martin Luther attached his Gospel axiom in the *Catechism* specifically to the Lord’s Supper, this same axiom remains true in whatever form the Gospel is administered, such as Baptism and Holy Absolution.

Interestingly, the Lutheran “Gospel in a nutshell” is quite unique to Christendom. Many other churches and denominations teach a “gospel” that shifts the words of Luther’s axiom around, thus muting and destroying the true Gospel. For example, the call for a “decision for Christ” from poor, troubled sinners turns Luther’s axiom (and the Gospel) around, so that it must then state, “Where there is life, there is also forgiveness and salvation.” Do you see how subtly the thought has shifted—from God’s forgiveness to one’s life? That is a formula for despair. How can we be certain that our life is up to God’s standards so that we can have forgiveness?

In contrast, Luther’s axiom comforts us with the fact that forgiveness has already been accomplished by the bloody sacrifice of Christ on the cross and sealed with the words of our Savior, “It is finished.” The writers of the *Formula of Concord* stated the axiom of Luther like this:

*Forgiveness has already been accomplished by the bloody sacrifice of Christ on the cross and sealed with the words of our Savior, “It is finished.”*

A poor sinner is justified before God without any merit or worthiness on our part, and without any preceding, present, or subsequent works. (FC, SD, Art. III:9)

For faith does not justify because it is so good a work and so God-pleasing a virtue, but because it lays hold on and accepts the merits of Christ in the promise of the Holy Gospel. (FC, SD, Art III;11, 13)

Luther’s axiom is not only unique in the milieu of much of the Christian world today. It also is of the greatest *comfort* to the troubled sinner in the hour of temptation and sin. When your conscience grieves you, your Lutheran pastor will not call for a “decision” from you, making you “prove” your faith before he pronounces forgiveness. Instead, he will speak to you the words of forgiveness: “I forgive you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” These words also

direct you to your baptism, where the Triune God vowed to forgive all your sin for eternity. In addition, your pastor will invite you to come to the Lord’s Supper because he knows and believes, as Luther did, about this holy meal: **“Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation.”**

This phrase is the “Lutheran Gospel in a nutshell.”

Joseph Burkardt is pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in St. Helens, Oregon.





# Treasurer's Report

## Summary of Income from Congregations through December, 2011

Budget	Actual	Balance
\$725,000	\$698,957.95	\$26,042.05

### Contributions for December 2011:

**Congregations - Budget** \$96,221

### Designated Contributions

Synod Fund	\$7,820
Home Missions	\$6,102
World Needs	\$776
Disaster Aid	\$0
Foreign Missions	\$3,686
India	\$469
Peru	\$8,408
Chile	\$492
Korea	\$6,000
Lutheran Schools of America	\$1,167
Cross-stitch	\$4,995
Thoughts of Faith	\$65,298

### Other

Subscriptions	\$2,550
Publications	\$31

**Total** \$204,015

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

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## Publication Changes

Changes are coming to the *Lutheran Sentinel*. You may have already noticed changes to the look of the magazine and some changes to the content. Changes are also coming to the publication schedule. Beginning this summer, the *Lutheran Sentinel* will be increased to 20 pages from 16 and will become a bi-monthly magazine (published every other month). Special collections of articles will be available on the ELS website during months in which the magazine is not printed. This schedule will allow us to continue producing a high-quality publication available to the greatest number of readers.



# What Does Love Have to Do with Marriage?

I decided years ago not to marry any couples unless they first consented to let me show them what God says about marriage. It is that important a matter! And there is no better time to do this than when marriage has come to mean not just one man and one woman, but *this man* and *this woman*, who will vow to each other, in the presence of those who witness their marriage, and in the sight of God, who created marriage.

A pastor's call to serve a congregation obligates him to teach God's word purely, to administer the Sacraments rightly, and to shepherd the sheep and lambs of the Good Shepherd faithfully. But a pastor's call does not obligate him to marry people. There is a reason for this statement because, in conducting a marriage, the pastor also works for the state, as every marriage license I have ever seen plainly says. Temporarily, then, he serves the government (the kingdom of God's left hand) as well as the church (the kingdom of God's right hand), and so he has a responsibility to each.

As great a blessing as marriage is to humanity, divorce is hurtful—to husband, wife and children, to family and friends, and to community and church. Certainly there is forgiveness from God for the divorced person, as there is for all people who sin and repent. But often divorce brings hurtful consequences that cannot be remedied this side of eternity.

A pastor's attitude toward every couple should be, "I do not want to be an accessory to a forthcoming divorce. Your divorce would not be good for anyone. So I ask you to listen to what God says in His word and then to consider together carefully what it means to vow that you two will become and *remain* one." Very few couples have refused to study Scripture with me.

The question they soon hear is this: "So, given that so many marriages end in divorce, why do you believe it will

be different for you?" You will not be surprised to hear that nearly every couple has answered, "Because we love each other." But who has ever thought differently?

Marriage certainly is all about love between one man and one woman, but it is more than that. What will keep love alive and growing between two who will not, because of sin, at all times speak or act as lovingly as they should toward each other? Consider this: To enter marriage is to enter into what God designed for man and woman *in order to bless them and bring them joy*. However, marriage begins with a vow, a promise.

Most of us think that love will enable us to keep our vow, but that simply is not true. The reality is just the opposite. Keeping the marriage vow is what will enable love to remain and grow. For the vow is made not just *to him* or *to her*, but also *to the community*, whose witnesses are gathered to hear your vow, and most especially *to God*. The *witnesses* hear that no one is to "put asunder" this union. With their presence at the wedding, they *promise* to support and defend the two in keeping their vow of oneness. In doing this, they mirror the will of God.

Marriage is about love, but it is more than that. It begins, continues, and comes to a godly conclusion with a vow, a promise that the Apostle Paul tells us is like the promise Christ makes to His bride, the Holy Christian Church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

So, when your pastor asks each of you, "Would you first consent to sit down and consider together what God says to you?" Answer, "**I do.**" The blessing will be yours—and ours.



Steven R. Sparley is pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grants Pass, Oregon.

## FROM THE EDITOR...

# The Ship “Concordia”

In January of this year, the captain of the *Costa Concordia* became one of the most hated men in Italy. The captain was arrested and charged with allowing an ocean liner with 4,200 passengers to run aground near the isle of Giglio. By his showing off, the liner came too close to the shore, where underwater rocks gashed a hole in the side that let in so much water, the ship tipped over as passengers scrambled to get to safety. Even worse, the crew and the captain left the ship before all the passengers were safely evacuated. Since this accident did not occur during a storm and the ship sank close to the isle, many people’s lives were saved.

Lutherans should know that “concordia” means “unity and peace in a common doctrine.” This word was part of the Lutheran creed, *The Formula of Concord*, and the word was also placed on the cover of the collected Lutheran creeds, namely, the *Book of Concord*. The creed and the book settled many disputes in the Lutheran Church 50 years after Luther’s death. It brought concord—peace and unity of beliefs—to the Lutherans of that day. These documents continue to be confessed by Lutherans who desire to be faithful to God’s Word.

The picture of the ship *Concordia* run aground, with a hole in its side, unable to go anywhere, begs for an analogy.

During the past 100 years, many Lutheran churches, pastors and members have steered their ship into the shoals of what they thought was a safe harbor. Instead of concord and faithfulness, they have run aground by accepting the wisdom of this world as truth, by abandoning Scripture as the source and norm of truth, and by scuttling their confession of the *Book of Concord*.

The gaping hole in the side of the Lutheran ship means that many who follow that captain will drown in unbelief and sink in despair and error. No life preserver will

save them because they have not heard in many a year the life-saving message of the true Gospel about Jesus dying for their sins.

The captain of the ship *Costa Concordia* will very likely be tried and punished for putting his ship and passengers in such unnecessary danger. But the bishops, pastors and other leaders of Lutheran church bodies that allow their members to worship Gaia and Sophia, who allow their hospitals to perform abortions, who have worked hard to destroy faith in what God has said in the Bible, who have used non-biblical truths to be expounded in their worship, who have fostered attitudes and practices contrary to God’s law—they are being praised as brave and loving men and women on the world stage. Perhaps they may not even recognize that their ship is run aground, that the crew does not care about the spiritual welfare of those in their care, that the passengers are dying in unbelief or that the real Judge is not happy with them.

To continue the analogy, our Evangelical Lutheran Synod might be considered a lifeboat that rescues a few people from the sea of unbelief so that they can hear again the life-giving good news of Christ and correctly return to the understanding of the Bible and a Concordia-like confession of the Lutheran creeds.

Perhaps many would rather drown in their rejection of the Gospel than be “saved” in our boat; but perhaps our rescue boat ought to more diligently engage others with Jesus, so that the life preserver of the Gospel may be grasped before the final tragedy occurs.



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

# Parkland Lutheran Dedicates New Cross

Years ago, Parkland Lutheran Church, Parkland, Washington, was called “The Church of the Lighted Cross.” It stood as a beacon to the members of the community and was seen by anyone driving up or down Pacific Avenue (the main road leading to Mt. Rainier), but when that cross had deteriorated, a new cross was not put in its place.

In the years that followed, different projects were proposed to add a steeple, a bell tower or a free-standing cross to the church property. Plans finally became reality when Parkland’s members offered the necessary funding, time and expertise to get the project going.

On Sunday, December 11, 2011, to the glory of God and to assist the members of the congregation to be bold in the confession of Christ crucified to its many neighbors in the community, Parkland Lutheran dedicated a free-standing, 50-foot tall, white-coated steel cross.

The new cross has been catching people’s attention as they drive by each day. It will also soon be illuminated at night so that Parkland Lutheran might once again be called “The Church of the Lighted Cross.”

We pray that these efforts will lead more people to visit our church, where they will hear about our humble Savior who died on the cross for all. “Far be it from [us] to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14).



*The new cross recently dedicated to the glory of God.*



*The old lighted cross. (Photo by the late Rev. W. C. Gullixson)*

## **PERIODICAL**

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