

January 2012

Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

"Engage Others with Jesus."



And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak. (2 Corinthians 4:13)

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Staff

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

Contributing Editors

Paul Madson, Charles Keeler, Daniel Madson, Timothy Buelow.

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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:

Name identification is everything in the advertising world. The big brands and the wanna-bes count on customers associating positive feelings simply by company name. Personal names too mean a lot. Look at the amount spent annually in protecting identities. With loss of name identity, coping with legal and civil duties seems impossible.

One identifying name surpasses all else: **Jesus**. January 1st marks the anniversary of Baby Jesus' circumcision and naming. His name identifies him as "Savior." He has come as our own rescue from sin and death. He has come for all. Everyone is to know this identifying name for one's own personal rescue—eternally.

Beginning a new calendar, we each might ask: How can I play a part in bringing the name of Jesus to one more soul who does not yet know? Like the wisemen of old, we worship the young Christ-child as the Savior for sinners of every age and of all races and nations. We join those Eastern sages in desiring to "Engage Others With Jesus."

Twelve or three? The exact number of the wisemen is unknown, but their precious gifts of thanksgiving for their redemption are renowned: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Likely, the gold was used for Jesus and his poor parents' hasty trip to Egypt. From ancient times the Christian church has surmised a special meaning behind these gifts: gold—to the King, frankincense—to God, and myrrh—to a Savior destined to die.

How can *we* honor God with *our* gifts? Is it possible the gifts we bring and the prayers offered will result in one more soul focused on Christ as God and King who came to die and rise again? Like the Magi, we too live for a name identification—a Name none can be without!

The prophet Isaiah records two inspired predictions often linked with the Magi's journey to Judea: "The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isaiah 60:3). "**They shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord**" (Isaiah 60:6b). Note this latter verse in particular. In his commentary, E. Young draws attention to the plural for the word "praises." He suggests: "This devotion manifests itself in the praises of God which are proclaimed. *The plural is perhaps for the sake of intensity.*"

Moved by love for the Name whose identity is even our own by faith, don't we too possess an intensity to advertise? May our God in this new year help us help others with this Name identification.



John A. Moldstad
John A. Moldstad

Epiphany: Giving Jesus the Magi's Gifts

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." (Matthew 2:1-2)

January 6th marks a special day in the church year. It is Epiphany. It commemorates the "appearance" of the star of Bethlehem that ultimately led the Magi into the very presence of the one born to be king.

As we celebrate this special day, our contemplation includes not only the joyous revealing of this Savior to the world, but also the blessed response of the Magi. As the Magi came, they not only honored him with their worship, but gave offerings of rare and precious gifts, a response we do well to consider as we worship our Lord.

As we read Matthew 2:1-18, we recognize that our Lord Jesus was born into a hostile world. Matthew's account does not let us romanticize or trivialize the danger facing this newborn king. The danger was real. The lives of innocent children were lost, taken by a jealous

and paranoid earthly king. Thankfully, the holy family was warned and they escaped.

While Herod's actions were immediately life-threatening to Jesus, for us, His coming was life-saving! That is why the spiritual journey to see Jesus does not end at Bethlehem—it is just the beginning. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin, Jesus lived a holy life in our place. His atoning death on the cross marked the fact that the punishment we deserved was once and for all time paid in full. The empty tomb upon his resurrection gives full assurance that our Lord's promises are true as He states, "Because I live, you shall live also" (John 14:19).

Matthew records, "When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh" (Matthew 2:10-11).

As we live for Christ, we are asked to "journey" beyond the safe-havens of our homes and to share this good news with the lost. Our gifts, much like those of the magi, include the giving of our time and talents as

we share this good news. We also mirror the Magi in giving him of our treasures so that together we can spread the Gospel to the very ends of the earth.

As we confess that this Jesus is indeed the King of kings and our Lord and Savior, we gladly give of ourselves and our treasures in his

service. In essence we give the gifts of the magi as we give cheerfully from a thankful heart knowing that he came in great humility that we might share in his glory.



Rev. Basel can be contacted at danbasel@blc.edu

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



“Learning to Engage Others With Jesus”

Making The ELS Vision Statement Your Own

In the next five years, we will learn more faithfully to engage others with Jesus. As you may know, this is the mission statement that our synod adopted at its 2011 convention. As you may also know, this statement corresponds to the five-year strategic plan of the synod. When I first heard this statement, I must admit I was not overly impressed. Don't we already know enough about spreading the Gospel? And what does it mean to “engage others with Jesus”? Doesn't sound very biblical to me. Such were my initial thoughts.



But since first hearing that statement, I've had much time and many opportunities to mull it over. I've decided that this statement is more powerful than it seems at first glance. Certainly we can learn *more* about reaching lost souls with the message of "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Consider how much there is to know about Jesus! That he is God and man at the same time, the long-awaited Messiah, the only way to eternal salvation—all of this would provide for more than a lifetime of study.

In addition, do we know all there is to know about the spiritually lost? That is, do we understand what and how they think so well that we could explain to anyone we meet—regardless of their spiritual, ethnic, economic, or cultural background—precisely how Jesus is their Savior from sin, death, and hell? Could we confidently speak with our fallen-away-Baptist neighbor as comfortably as we could with our Buddhist coworker about where they will spend eternity? Could we develop methods of outreach for our congregation that will apply to a young suburban family as well as to an elderly couple in a condo? Again, there is always more for us to learn.

Regarding "engaging others with Jesus," what more is that than what Jesus already told us in his Great Commission? Thus, how many different ways can I find to go and touch someone's life *every day* with the Gospel of our Savior? What sort of creative outreach ideas might be bouncing around in my head or in the heads of others, ideas

that might be harnessed for the good of spreading the news of God's kingdom? Have we exhausted every avenue possible in trying to reach those who need to know Jesus' love and forgiveness?

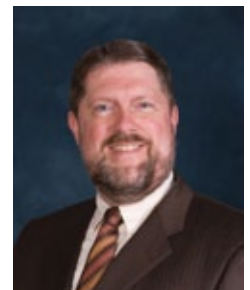
Perhaps you also have had questions about this mission statement. In fact, maybe you *should*. Why? Because that means you're thinking about it. Indeed, in some ways that mission statement sounds so simple, and yet there is great depth to it because of its subject matter: Jesus. You see, even though "we" is the subject of that statement, grammatically speaking, it's not what's important. The emphasis is on Jesus!

Over the coming year, your Board for Evangelism and Home Missions will present an article in the *Lutheran Sentinel* each month under the general theme of "Learn to Engage Others With Jesus." Each of these articles will examine various aspects of outreach and evangelism and aim to equip you to be better witnesses for your Lord. Our goal is to present practical ideas and resources that you will be able to use in your everyday life, both as an individual and as a member of a congregation. In the meantime, keep looking for and making use of opportunities to share the Good News of your Savior with someone who needs to hear it. That's the best way to make the vision statement real to you.

Parts of this article were adapted from the 2011 Synod Convention Essay: "Who Do You Say I Am?"

Next month: "Evangelism and Outreach: What's the Difference?"

Michael K. Smith teaches at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary and serves as the chairman of the Board for Evangelism and Home Missions.



God's Comforting Answer To Our Need for Salvation

Adam and Eve were given the ability to refuse temptation. While owning a perfect range of choices given them by God, they were not destined from creation to choose the wrong and reject the right. Yet they rejected the good. They fell into a temptation from the deceiver Satan: "You shall be as gods knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). The statement was a lie! Why?

The creation story gives us an important distinction between "knowing" and "being." The existence of Adam and Eve as humans, having life and vitality formed perfectly by God, meant that they knew good in its every possible meaning. They could not know evil in the way God did because He is all-knowing, while their knowledge was limited. The creatures cannot raise themselves to the level of the Creator. The full impact of Satan's lie was that they came to know evil because they *became evil by trusting the word of the Evil One*. Because they had been perfect, Adam and Eve could have said "no" to him. Instead, they became sinners. The fact that they succumbed had terrible consequence.

Sin became proactive in the human nature. It turned out to be a predator. It even passed to the next generation, involving Adam's children, where its obvious power showed. Hoping to forestall tragedy, the Lord warned Cain about hatred. God said to Cain, "Sin's desire is for you" (Genesis 4:7). Though forewarned, Cain let the predator close in: hatred consumed him and he murdered his own brother, Abel (4:8).

But there is another thread to be picked up and woven into this sad tapestry: the meaning of death. Our Lord's warning to our first parents included a threat. They would surely die by rejecting His word. What did death mean? It meant our parents abandoned God. They forsook His holy will and

went their own way, guided by Satan. And Satan's will had the intention of leading them to hell. After all, this was the place God had made for Satan and his angels as the punishment for sinning, and the Lord cast him out of heaven (2 Peter 2:4). And so the old evil foe wanted to get even with God. He decided he would steal God's chief creature from Him. Then an act of sheer mercy on God's part occurred!

God spoke His life-giving word in a promise to Adam and Eve, even while it is as a death blow to Satan, who in the form of a serpent is listening: "I will put enmity between you, (Satan) and the woman, and between her seed and your seed; it will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit decided that the fulfillment of this promise of hope for sinful humans meant that the Son should take human nature to His person, assuming human flesh into His being, in order to accomplish the salvation of all people.

Why is Jesus Christ, the God-Man, able to save sinners? This will be the topic of the next article in our series on the Person and Work of Christ.



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

Our ELS Mission in South Korea

Korea is a peninsula situated between China and Japan. The northern part is a communist country where the people cannot identify themselves as Christians. The southern part is a democratic country and one-fourth of the population is Christian—mostly Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists. Since Buddhism has been in Korea for over 1,000 years, most Koreans tend to be Buddhists even though they do not attend temple meetings regularly.

East Seoul Canaan Church (ESCC) was started in June of 2005, when the Rev. Young Ha Kim was sent back to his homeland by the ELS Board for Foreign Missions (now Board for World Outreach). He started Bible studies and Sunday worship services with a handful of people. At present, more than 200 people gather for Sunday worship. Church membership is over 350 people, including students in the United States. Each year during the past six years, about 20 people were baptized and more than 40 people have become members. Our Korean church body is officially named, “Jesus Lutheran Church.”

The main mission of ESCC is to teach Lutheran doctrine, especially the Law and the Gospel, because many Korean Christians are not certain of their salvation, even though they believe in Jesus. The church accomplishes this mission in part through the English as a Second Language classes and the “study abroad” programs.

Canaan Language Institute (CLI) began in June 2006 to reach out to the Korean community. Dennis and Dolores Morrison (certified Lutheran Elementary School teachers) and Margaret Kim serve as the main teachers. This program, unique to Korea, prepares Korean students to enroll in US schools. Presently, about 80 students are attending WELS and ELS/WELS high schools. More than 20 ESCC students have already graduated from high schools in the US and are now attending American colleges. Because parents of these students

were also required to learn about the teachings their children would learn in the US, many of them have become members of ESCC. Since 2008, some grade school students have attended Parkland Lutheran School in Tacoma, Washington, for one year. Rev. Kim travels to the United States once a year to visit the WELS high schools and to communicate with the students from Korea.

The first Asian Mission Conference was held at the ESCC building in October 2007 with many missionaries from Japan, Australia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India and the United States. It was a wonderful opportunity for those missionaries to be connected for the first time to others in the mission field.

Each summer, the high school students who return from the United States attend a “retreat program.” A new group of students are then able to talk with returning students, who have attended the same schools that the new students will go to. This retreat also builds more life-long relationships with the students and with Rev. Kim.

Each year since 2009, Michigan Lutheran Seminary high school students have traveled to South Korea, supervised by Prof. Norval Kock, to help conduct Vacation Bible School classes at ESCC in July. Their presence attracts other Korean children and families who are interested in sending their children to the English program.

The ESCC is also working to bring the Gospel to China and North Korea. The ESCC started helping some of the many refugees from North Korea by sending clothes to refugees staying in China, by visiting them in schools, or by helping them get settled in a new land. Many North Koreans die of starvation and so are driven to risk their lives to travel to China. The members of the East Seoul Canaan Church pray that our gracious Lord will grant the same blessings to the North Koreans that they also have received, so that they can be granted eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ!



East Seoul Canaan Church

Using God's Talents to Proclaim Christ

Artwork to God's Glory

Karyn Lukasek was one of the presenters at the October ELS Women's Mission Society Rally in Apple Valley, Minnesota. Karyn, who is a Bethany Lutheran College graduate with a studio art degree, related how the Lord has enabled her to make use of her artwork in religious publications. One of those publications is an Arch Book Series account of creation produced by Concordia Publishing House. Karyn is married to Michael Lukasek and together they have a son, Isaac, pictured in the photo. Below is part of her presentation to the Mission Rally.

The theme for today's Mission Society meeting is "Learning to engage others more faithfully with Jesus." Evangelism and Mission Work is a tricky topic, because so many of us have aversions to striking up controversial conversation with other people.

We recently moved from an apartment complex where our next-door neighbor was an incessant discussor of religion. While he believed that the Bible was true, he did not believe that Jesus was his Savior from sin, for one needed only follow Jesus' example to achieve perfection in this life.

Finding a stranger who loved to talk about Scripture was exciting. But it soon became apparent that this neighbor was not going to listen to the real Gospel. I began avoiding him and his family because whenever we crossed paths, he would spend hours talking about what he thought Scripture said.

What frustrated me was that this neighbor always seemed to have his biblical arguments well-planned out. I found myself fumbling for the right words to defend my faith in my Savior. If I knew what I believed, why could I not communicate it effectively? Then it dawned on me that I was—once again!—focusing on myself and not trusting that God's Word can work a miracle on my neighbor's heart just by saying, "Jesus died for your sins."

My point about this neighbor is that each of us have been given a different set of gifts, which can be used to engage others more faithfully with Jesus. As I said before, public speaking is not one of my gifts. Perhaps my aversion to speaking led me to engage others with Jesus through art and writing. I am perfectly happy to be cutting up tiny pieces of colored paper and gluing them together until they resemble the six days of creation or using a three-haired paintbrush to turn gobs of paint into Jesus' hand, or compulsively organizing sentences and punctuation into a cohesive letter or story.

In fact, I did write a ten-page letter to our neighbor,

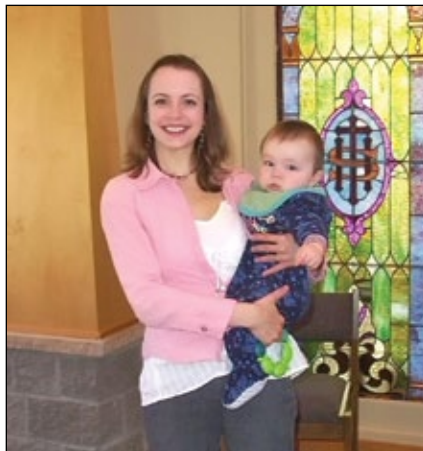
citing Bible passages that defended the Lutheran faith and encouraging them to look more closely at Scripture. On paper, I was finally able to express what I believed in a fluent and organized manner. I kept reminding myself that creating faith was God's job, not mine.

After my children's book was published, my mother had a profound comment: "Karyn, God is using you through this book to reach lots of people with the Gospel!" That is when the light really came on—this book was not about me, it was about God spreading His Word! God was providing me with an awesome opportunity to engage others with Jesus.

God also provides you with your own unique way of spreading His Gospel. Mission work occurs in a wide variety of ways, because we are not all the same. While I wished that I was a confident speaker, I was overlooking the other abilities God did give me. I may be the finger in the body of Christ, while someone else may be a mouth, or a toe, or an ear. I do well at finger-work, so why worry about toe-work?

There is nothing wrong with desiring to improve a particular skill and working at it. The point is that God graciously gives each of us natural talents with which to serve Him. He makes us different so that His Word can be proclaimed in dozens of different ways. He gives us abilities to speak and He also works through writing, music, artwork, financial support of the church and missions, teaching, prayer—and the list goes on. Consider how mothers read all those Bible stories to their children, pray with them, bring them to church and have them baptized.

The purpose of this presentation is not to make you feeling guilty into writing a children's book or painting a rendition of the Lord's Supper that rivals da Vinci's. I would rather encourage you to know that God has provided you with special talents and He promises to be with you, guiding your words and actions so that His Son, your Savior, is proclaimed.



Karyn Lukasek

On the Synodical Scene...

Holton Lutheran Hosts Mission Rally

On October 29, 2011, 40 ladies and pastors met for the Circuit #3 Women's Mission Rally at Holton Lutheran Church, Holton, Michigan. This year's theme was "Harvesting Souls for Jesus." The Rev. Paul Zager led the opening devotion, based on Isaiah 2:2-3.

The Rev. Nicholas Proksch from Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Holland, Michigan, gave a presentation on their home mission outreach in Holland. The Rev. Steven Petersen, Outreach Missions Counselor, then gave an update on our synod's mission work, especially in the foreign mission fields. Also present were Jenni Petersen and Clara Nettesheim, former workers at Martin Luther School, Plzen, Czech Republic, who gave a slide presentation of their work this past summer at the school.

After a delicious lunch prepared by the ladies of Holton, the ladies designated the offerings for home and foreign missions during the business meeting. The group designated foreign mission funds to Cross-stitch. The home mission offering was divided between the mission congregation at Holland, Michigan, and Camp Lor-Ray-ELS/WELS Family/kids Camp. The next fall rally will be at Grace Lutheran Church, Weston, Ohio.

Chelsea Dietsche Begins ESL Work in Chile



"English as Foreign Language" Teacher Chelsea Dietsche is working in our ELS mission congregation in Linares, Chile, after a month-long training program in Santiago. She advertises for students on local radio and by meeting prospects on city streets. Chelsea teaches her classes in the education room of the church in Linares, where students can meet Missionary Oto Rodriguez, pastor of the congregation. Please pray for God's blessing on this outreach opportunity and follow Chelsea's work and experiences at www.followchelsea.com.

Amanda Herman Helps Build a Church

At the age of eight years, Amanda already knows what she wants to do with her life—a clothing designer. She is using her interest to make original handbags to raise money to help build a Lutheran church in Ternopil, Ukraine, where her grandfather, the Rev. John Vogt, works as a friendly counselor to the Ukrainian Lutheran Church.

So far, Amanda made over 60 handbags and has raised over \$2,000.00. Upon getting a sewing machine for Christmas, Amanda and her mother, Becky Herman, began making handbags, which take about an hour to



design and sew. When she sent them a \$1,000 check, Bishop Vyacheslav Horpynchuk of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church wrote: "Please thank Amanda on behalf of the whole ULC.... What a great work for Christ she does!"



Pastor, I Have a Question...

Coming Back from Heaven?

Question: *I have heard from friends and books about people who had died, gone to heaven and come back. I don't believe any of this. Could you please help with a response to my friend? The inquirer referred to the following books: "Heaven is for Real", by Colton Burpo and "90 Minutes in Heaven" by Don Piper. Both books refer to people who were declared dead; one for a few minutes and the other for 90 minutes. Having encountered such stories, friends were excited.*

Answer:

Throughout the years, this pastor has met people who reported the visits of loved ones who had died. They found some comfort in these experiences. The March 2010 column addressed the issue of near death experiences and the tunnel with the light. This column was directed to help in responding to a friend who was excited about meeting someone who died, saw heaven and returned.

The Bible has several accounts of resurrections: Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:41 ff), the widow's son (Luke 7:11 ff), Lazarus (John 11) and, of course, the Easter story. When Jesus died, Matthew reports, "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many" (Matthew 27:52-53).

People have come back from the dead. We might have expected one or more to report on what they saw in heaven. The Bible is silent.

St. Paul reports on this experience, "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which *it is not lawful for a man to utter*" (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). The resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus showed St. John a vision of glory in the Revelation; read especially Revelation 21.

We believe in heaven because God promises it in His Word. Jesus taught us to rely on the Bible. It is tempting for us to want additional proof. If God answers prayer the way we

Send your questions to:

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

want, if our faith gives us a special feeling, if we might have a vision from heaven, we might hope it would strengthen our faith. However, such experiences are not the solid foundation on which true faith is built.

Jesus told a story about two men who died, a rich man and a poor man. The rich man went to hell; Lazarus went to heaven. The rich man asked for relief. When it was refused, he asked that Lazarus be sent back. “Then he said, ‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’” (Luke 16:27-30).

There is grave danger in relying on anything other than the testimony of the Scripture. It is one thing to find a little solace in somebody claiming to come back from death. It is an unwholesome thing if this becomes the foundation of our faith.

These things we should know:

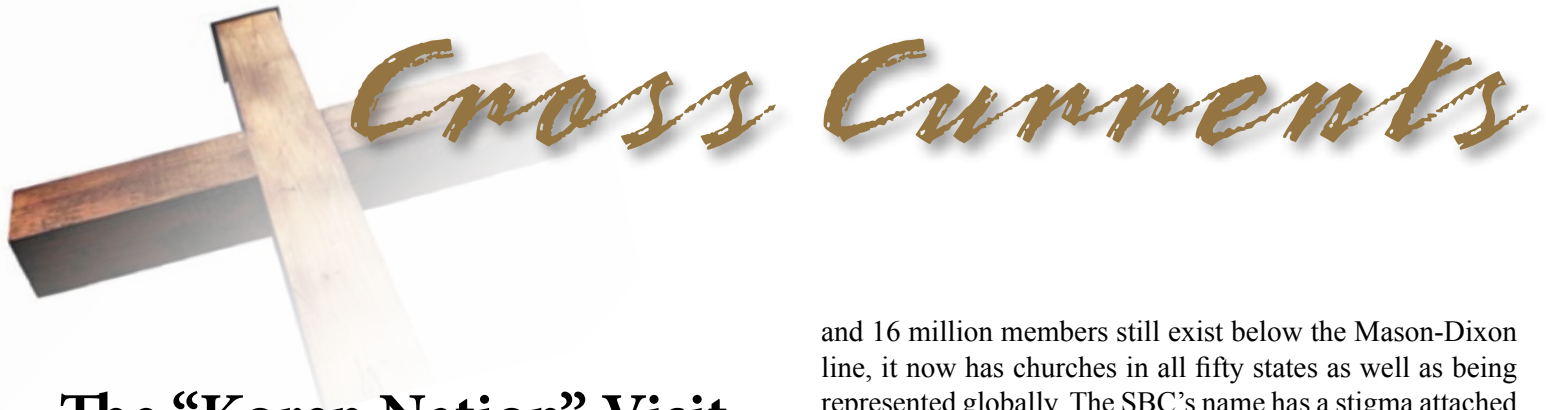
1. If God allowed it, the reports of those who died and returned to life would agree with Scripture.
2. “Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).
3. Those in the Bible who saw heaven were commanded not to reveal certain things (2 Corinthians 12:4, Daniel 12:4, Revelation 10:3-4).

Jesus earned heaven for us by His death and resurrection. Easter is all the proof we need that, “Because I live, you will live also” (John 14:16).

We believe in heaven because God promises it in His Word.

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





Cross Currents

The “Koren Nation” Visit

One day last October, about 35 descendants of Rev. Ulrik Wilhelm Koren paid homage to their distinguished ancestor by visiting the campus of our Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary. These members of the “Koren Nation” from Norway wanted to see where in America their sainted ancestor carried out his mission work. Their trip included visits to places in Iowa and Wisconsin.

A pastor in the state church of Norway organized this trip. They were aware that U.V. Koren had special ties with the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, so it was fitting that they should visit its headquarters in Mankato, Minnesota, where their ancestor continues to be held in high regard.

U.V. Koren came to this country in 1852 and was a pastor at Washington Prairie, Iowa, from 1853 until his death in December 1910. From his home in Washington Prairie, Koren began congregations in a wide area of Iowa. He held many offices in the “Norwegian Synod,” as it was then known, eventually serving as its president. Koren’s biblical leadership was especially appreciated during the predestination controversy when he proclaimed the true Lutheran doctrine on conversion and election.

We surmise that Dr. Koren would have been pleased to know that his descendants traveled across the ocean to visit the lands so blessed by his ministry. We hope that their visit deepened their appreciation for their ancestor and the message he championed: the unconditional Gospel of eternal salvation by grace through faith alone.

What’s In A Name? A Lot!

Yes. A name can be important. The largest Protestant denomination is presently known as the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), founded in 1845 over slavery. Its president defined the issue: “The name ‘Southern’ really no longer reflects who we are as a Convention in reaching all of North America.” He added that the word “Southern” does not play well in places like Boston, New York, Michigan or Wyoming. While most of the SBC’s 40,000 churches

and 16 million members still exist below the Mason-Dixon line, it now has churches in all fifty states as well as being represented globally. The SBC’s name has a stigma attached to it, according to a 2006 poll that revealed that over 49 percent of 18- to 24 year-olds would not be inclined to join a church if they knew it was Southern Baptist.

Motions to change SBC’s name have been proposed eight times at past conventions and were rejected. It is difficult to change such an historic name. Along with legal issues, the proposed name change would have to be ratified by two consecutive annual conventions.

Our synod knows what is involved, since in 1957 it changed its name from “Norwegian Synod of American Evangelical Lutheran Church” to “Evangelical Lutheran Synod.” The name change reflected the new cosmopolitan nature of the church body, where they chose to emphasize the Gospel (Evangel) instead of its past heritage.

The Exodus Revisited

In the twelfth chapter of Exodus, Moses records the great exodus of God’s people from Egypt. Now, thousands of years later, another exodus is taking place. This time the fugitives are not Israelites, but Egyptian Christians, Copts, who are fleeing to the United States. Though the Copts have a two-thousand-year history in Egypt, the recent Islamist revolution is making life difficult for them. As one reporter put it, “It’s ugly for Christians in Cairo right now.”

Many areas in this troubled world are making life “ugly” for Christians to live there. American religious freedom is not found in much of the world. This situation begs for our prayers on behalf of those Christians who are suffering for the name of Christ (1 Timothy 2:1).



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

Treasurer's Report

Summary of Income from Congregations through November, 2011

Budget	Actual	Balance
\$725,000	\$602,737.13	\$122,262.87

Contributions for November 2011:

Congregations - Budget \$50,311

Designated Contributions

Synod Fund	\$1,130
Home Missions	\$1,139
World Needs	\$470
Disaster Aid	\$0
India	\$6,627
Peru	\$3,864
Chile	\$30
Korea	\$1,200
Lutheran Schools of America	\$532
Cross-stitch	\$5,652
Thoughts of Faith	\$31,225

Other

Schwan Foundation	\$10,000
Estates	\$23,000
Subscriptions	\$0
Publications	\$415
MAP	\$265,000

Total \$400,595

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

Gifts Received for the Synod in Memory of Memorial by

Norman Holte

Silas & Mary Born - Mankato, MN
Leona M. Merseth - Clearbrook MN

Aurilla Craft

Rita Groth

Trinity Ladies Aid, Calmar, IA

Goldie Skogen

Our Savior's Ladies Aid - Princeton, MN

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Norman Holte, 1918-2011



Norman Severt Holte died on November 10, 2011, in Mankato, Minnesota. The funeral service was held on November 14 at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church with the Rev. John Petersen conducting the service. He was buried at Woodland Hills Memorial Park, Mankato, Minnesota.

Norman was born on January 7, 1918, to Gabriel and Matilda (Nelson) Holte of Edy Township, Minnesota. He was baptized and confirmed at Concordia Lutheran Church, Clearbrook, Minnesota. In 1942, he graduated from Bethany Lutheran College (BLC) in Mankato, Minnesota. After working in the California shipyards during World War II, he graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1944 and began teaching at BLC in 1945. At the college, he also served as Dean of Men, Registrar, High School Principal, College President and Acting Academic Dean. He taught part-time from 1982 to 1986 and retired completely in 1986. Norman married Violet E. Fevig on July 18, 1947, at Calvary Lutheran Church in Ulen, Minnesota. Their marriage of 64 years was blessed with four children. They were members of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church. From 1994 to 2003, he served part-time as Synod Archivist and was on the Committee on History and Archives.

Norman is survived by his wife, four children, nine grandchildren, eleven great-grandchildren, and one sister.

No Fear

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has come. . . to enable us to serve Him without fear. (Luke 1:68 & 74)

In the mid-1990's, a popular clothing brand name sprang up boldly claiming, "NO FEAR." This was intended to be more than a clothing line. It was to be a way of life: "If you're not living on the edge, you're taking up too much space," read one of the T-shirts.

God chose Moses to lead His people out from slavery in Egypt and to the promised land. But at the burning bush, God's chosen leader was not wearing his "NO FEAR" garb. He was afraid—afraid of being ignored by God's people (Exodus 4:1) and afraid that he didn't possess the necessary speaking skills to serve the Lord's high purpose. "I've never been eloquent," Moses said of himself (Exodus 4:10). Moses also was afraid of conflict and trouble.

But God showed Moses exactly why even a sinful, fear-filled being could serve the Lord *without fear!* God promised Moses that the words he spoke would be God's words (Exodus 7:2). God demonstrated to Moses not how powerful Moses was, but how God's power could make him fearless. After seeing the ten plagues and the deliverance from Egypt that God accomplished, Moses could stand at the Red Sea and encourage the children of Israel, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today... The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Exodus 14:13-14).

As we proceed into a new year as God's people, no doubt we, like Moses, will have fears: "Will trouble and conflict disrupt our lives? Do we have what it takes to deal with afflictions? Will financially difficult times trouble our churches like it has so many jobs and

businesses around us? Are our pastors and missionaries persuasive enough to be effective servants of God and His Word?"

As we face these spiritual fears, may we be directed, along with Moses, to God's fearless service for us. God says through the prophet Isaiah, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1). Again, God strengthens us in our work for Him by saying, "My word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but

will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). Also, the Christmas angel's message encourages us as we face the challenges, troubles and fears of 2012: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people...a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

We have just celebrated the truth that the Lord our God has come as the Savior of this sinful world. Through His Word and Sacraments, Jesus has established His church wherever they are rightly administered. He has brought you into His holy Christian Church through these same powerful means, even as He preserves it through the same. We may be doubt-stricken and fear-filled beings just as Moses once was. And, like him, we can also be assured by God's fearless work of salvation on our behalf and strengthened by His Means of Grace, so that we may be enabled this year to "serve the Lord without fear."



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

FROM THE EDITOR...

Communicating the Gospel

As we draw nearer to celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, one of the factors that brought the Gospel message to people throughout Europe was the development of the printing press. God used this new technology to reach people that Martin Luther never met. When Luther stood before the Emperor and was ordered to recant, there was placed before him quite an assortment of books that he had written in the space of three short years. While Dr. Luther used this new technology and thanked God for it, he did not rely on it alone. For Luther continued his vocation of teaching and preaching the Gospel in order that the citizens of Wittenberg and the students at the university would understand what faith in Jesus truly meant.

It is truly breathtaking to see how quickly new technologies have developed and have been accepted into our society and lives. Computers, the internet, email, smartphones and social websites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn (to name just a few) have simply exploded as millions of people have connected to the internet.

All of this presents tremendous opportunities for God's children to interact with people and talk about the Gospel message. One part of "learning to engage others with Jesus" means learning to use this new technology to the glory of God and for the sharing of the message about Jesus and His salvation. The potential for such communication is staggering to consider.

Satan has found his uses for this technology so that false teachings, pornography and all sorts of evils can be found if one looks for them. The arrest of people who have downloaded child pornography point to how easily the devil can tempt us to stray from the faith and support or engage in sinful behavior.

All things have been created for our good as we use them to the glory of God. Consider how we can talk about Jesus with almost anyone in the world through a multitude of internet programs. Through Facebook, we can show our friends what it means to write and think as one of God's children. Through the internet, pastors can hold Bible classes with people living at far

distances. This is especially helpful in Australia, where members are literally hundreds of miles away.

This new technology also allows us to share, in several types of formats, religious books, tracts, speeches, sermons and seminars. People can have productive meetings from their own homes with others living far away.

The internet has been used to receive information from missionaries about their work in far lands. This information can encourage us to pray directly for the people in the Peruvian jungles, or victims of Chilean earthquakes or monsoons in India.

New technology, however, should never replace the important kingdom-work at local congregations as pastors and members gather for worship to receive God's Word and Sacraments. For in the worship service—with its ancient liturgies, its divinely-inspired Scripture lessons, its hymns of instruction and praise, its sermons and celebrations of the Lord's Supper—Jesus promises to meet us and give us His grace. Here God's people find comfort, strength, growth and opportunities to confess Christ and show their godly love for one another.

In this New Year, let us thank God for the new technologies that we can use to reach people around the world with the message of salvation. May we also appreciate the blessings we already have through local congregations as we continue to worship Jesus together and proclaim His story to those who live near us.

A Big Thanks

Thanks to our Lutheran Sentinel readers for sending in the "Readership Surveys" and submitting surveys online. Your input was important as the Communication Committee works on bringing our synod's communication into the 21st century.
The editor

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



The Generosity of Cross-Stitch!

Many know that the network of Women's Mission Societies (WMS) among the ELS is called Cross-stitch. But perhaps less well-known are the many blessings created when funds collected at WMS Rallies across our Synod are gathered together by Cross-stitch and forwarded to worthy causes among ELS world missions. During the last two years, over \$62,000 was donated and distributed by the women of the ELS through Cross-stitch. The projects blessed by these donations (in descending order of support received):

- Orphans in India (four sets of clothing and school supplies for 300 children each year)
- Schools in the Peruvian jungle (operating support for three elementary schools and a high school)
- Gift of Life mobile medical and dental clinics and pro-life centers (operating support)
- ELS Home Mission congregations (outreach and evangelism support)
- Women in Peru (scholarship for continuing education)
- Former Indian Orphans (scholarships for college classes when they leave our homes)

Thanks to the ELS Women's Mission Society and all who support Cross-stitch! Through it, critically-needed assistance is provided to many people around the world!



Indian orphans wearing clothing provided by Cross-Stitch.

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ELS World Outreach: www.elsworldoutreach.org

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary: www.blts.edu

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