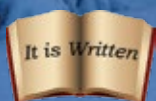


November 2012

# Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

*"Engage Others with Jesus."*



**"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,  
and comes down from the Father of lights." (James 1:17)**

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# From the President

Dear members and friends of our ELS:

*One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are loving.* Psalm 62:11–12

Power and love. Novels and movies know how to weave these two key concepts into exciting plots, subplots, and mysterious twists. The fascination over the details of the lives of kings and queens, presidents, influential CEOs and Hollywood stars often can be summed up by an attraction to the intrigue found in power and love.

Power without love is scary. Think of how tyrants and dictators have wreaked havoc on their citizens when power has not been coupled with love. People like Nero, Bloody Mary, Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi, and the late Kim Jong-il of North Korea come to mind. Can you imagine the terror of living under such evil on a daily basis, especially if there were reasons to question your “good grace” status before the controlling regime?

The psalm verse above speaks of **ultimate power** coupled with **ultimate love**. Unlike the tyrants and czars of the world displaying little love for their subjects, the God of this universe not only wields a scepter unmatched by any human authority, but also has a love that far exceeds what the mind of sinful man could ever conceive.

Isn't this what captures the significance of Thanksgiving for the Christian? We are not like the proverbial atheist who had a sudden urge to be filled with gratitude but didn't know who to thank. The God we have come to know—all due to His grace in seeking us—is the creator of all that we have around us, the preserver of all that we need for this body and life, and is the redeemer of our souls!

When the psalmist speaks of **power and love** in connection with this Ruler, we truly are comforted and want to take notice! Though we would have reason to fear His power to crush us because of our sins—including ingratitude and worry—we now, because of His deep love for us as shown in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, have every reason to be confident and filled with joy!

How will you celebrate this Thanksgiving? As you think of family, friends, good food, recoveries from illnesses, protection, and care offered to even the less fortunate, think on this above all else: We have a good, great, and powerful Ruler who loves us so much that He entered our fallen universe with flesh and blood to rescue us from eternal destruction. Will He not continue to use His almighty power to have all things turn out for our good (Romans 8:28, 30–31)?

Sensing the urge to offer praise? You know where to direct it. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the one true God who does all things in love for us as shown by the intervention of the Christ. Truly, thanks be to God!



*John A. Moldstad*  
John A. Moldstad, President of the ELS

# Thanksgiving:

## Trusting in God's Hidden Providence

A month before I was to be married, my car was stolen. I was very thankful—not right away, of course. I liked my car. But the police found it after the joy-riders were done with it, and I got it back. Not only that, but whoever took it did just enough superficial damage that the insurance company declared it “totaled,” settled for the car’s Blue Book value, and then sold it back to me at a very low cost. The end result was that I now had enough money (I didn’t before) to take my new bride on a honeymoon. So, a few months later, as my family went around the table at Thanksgiving and listed things for which we were thankful, I could include “being the victim of grand theft auto” on my list.

Actually, according to the testimony of Scripture, the fact is that the list of “things we should be thankful for” is so long that it is much more difficult to come up with anything for which we should not be thankful. After all, we are promised that “all things work for the good of those who love God” (Romans 8:28). Now, there are probably lots of things that we’re not thankful for yet. But once we see heaven and “know fully even as we are fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12), then we can expect that we will fall on our knees in genuine thankfulness for even the things that we see as the worst things that happen to us. Now, how can this be? I have no idea. Which is exactly why we call it “faith.” If we could understand it, then they’d have to call it something else.

And that’s the point. Unlike the story I told above, we don’t always see a tidy resolution to the things that happen to us in this world. The revelation of the reasons why misfortunes happen is not only sometimes delayed, but sometimes it is never given to us as long as we live. Or, even more than that, there are probably lots of times when we think we’ve understood the reason why something happens

when, in fact, the real reason was something else entirely. Only God knows. For our part, our role is simply to trust that God will work His gracious purpose in all things. As it says, “Be still and know that I am God. *I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth*” (Psalm 46:10, emphasis added).

There are times in life when that truth is easy to accept, and there are other times when it is hard. But God’s wisdom is always trustworthy. The best thing to be thankful for this Thanksgiving season is that our faith does not rely on our understanding of worldly circumstances. Whether

something that happens to us is easy to understand or difficult is not where our hope lies. Instead, our hope is in God Himself, who has guaranteed that those who believe on Jesus have eternal life. And so we don’t need to see things working out for our good before we can trust that they are.

Where earthly promises sometimes come with fine print, God’s promises come instead with the big, bright, clear assurance of the Gospel. As it says, “He

who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). God’s clearly demonstrated love for us surpasses our understanding by a greater distance than anything else that has ever—or will ever—happen to us. It is faith in what happened at Calvary that makes faith in what happens everywhere else possible.



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**Daniel Finn** is pastor of Pilgrim Lutheran Church in Waterloo, Iowa, and Faith Lutheran Church in Parkersburg, Iowa.



# ADVENT: OUR SORROW LEADS TO JOY

I'm an orphan. This will be my first Christmas without a parent with whom to share its joy. There are no more phone calls talking about Christmas concerts (a motherly favorite), no more cards with that special, familiar handwriting, no more gifts picked out especially to spoil her. Mother died right before last Easter. After her massive stroke a year ago and slight recovery for a few months, the Lord graciously took her into glory. So, now I'm an orphan. Or, as I tell my members when they lose a parent: "Now you're a big person!" That is, your special parental safety net is gone, and family responsibilities now rest squarely upon you.

Holidays can be difficult times for those left behind. I don't mean to minimize anyone's feelings if that describes you, but Christ long ago replaced my human sorrow with great joy at my mother's advent into heaven. And now, as we stand on the verge of Christ's Advent, I can almost hear her utter those familiar words: "The Lord is good!" And isn't it amazing that His almighty goodness calms our hearts, stills our fears, and takes away our sorrow in the form of an Infant? Only God could conceive, deign, and design such a wondrous turn of events.

My mother was a long-time choir director at her church. She loved hymns. She loved Christmas carols. She loved my favorite Advent hymn: "O Lord, How Shall I Meet Thee" (TLH 58). She well knew the awful (humanly speaking) life of its author, the Lutheran pastor Paul Gerhardt, back in the mid 1600s. He lost his parish, his wife, his children, etc. to warfare and strife. Yet, from all that human anguish and sorrow bursts his paean of praise to the coming Christmas King. More than once my mother and I shared those amazing words of verse three:

*"I lay in fetters, groaning, Thou com'st to set me free;  
I stood, my shame bemoaning, Thou com'st to honor me;  
A glory Thou dost give me, A treasure safe on high,  
That will not fail or leave me, As earthly riches fly."*

As a Christian, I'll let you in on a special secret: all of us are orphans, and yet we're not orphans at all. When we reflect on our lives and gaze into our hearts we're forced to own up to our personal failings, our sins of commission and omission. We're forced to face the Almighty Judge of the universe alone, with no parent to intervene and tell us everything will be all right. Alone we stand at the abyss between the human and the Divine, between time and eternity. We're orphans chained, groaning, and ashamed of our pitiful attempts to attain heavenly paternity by our own efforts. And yet, into that inner void steps the Baby Jesus. He literally joins Himself to our very flesh. He takes upon Himself our burdens and griefs. And He tells His Holy Father: "On account of Your love for Me, adopt them!" And God has and does! Yes, for the believer sorrow is always replaced with joy!

Advent is our special time to prepare our hearts to meet the Christ Child. After all, He's the Head of our eternal family. One way to better prepare is to embrace your earthly family right here, right now. Don't let any cross words or uncaring emotions be directed their way. Resolve to put aside any past grievances or grudges you might be carrying. See

your loved ones as godly gifts given to you by the Baby Jesus. In Christian humility, live and breathe that truth and your Baptism into Christ will bathe you in both joy of heart and peace of soul. You are in Christ's family, never to be without siblings, and you will once again be united with your loved ones in heaven. Merry Christmas, Mother....



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**Thomas H. Fox** is pastor of Pinewood Lutheran Church in Burlington, Massachusetts.

# The Great Mystery at the Manger

My oldest son was born while I was serving as a pastor in Oregon. Two doctors, a nurse, and the anesthetist were the only people in the room, other than my wife and I. I was holding a glass of water in my hand for a Baptism because my son had gotten stuck, and they were working to free him from inside my wife. Hearing the first cries from him was an incredible joy, after moments of panic.

My next two children were born in a St. Cloud hospital during scheduled surgeries. The St. Cloud hospital in Minnesota is a training hospital for nurses. I was shocked when each doctor had a nurse, that the baby had a nurse, my wife had a nurse, and I had a nurse. There must have been twenty people in the room! My first thought when walking into the room was, "What is this going to cost me?"

When we look at the conditions of our Savior's birth, we see two distinct, yet amazing, truths.

The first one is this: Jesus was born in the worst of conditions. He was born among the filth of animals. He was laid in a manger for His bed. No doctor was there to take care of Him if something was to go wrong. There was no nurse to take care of each of the three members of the family. His first visitors were not wearing hospital gowns to protect Him from germs; in fact they also had been outside with other animals. Jesus was born this way so that He could take our place, to be fouled with the filth of sin. Jesus was born in the lowliest of conditions, born to be the Suffering Servant of all people.

The second truth is in great contrast with the first. In spite of the humble surroundings, the baby in the manger is the Lord God, the long-promised Messiah. The shepherds who gazed at the manger had been told that their Savior had finally come. Jesus is the One who came to make everything different. In the person of Christ, God and sinners are brought together. Our salvation begins with the Incarnation of Christ and is shown to the world at Christ's birth.

How incredible it must have been for the shepherds to hear the angels sing and be present in that stable, yet see the Lord humbly lying in a manger! Is it any wonder that Mary, who had experienced all these things and heard the shepherds' story, pondered all these things in her heart?

One of my favorite hymns at Christmastime focuses on this amazing event: the wonderful, yet humble beginning of our Lord.

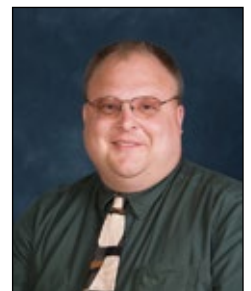


*O Jesus Christ, Thy manger is  
My paradise at which my soul reclineth.  
For there, O Lord, Doth lie the Word  
Made flesh for us—herein Thy grace forth shineth.*

*Thou Christian heart, Whoe'er thou art,  
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee!  
For God's own Child, In mercy mild,  
Joins thee to Him—how greatly God must love thee!  
(ELH 161:1, 4)*

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**Cory Hahnke** is pastor of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Cold Spring, Minnesota.



# *Bible Passages to Know for Engaging Others with Jesus*

Your pastor probably made you do it. You most likely chafed under the burden, but now you wish you had taken it more seriously. The dreaded memory work of confirmation class; what a blessing it really is! This is especially true if you want to engage others with Jesus.

God has chosen to work through His Word to create faith. Because engaging others with Jesus has the ultimate goal of bringing them to faith, you will see to it that they hear God’s Word. The light of your good deeds may lead them to ask questions about your faith, but it will not create faith in them. Only the Gospel can do that. So what passages should you have memorized and ready to share in an instant?

First, you need to remember that there are two types of verses—Law and Gospel. These have very different purposes and applications. The Law shows our sin and our need for the Savior. It has a very important role in engaging others with Jesus. It prepares the heart to hear about Jesus. The Law, however, cannot create faith. Only the Gospel can teach someone about Jesus and empower them to trust that His life, death, and resurrection have won forgiveness and eternal life.

Here are some good examples of verse pairs that can be used to engage others with Jesus. If you learn them as pairs, you will have both Law and Gospel ready to share.

<b>Law</b>	<b>Gospel</b>
Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death...”	Romans 6:23 “... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”	Romans 3:24 “and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”
Isaiah 64:6 “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”	1 John 1:7 “... and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.”
Galatians 3:10 “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’”	Galatians 3:13 “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’”
Romans 3:20 “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.”	Romans 5:8 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
Isaiah 53:6 “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way...”	Isaiah 53:6 “...and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

These are just some of the pairs that could be presented. Perhaps you already have some better ones in mind.

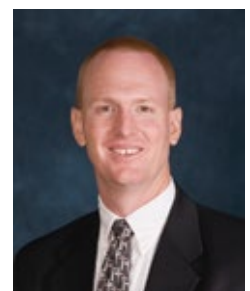
In your desire to have Scripture memorized, do not overlook the *Catechism*. The Commandments and the Articles of the Creed and their meanings can be very helpful in proclaiming Biblical truth as you engage others with Jesus.

Also, keep in mind that your lack of a memorized verse should not stop you from telling others about Jesus. If you can’t think of a verse, just tell them that Jesus loves them and died to take away their sins. It is as simple as that.

If I had only applied myself to my confirmation memory work, I would be much better equipped to engage others with Jesus. Do you feel the same way? It isn’t too late. There is still time to learn. Memorize a few verse pairs and share them when you have opportunity. God bless your efforts to bring people into contact with Jesus through His Word.

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



# Our Comfort from Christ's Baptism

Baptism is Christ's "twice-over": one by virtue of His personal Baptism, again, by virtue of His authorizing Baptism for others. Our comfort from Christ's Baptism is wondrous and abundant!

Christ Jesus accepted and believed God's Word. The reason why I even bring this up is of course that if Jesus hadn't, He would not have fulfilled all righteousness. Our Lord Jesus did not doubt the Gospel invitation inherent in Baptism. So in connection with His desire to personally be baptized, He asked John to baptize Him, adding, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). God wanted Jesus to do everything for the salvation of all people. Jesus knew this and willingly entered into Baptism to fulfill His Father's will. At His Baptism, Jesus wanted to begin His ministry as the Lamb of God and take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He willingly "became sin for us" so that "we might become the righteous one of God through Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). But there was more to it.

Ever the Sin-Bearer, that day at the Jordan your sins and mine and those of all sinners were on His shoulders. Jesus asked John for Baptism to wash away this burden. We see the very idea of this cleansing is divine in origin, affirmed also in the visible presence of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus saw coming to Him in the form of a dove. And then the voice of the Father was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17). At Christ's Transfiguration, the Father repeated those words about Jesus and added, "Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5)

Indeed, we hear Him later speaking of this very same matter, saying, "Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:20).

Therefore, from the very start of His saving work as Prophet, Priest, and King, our Lord sets up a way for helpless sinners to be brought to Him. "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

By Baptism the Savior is mine and I am His. In my Baptism, I am not given a mere smidgin of His saving work. Rather, He brings me His grace, full pardon, and complete salvation from my sin and guilt.

"Be baptized and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16). What a wonderful invitation the faithful Ananias here spoke to Saul in Damascus. Some have called this a "Gospel imperative," similar in nature to the command to come to a table laden with all sorts of great foods and desserts: "Supper is ready. Come and get it!" What I bring to Baptism is no better than my bringing an empty, hungry stomach to the supper, that is, I bring nothing. Even my hunger is something I don't create myself. I cannot add anything to what Christ Himself has here prepared.

Yet, the comfort of Christ's Baptism goes further. It includes the application of death's meaning as payment for our sins. "All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death" (Romans 6:3). But then also, our own resurrection from the grave comes into the meaning of our Baptism, as Paul writes, "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him" (Romans 6:8).

In view of all this, is it any wonder that we should want Baptism? Any wonder that parents want the great meaning of Baptism for our own infant children? We as parents give thanks that the washing away of sin lies in the application of water and the Word for our children born with sin inherited from us, because "I have been a sinner from birth" (Psalm 51:5).

How wonderful also that adults who come to faith in their Savior also have the Gospel in Baptism for their faith! We praise God for this wondrous Sacrament!



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

# Worshiping the Lord with Gladness

*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalm 100)*

We all look forward to celebrating a treasured American tradition each November. It is the time of our annual Thanksgiving celebration. As we meet around the Thanksgiving dinner table, we have a natural reason to thank the Lord as we meet. While many conversations center on the latest events—travel, weather, food, the latest on the kids, which store to hit for Black Friday—the reality is there is great abundance right before our eyes. It is seen in our families, our friends, and on the tables around which we gather.

Often the things we take for granted each day are the most precious gifts of all, that of our families, as colorful and as diverse as they may be. But let us not forget the most important acknowledgement that has been encouraged as we observe this national holiday. It is a recognition of those all-encompassing words of the psalmist, “It is He who made us, and we are His” (v. 3).

Thanksgiving is a great time to consider our blessings from the Lord under that very familiar Fourth Petition of the Lord’s Prayer, where we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” We should give thanks daily, because that petition is more often than not fulfilled even before we pray it. In this petition, we confess, “God certainly gives daily bread without our prayer, even to all the wicked; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to acknowledge this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.” Table prayers, special blessings, folding our hands as we bow our heads in prayer, all are there to help us remember to “receive our daily bread with thanksgiving!”

The question is, do we know what is meant by “our daily bread?” Or in other words, do we know that for which we should and ought to be giving thanks? As we look around the table at our family gatherings much is self-explanatory. We see here and in many other ways: “Daily bread includes everything needed for this life; such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, fields, cattle, money, goods, God-fearing spouse and children, faithful servants [workers] and rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, order, honor, true friends, good neighbors, and the like” (Luther’s *Small Catechism*, ELH, p. 33).

What are our basic “daily” needs? Food, drink, clothing, place to live, a means of making a living, and those things that make for a peaceful home and worship life. Certainly among these are “god-fearing spouse and children, faithful workers and the like.” Who of us was not concerned this month with the exercise of our civil right and privilege of choosing our leaders, knowing the importance of good government? What time are we not concerned about whether



we are getting seasonable weather? Who of us would not love to live in peace and have a goodly measure of health, etc.? All of these things we ask for and long for. Yet when we do have them, we often take them for granted and are not always thankful.

As the psalmist by inspiration of the Holy Spirit pens this beautiful psalm, he is calling us to worship and to worship with a thankful heart. Be thankful for a place we call our church, the place where we gather to hear God’s saving Word. Here we gather to be built up in our faith through the blessed means God provides for the feeding of our souls. This is something we must never, ever take for granted. Our place of worship is something precious in God’s sight for it is here that we gather to honor and thank our God, not just once a year, but weekly, perhaps daily. Yet who of us would dare to only thank God one day a week while He graciously provides for us seven days a week? At the same time, ought we not take our rest from the hustle and bustle of the world



in order to honor our God for yet another year, week, day of being cared for? The answer to this is given by the psalmist,

*“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; Give thanks to him and praise his name.”*

Why?

*“For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.”*

The object of this enduring love is you. It is to you He chooses to express His love in providing your daily bread. While many would say that is all we need, there is more. God knows better. He provides for our eternal good. His ever-enduring love (promised love) caused Him to send His beloved Son to be our Savior. He alone is able to save us from the just punishment we deserved for our sins, not the least of which is often ingratitude.

It was the sending of a Savior from sin and sin’s just punishment that fully explains this love that endures forever. It was Jesus who came and lived a perfect and holy life under the Law in your place. God credits His righteous and holy life to you, the sinner. While the remaining barrier to your eternal good was sin, God the Father placed the entirety of sin’s debt on Jesus as He bore sin’s punishment on the cross. With the righteousness we need before God obtained and the punishment our sin deserved removed by the blood of Christ, we are called by the Gospel to faith in the Son of God and the

salvation He brings. In this forgiveness, we are loved and we in turn confess and follow this savior God.

May our Thanksgiving be more than lip service for all the blessings we have, and may it be more than just a gathering for pleasant conversation on material things. Rather, may our conversation include the One who gives us all; not the least of all is His Son, in whose name we gather to worship. May our offerings this Thanksgiving reflect a true response of gratitude to the God who provides our daily bread. Then our thanksgiving will be sounded like that of the psalmist as we raise our voices in praise to a precious provider and savior God who has given us all. As the psalmist reminds us, “For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; **his faithfulness continues through all generations**” (v. 5, emphasis added).



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





# On the Synodical Scene...

## The Ordination of Christian Hansen Eisenbeis



(Left to Right): The Reverends John Strackbein, Christian Eisenbeis, Gaylin Schmeling, and Craig Born.

Candidate of Theology Christian Eisenbeis is a 2009 graduate of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. He was ordained and installed as associate pastor of Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and of Grace Lutheran Church, Norman, Oklahoma, on August 19, 2012. The Rev. John Strackbein of Holy Cross served as liturgist and performed the rites of ordination and installation. Both congregations are members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The Rev. Gaylin R. Schmeling preached the ordination sermon based on Matthew 10:40 with the theme “The Public Ministry Speaks for Christ.” The Rev. Mark Bitter of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma, served as organist.

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

## The Ordination of Luke Willitz

On Sunday, September 2, 2012, Candidate of Theology Luke Willitz was ordained and installed as pastor of New Life Lutheran Church of Sebring, Florida. The candidate’s seminary classmate, the Rev. Peter Heyn, pastor of Peace Lutheran Church of Lakeland, Florida, served as liturgist. Another classmate, the Rev. Matthew Moldstad, pastor of Peace Lutheran Church of Kissimmee, Florida, served as lector. The Rev. Joel Willitz, pastor of St. John Lutheran Church of Frankenmuth, Michigan, and father of the candidate, delivered the sermon. His text was 1 John 1:1–2:2 and his theme, “The Blood of Jesus Christ God’s Son Cleanses Us from All Sin.” The Rev. Herbert Huhnerkoch, Circuit 1 Visitor, conducted the rites of ordination and installation.

Additional pastors who participated in the laying on of hands were the Reverends Michael Dale, Charles Keeler, Andrew Palmquist, and David Lillegard. Mrs. Ione Lillegard served as organist.

The women of New Life prepared and served a variety of delicious finger foods and refreshments.



(Back row L to R): Pastor emeriti David Lillegard and Herbert Huhnerkoch, the Reverends Andrew Palmquist, Charles Keeler, and Michael Dale. (Front row L to R): the Reverends Peter Heyn, Luke Willitz, Joel Willitz, Matthew Moldstad

## The Installation of Harvey Abrahamson

On Sunday, September 2, in a 4 p.m. service, the Rev. Harvey Abrahamson was installed as pastor of Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Elderon, Wisconsin. The Rev. Tosten Skaaland, who served Our Savior’s for over 30 years until his retirement this summer, served as the liturgist. The Rev. Bob Otto, Circuit Visitor, performed the rite of installation. The Rev. Nathanael Abrahamson, Harvey’s son, preached the sermon titled, “The Most Powerful Message There Is,” based on 1 Corinthians 2:1–5. The Reverends Roger Holtz, Greg Haugen, John Smith, Leonard Buelow, and Kurt Kluge also took part in the service. Following the installation service, the ladies of Our Savior’s served a wonderful celebration meal.



(Back Row L to R): Reverends Roger Holtz, Nathanael Abrahamson, Gregory Haugen, John Smith, and Kurt Kluge (Front Row L to R): Reverends Tosten Skaaland, Harvey Abrahamson, Robert Otto, and Leonard Buelow.

## Camp Indianhead 2012—Minnesota and Iowa

Junior high-aged youth from Iowa and Minnesota met at Lutheran Island Camp, located near Henning, Minnesota. About 70 youth, 10 counselors and 11 pastors participated during the week of July 15 through 20. There were a week-long intensive Bible study on Holy Baptism, worship and devotions morning and evening, and a wide variety of fun activities. The camp is located on an island in East Battle Lake. Everyone really enjoyed the fellowship together in Christ and His Word. The participants grew in their faith in Jesus' forgiveness and in their lives given by grace in Holy Baptism.

*Submitted by the Rev. Robert Harting*



## Bethany Seminary Begins a New School Year: 2012–2013

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary began its new school year with an opening service on August 27 in Good Shepherd Chapel. Prof. Michael K. Smith based his message for the opening service on John 10:1–5. He noted that we may periodically hear many voices, even Satan's. But Jesus is our true Shepherd who assures us of His forgiveness and guides us with His voice, which we hear in our Baptism, in His Word, and in His Holy Supper. Future pastors train to proclaim the voice of Jesus to the flocks they will serve because His voice alone leads people to heaven.

The teaching staff for the seminary this year is as follows: Thomas Flunker, Adolph Harstad, Thomas Kuster, Dennis Marzolf, Michael Smith, and Gaylin Schmeling. Professor Flunker is teaching Hispanic outreach; Professor Harstad is teaching in the areas of Old Testament and homiletics; Professor Kuster is teaching communication; Professor Marzolf is teaching hymnology; Professor Smith is teaching in the areas of New Testament and homiletics; and Professor Schmeling is teaching dogmatics, church history, and homiletics.

The seminary enrollment this year numbers eleven: two vicars, one senior, two middlers, and six juniors. The vicars are Ben Wiechmann at King of Grace Lutheran (Golden Valley, Minnesota) and Michael Willitz at Christ Lutheran (Sutherlin, Oregon).



*(Left to right): Michael Lilienthal, Jeff Hendrix, Daniel Ruiz, Andrew Soule, Stephen Stelaff, Jesse DeDeyne, Josh Mayer, Matthew Behmer, Paul Lange. Not pictured: Paul Webber, Ben Wiechmann, Michael Willitz*

## ELS Women's Missionary Society, Pacific Northwest Meets

About 60 people attended the 35th annual ELS Women's Missionary Rally hosted by Christ Lutheran Church, Sutherlin, Oregon. The opening devotion was led by the host pastor, the Rev. Frank Fiedler III, who used the Office of Prime and the hymn "Stand Up, Stand Up, for Jesus." The Rally theme was "Soldiers of the Cross, Arise!" Linda Strepp, president of the Christ Lutheran Church women's group welcomed the group to the rally.

The Rev. Steven Petersen presented a movie "Taking Root: Planting the Gospel in Chile" by Chelsea Dietsche, who teaches ESL classes in Chile and slides of ESL schools around the world.

The first order of the business meeting was to look at a presentation of 35 years of Mission Rally history, given by Barbara Coggsell. She stated that the rally attendees have given over \$75,000 to the Lord's mission work. Next, it was resolved to send the 2013 mites offerings to Grace Lutheran Church, Redmond, Oregon.

Regarding the election of rally officers, Kay Kassulke (Medford, OR) was elected president, Cindy Black (Myrtle Creek, OR) was re-elected secretary, and Kathy Kahler (Hood River, OR) was elected Christian Growth Chairman for one year.

Mrs. Anita Smith spoke about the orphanages in India, where the children are hearing the Gospel each day. The Rev. Michael Smith presented information on the home mission congregations of the ELS. A quilted wall hanging with the pictures of the ELS congregations in the west was given to Our Savior Lutheran Church in Grants Pass, Oregon.

Vicar Michael Willitz led the closing devotion, using the text Ephesians 6:10–18. The next rally will be at Parkland Lutheran Church, Tacoma, Washington.

*Submitted by Barbara Coggsell*



# Pastor, I Have a Question...

**Question:** *What happens to Christians when we die?*

**Answer:** November 1 is All Saints Day. On that day we commemorate the blessed dead. Most everyone wonders about the afterlife. We are self-conscious, that is, we are aware of ourselves and our existence. It is nearly impossible for us to imagine a time when we no longer are, when we no longer exist.

In the beginning, God sculpted Adam from the dust. He breathed into Adam the breath of life giving him a soul and life. God warned Adam and Eve, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Adam lived 930 years and then he died (Genesis 5:5). Every person born after Adam died.

God's people bury their dead, returning them to the ground from which they were made. "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Jesus came to conquer death. St. John wrote of Him, "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10).

Jesus was punished for human sin. Breathing His last, He proclaimed, "It is finished." The work for which He had been sent was complete. Jesus breathed His last and commended His Spirit to God.

His body was buried in a borrowed grave. On the third day, He rose bodily. Paul announced the results: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

Jesus proved what happens when we die. Resurrected, He showed Himself to many witnesses. This is the truth about death: it is temporary. As Jesus rose, His people too shall rise.

Paul said that some of the witnesses had died. They had fallen asleep. Our bodies rest in cemeteries, sleeping places, awaiting the trumpet call signaling Jesus' return. He brings with Him the souls of those who sleep in Him:

"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet

of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words"

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Christianity provides the answer: "It is not death to die to leave this weary road, and midst the brotherhood on high to be at home with God." Death is a separation caused by sin (Romans 6:23). Our bodies wear out and die. Souls leave the body (Luke 23:43) and angels carry the souls of believers to heaven while their bodies sleep in the grave. We on earth and those in heaven await the resurrection.




**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.



# Youth Notes

I learned a lot about perseverance while training for Ironman Wisconsin in 2004. For those of you unfamiliar with the sport, triathlon is an activity where competitors swim, bike, and run. The term Ironman refers to the longest race distance—2.4 miles of swimming, 112 miles of biking, and 26.2 miles of running. Participants enter the water at 7:00 a.m. and have 17 hours to complete the race. If you cross the finish line before midnight, you are an Ironman!

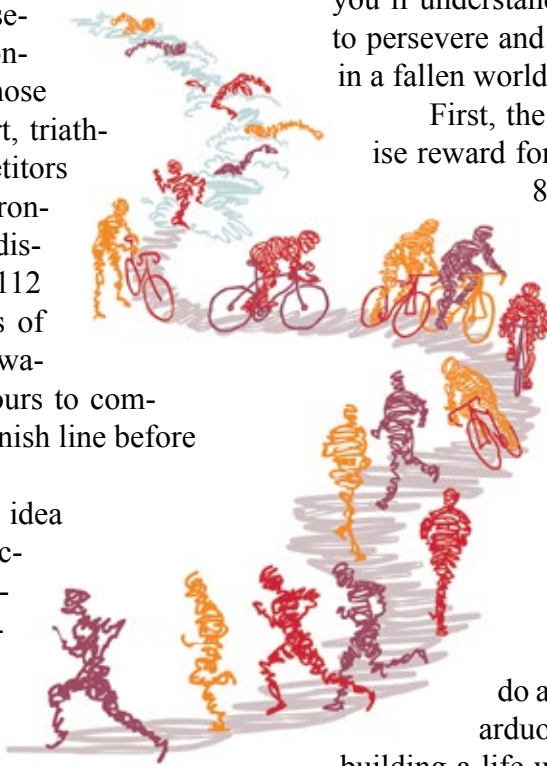
At the age of 42, I got the idea in my head that I would like to accomplish this feat. With a traditional sports background of football, basketball, and baseball, I had little experience with long-distance swimming, biking, or running. Nevertheless, I started training. It took me 18 months to get in shape. Race day temperatures in early September peaked at 95 degrees with 30 mph southerly winds. Under these severe conditions, it took every ounce of determination that I had to finish the race. I crossed the finish line that evening at 7:53 p.m. as the announcer yelled, “Hey, Dan, you’re an Ironman!” Needless to say, it was a long day, but well worth it!

## *Building a Life Worth Living* **Building Perseverance**

The prefix *per* with the base word *severe* denotes being in the middle of a difficult situation. For Christians, building a life worth living is often challenging! Nobody sails through life without spiritual, physical, or emotional challenges. The longer you live, the more you’ll understand. So what allows followers of Jesus to persevere and stay focused on eternity while living in a fallen world?

First, the many verses in the Bible that promise reward for faithfulness. My favorite is Romans 8:28, which tells us “that all things work together for good to those who love God.” Second, the example that Jesus set for us. As with all marks of spiritual maturity, Jesus is the perfect example of perseverance. From the time Adam and Eve fell into sin, God promised a Savior who would come into this world, persevere through unimaginable human suffering, and ultimately render Satan powerless.

If you ever get the crazy notion to do an Ironman, be prepared to put in some arduous training. If you are serious about building a life worth living, be prepared to do as the apostle Paul wrote to his Colossian friends when he said, “continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel” (Colossians 1:23).



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



# The Christ in Media Institute Promotes Missions

“Why wait for a study? I want to start a virtual church next Sunday!” said the Rev. Gonzalo Delgadillo. What is a “virtual church”? Many people who have come to faith through media messages are not near an ELS or WELS congregation. A virtual church would offer an interactive Spanish or English service in



which people from around the world could worship in liturgy, Word, and song with Pastor Delgadillo in El Paso, Texas.

Ideas like these often emerged at the

Media Outreach in World Missions Conference sponsored by the Christ in Media Institute and hosted at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota. About 140 people attended the two-day conference, including world missionaries of the ELS and WELS; media and technology professionals; students and faculty members from Bethany Lutheran College, Wisconsin Lutheran College, and Martin Luther College; and board members of the two synods who deal with missions.

To lead conference discussions, the Christ In Media Institute invited a panel of seven people involved in foreign missions and media work: Rev. Gonzalo Delgadillo, El Paso, Texas; Rev. Ugis Sildegs, co-pastor of Riga Lutheran Church, Latvia; Rev. Terry Schultz, missionary in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Peru; Rev. Paul Hartman, missionary in Puerto Rico and Coordinator of Multi-Language Publications; Michael Klebig, San Jose, California, engineer, and his wife Jas Lonnquist, screen writer and producer; and Rev. John Lawrence, Director of Advanced Studies, Asian Lutheran Seminary, Hong Kong.

Prior to the conference, each presenter wrote brief essays addressing seven challenges to using modern technology in proclaiming the Gospel to people in remote areas of the world. The challenges were identified as: 1) Cultural, 2) Technological, 3) Creative, 4) Legal and Political, 5) Teaching Local Production, 6) Stewardship, and 7) Discipleship. A conference session was devoted to discussion of each.

The discussions demonstrated that new technology, the internet, and other media have given the Church unprecedented opportunities to share the Gospel message with vast audiences throughout the world. Still, to use technology well, mission workers need to understand and overcome the cultural, legal, and financial issues that could be barriers to the spread of the Gospel message.

Among the examples of technology useful in mission work presented at the conference was a “portable media distribution system” featuring a palm-sized projector powered by sunlight that could easily be loaded with media and taken to remote places in the world. There was also an inexpensive “mission field video production package” that could be used on site in world missions to produce videos. Through a generous donation of \$2,500, one such media production package was offered to one of the world fields. A nomination process produced several strong candidates, and the production package was presented to the ELS mission in Chile.

In the closing session, Dr. Tom Kuster, executive director of the Christ in Media Institute, presented the 2012 “Lucas Cranach Screenwriting Award” for creative writing to Jeff Hendrix, a student at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

During the two conference evenings, seventeen groups presented reports and video clips of media work already being done and spoke about future projects, such as the planned sequels to the widely distributed “Road to Emmaus.”

In the final conference session, participants discussed action items that could be undertaken to promote Gospel outreach via media and technology. Suggestions included studying use of virtual congregations, creating online resource directories, providing support for creative talent, supporting national leaders in learning to use technology, and many others.



The conference concluded with a festive international worship service in Bethany’s Trinity Chapel, featuring a message from God’s Word by Rev. Steve Petersen, Mission Coordinator for the ELS, a number of Scripture readings by world church leaders in their national tongues, and powerful music by the Bethany Concert Choir.

*By the editor with Professor Thomas Kuster, executive director of the Christ in Media Institute.*

## From the Editor...

# Mission Works

Through the technology of multimedia presentations and the internet, God has given His Church an unprecedented opportunity to bring the Gospel to people who live in jungles and in other remote areas of the earth. Multimedia deals with the creation of videos and published books that can be distributed to areas where Christian missionaries may not be welcome.

With a modest investment in equipment, Christians can create quality videos that can be put on the internet and shown around the world. Videos of worship services can be stored or broadcasted live (streamed) on the internet. Other church bodies and congregations have been using this technology for years. The success of the video “Road to Emmaus” demonstrates how the message of Easter joy can be distributed in churches and on the internet.

We ought to rejoice in the opportunities God has given us to proclaim the Gospel to the world in many languages and with many formats. However, multimedia is just one part of the work that needs to be done in reaching lost souls. It was recognized at the Christ in Media conference that personal instruction in the Word needed to follow those who had come to know Jesus.

During the first 1,500 years of the Christian Church, multimedia presentations and printed books did not exist. Yet missionaries to Germany, Scandinavia, Britain, and northern Africa proclaimed the Gospel message with such success that the Mediterranean Sea was a “Christian lake” for 600 years.

Mission work during the first 1,000 years of the Christian Church consisted of a two-pronged effort: the proclamation of Christ’s resurrection spoke about the hope Jesus gave to the world that was absent in other religions, and the work of individual Christians to love and care about their neighbors and enemies.

It was noted at the conference that the followers of Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and animist religions have little care for people who follow other religions. They care only about their own. But Jesus instructed His followers: “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12). The word “love” means that we have a genuine and purposeful care about the physical and spiritual well-being of our neighbors.

Along with the proclamation of the Gospel to the world via the internet, the Christian Church still grows through the loving personal interactions of preachers and church members with their neighbors. As we are strengthened by God’s love for us through Christ’s death, we also are emboldened to show Christ’s love to those around us, whether they are Christians or not. As we ask God to give us compassionate hearts and eyes that see opportunities to serve others, we also ask Him to give us opportunities to “give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

Some ways to exercise our Christian love could be praying for the lost, writing letters and notes of encouragement, bringing children to Sunday School and worship services, handing out tracts or Bibles to people we know who could use them, providing meals to people who are sick or experiencing a tragedy in their lives, visiting or writing to the lonely and those in prison.

We do not have to be multimedia experts to show Christian love to people. But we can also support the multimedia efforts of congregations and our synod so that people around the world can know about Jesus through the written and spoken Gospel message on the internet. We should be praying for the work being done in our home and foreign missions by our ELS missionaries.

At the CELC conference in May 2011 and the Christ in Media conference in October 2012, it was amazing to hear how the Gospel message was reaching unbelievers through personal contacts, the internet and through mass media. Let us pray that God will continue to bless and protect the work of missionaries in nations where conversion to Christianity can mean separation from one’s family or the death penalty. Let us ask God to help us be mission-minded—that is, be compassionate towards others—so that the message of Christ crucified can reach the ears and hearts of the people around us and in the world. Through our various vocations, we can be the salt that helps and the light that shows Jesus as the Savior of the world.



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

# A Bible Garden That Produced Much Fruit

“Pastor,” asked Anna Seidl, “could we start a Bible Garden at church and invite neighbors to help and then have some of the produce?” That question started a summer-long project on the grounds of Grace Lutheran Church, located on the west side of Madison, Wisconsin. Anna is working on a doctorate in plant pathology at the UW–Madison campus



after graduating from Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota. Most people think of a Bible Garden as a place to grow a collection of plants mentioned in the Bible, but Anna had a slightly different idea in mind. This would be a beautiful combination of vegetables and flowers where Biblical references to plants and the growing of food could be brought to life for the gardeners. The hope was to involve both church members and members of the community.

In the spring, Anna put down black plastic to kill the grass, planning that the garden would be in the shape of a cross. Marigolds and vinca were planted to form a border around the edge that would bloom all summer. All the popular garden vegetables were included, though often with a twist, as tomatoes ripened to shades of pink, yellow, orange, and purple-black and beans came in green, yellow, and purple. Other plants that did well were squash, eggplant, zucchini, cabbage, cucumbers, beets, and carrots. Tall red cannas were planted in the center of the cross with other flowers dispersed among the vegetables.

Integrated into everything were Bible passages, with a devotion on a different pertinent passage each week. One week, the gardeners sowed wheat that fell on good soil and on the path. The wheat grew until the rabbits found it, but it still demonstrated the parable Jesus told about the four types of hearing God’s Word. The week the weeds really started poking up, the focus was on Genesis, where God said that we would always battle thorns and weeds to produce our

food. Another was on patience as the gardeners waited for the tomatoes to ripen, another on blight and mildew, mentioned in Deuteronomy and present on the zucchini, and another on God’s bountiful providence.

The gardeners took home as much produce as they wanted, and other vegetables appeared at various church functions. Sun Gold cherry tomatoes were enjoyed by all for the rally Sunday potluck with sliced onions and tomatoes to add to the hamburgers. A Bible Garden Vegetable Medley appeared for the Harvest Festival/Mission Festival Sunday and Bible Garden Hot Dish, featuring eggplant, zucchini, peppers, onions, and homemade tomato sauce, was shared at the young people’s Bible study dinner.

The Bible Garden caught the attention of the neighbors that live around the church, and they enjoyed the flowers and picked some of the fruit. Two long rows of carrots, tucked behind the now-frozen marigolds, are waiting for



the gardeners to dig them up and find the delicious (though perhaps almost too abundant) “treasure in the field.” We all need to eat more carrots! This first year was fairly successful, but was still a year of getting started. The hope will be to encourage involvement of more members of the community to ultimately share the Gospel with them.

## PERIODICAL

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