

July 2012

# LS Online

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"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.  
And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

(John 8:31-32)

# You Are Free

Freedom! We love it. It is what makes us who we are. We, after all, live in the “land of the free.” Many will commemorate our independence with a beer in their hand and brats on the grill. Fireworks will burst overhead and proclaim to the world that our freedom is worth celebrating. In the euphoria of the moment, we may even consider how blessed we are to live in the United States of America. But do we take our freedom for granted? Do we forget the great cost with which our freedom was bought? Over 25,000 Americans gave their lives to win your freedom in the Revolutionary War. About the same number were wounded. Hundreds of thousands of Americans have given their lives in the ensuing wars to protect those freedoms. Do you take it for granted? Does your failure to consider the cost cause you to misuse your freedom?

The misuse of freedom is a topic that Paul took up with the Galatians. He wrote, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature. Rather, serve one another in love” (Galatians 5:13). In Christ, we truly are free: free from the demands of the law and free from the consequence of sin. Jesus has won for us life in heaven; there is nothing that we can do to earn it. It does not matter what you have done, how bad a person you have been. In Christ, all of your sins are forgiven. But do not think that this was an easy matter or one without great cost.

Your spiritual freedom came at a great price. God sacrificed His own Son to set you free. Jesus used His freedom to serve you. He became a slave to your sin. He claimed it as His own and suffered and died in

your place so that you could live in liberty both here in time and hereafter in eternity. He didn’t make this sacrifice because you deserved it. He did it simply because He loves you. By His grace, you are free.

How will you use your freedom? The temptation is to use it to satisfy our sinful nature. Here are some examples: God has not commanded that I go to church every Sunday, so I won’t. God has not commanded that I give a specific amount of money in thankfulness to him, so I will give as little as my conscience will allow. God has not specifically commanded me to serve in the functioning of the congregation, so I won’t.

We often use our freedom in selfish ways. When we do so, we are forgetting the cost and who paid it. You are free. Free to serve Him who gave up His freedom to serve you. We have much for which to be thankful.

We can celebrate our independence with a beer in our hand and brats on the grill. But let’s not forget the cost. One day you will live in the true “land of the free,” heaven. You will be there because Jesus died for you. In Him, you are really free.

*Your spiritual freedom came at a great price. God sacrificed His own Son to set you free.*



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

# A Fragile Freedom

“His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts.” (Psalm 145:3-4)

We are only a few years into the twenty-first century (the 2000's). Many of us can look back and remember the unusual fear that people had when the 1900s were ending and the new century began. Concerns were expressed about the computer breakdown that would occur and other fears surfaced. Some people designated the year 2012 as the end of the world. What would the future hold for us? It seemed that the future would be threatening to the entire world history and, as a result, the apprehensions escalated.

It is, however, essential that we remember who is to be trusted by every generation. It is God who sees to it that the blessings continue. Think back on the previous century. World powers and despotic rulers raised their heads and fell again, such rulers as Hitler, Napoleon, Stalin, and Sadam Hussein. Even the feared United Soviet Socialist Republic fell into shambles as freedom returned to many nations in Asia and Europe.

But the fragile nature of freedom is not easy to maintain due to the fact that the heart of mankind, including citizenry and rulers alike, have the natural corruption of human nature to deal with. Mankind does not think about other people in Christian love. All people need to be brought to know the mercy and love of God for mankind in order to have a freedom that lasts.

Martin Luther, in one of his writings on government and society, put it this way:

If the world were composed of genuine Christians, that is true believers, no prince, king, lord, sword, or law would be necessary or helpful. For why should they need them, since they have in their hearts the Holy Spirit, who teaches them and sees to it that they wrong no one, that they love everyone, and that they gladly suffer wrong and even death from everyone?...It is, therefore, impossible

for the secular sword and law to find anything to do among Christians, since of their own accord they do much more than all its laws and doctrines can demand. This is exactly what Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:9: “The law is not made for righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient. (*Treatise on Secular Authority*).

Read Psalm 33:12—“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”

As Americans, we need to be grateful to God for preserving among us the leaven of Christianity—the mighty acts of God that we know and believe, especially His sending Christ as Savior—which results in preserving among us:

- Liberty to worship Christ.
- The opportunity to tell the next generation the mighty works of God.
- A world in which to love and serve others.
- A nation which can continue to spread the news that God is yet gracious.
- A fragile freedom for the next generation.

We can use the blessings and freedoms God has granted us in the United States to worship God in spirit and truth, to support missions throughout the world, and to show Christian love to those around us.

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**Wayne Halvorson** is co-pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Albert Lea, Minnesota.



# WHY LUTHERANS?

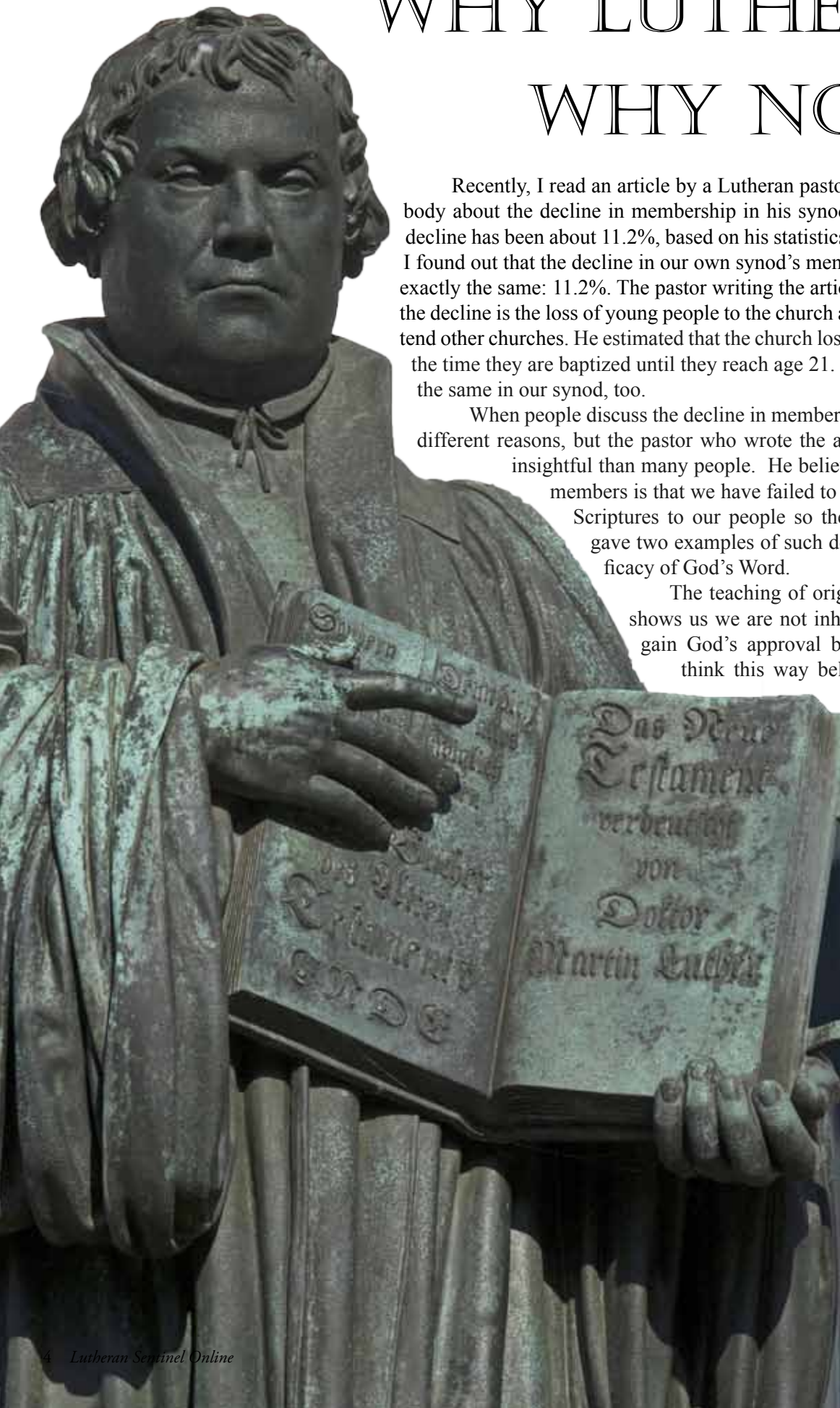
## WHY NOW?

Recently, I read an article by a Lutheran pastor from another Lutheran church body about the decline in membership in his synod. During the last ten years, the decline has been about 11.2%, based on his statistics. In checking our *Synod Report*, I found out that the decline in our own synod's membership over the same period is exactly the same: 11.2%. The pastor writing the article noted that a major reason for the decline is the loss of young people to the church and adult members leaving to attend other churches. He estimated that the church loses 75% of its young people from the time they are baptized until they reach age 21. I imagine that statistic would be the same in our synod, too.

When people discuss the decline in membership in churches they give many different reasons, but the pastor who wrote the article mentioned above is more insightful than many people. He believes a main reason we are losing members is that we have failed to teach important doctrines of the Scriptures to our people so they understand them clearly. He gave two examples of such doctrines: original sin and the efficacy of God's Word.

The teaching of original sin is important because it shows us we are not inherently good creatures who can gain God's approval by our own doing. People who think this way believe they can save themselves and see no need for a Savior.

The Bible clearly teaches that the human nature is sinful and we are corrupt from the moment of conception. This is taught in the Psalms, where it is written, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (51:5). It was taught by our Lord Jesus when He said, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to Spirit" (John 3:5-6). It is also taught by the Apostle Paul: "By one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).



The only remedy for original sin is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel reveals that Jesus came to this world to live a life without sin. Jesus did this because He was born without original sin. This was the case because He was conceived in the womb of His mother by the power of the Holy Spirit. He did not have a human father. He is true God, so He had a perfect nature. He was able to live a perfect life on earth, obeying every one of God's laws all the time. Jesus offered His sinless life on the cross as the perfect sacrifice to pay for the sins of the world. On account of His work God forgives our sins.

The power of forgiveness is greater than the power of sin. Through Christ we have the remedy to original and actual sins. As in the medical world, we need to have the diagnosis before we can receive the cure. This is why it is so important to understand the scriptural teaching of original sin correctly. No one likes to hear that he or she is a sinner, but we need to know this in order to believe in the Savior. Our church body needs to teach this doctrine clearly so our members recognize the importance of belonging to a church that teaches the truths of God's Word.

The Scriptures give us a grim diagnosis when it states that we are conceived and born in sin (Psalm 51:5). There is only one remedy for that condition and that is faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ, who cleansed us from the stain of sin and won forgiveness for us by His perfect life and death on the cross. The benefits of Christ's work become ours through faith in Jesus as our Savior.

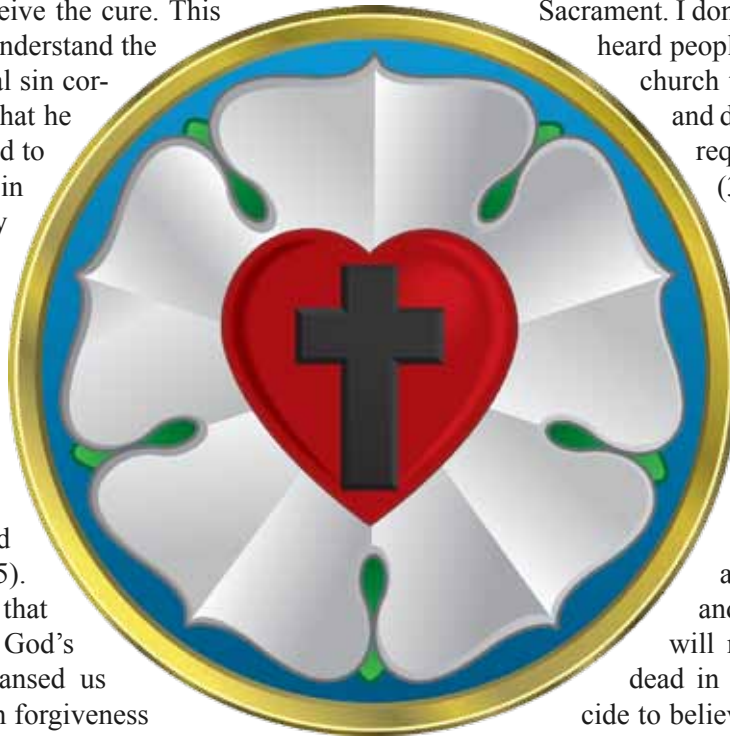
It is important to know that we are sinners so we will see our need for the Savior. It is just as important to know how God brings us to faith and keeps us in the faith so we receive our eternal inheritance in heaven. God brings people to faith through the Sacrament of Baptism and through the Word of the Gospel. He keeps people in the faith through the Word of the Gospel and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Gospel and the Sacraments are called the Means of Grace because the Holy Spirit works through them to bestow God's grace (forgiveness) upon us. God's power is working through these means to change our hearts from sin and death to faith and life. He also works through these means to strengthen our faith and help us in our fight against sin and the devil.

The power of God's Word to accomplish its work in us is taught in the Scriptures in such passages as: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16) and "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is 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 55:10-11). The purpose for which God sent His Word is to bring us to faith and keep us in the faith.

If we want God's power working in our lives to keep us in the faith, we must be regular in our use of Word and Sacrament. I don't know how many times I have heard people say, "You don't have to go to church to be a Christian." That is a lie and deception of the devil. God's law requires regular church attendance (3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment), but more importantly the one who absents himself or herself from Word and Sacrament forfeits God's power in the Word to remain strong in the faith.

Most churches deny the power of God's Word. They teach that the Bible is a religious instruction manual (like all other religious books) and that people decide to believe and follow God by free will. This will never happen. People who are dead in trespasses and sins cannot decide to believe in God. God is the only One who can turn a heart from unbelief to faith. He is the only One who keeps us in the faith. He does this through His powerful Word.

It does make a difference which church you go to. Most churches do not teach the doctrines of Original Sin and the Efficacy of God's Word correctly and thus deprive their members of understanding their true malady (sin) and the remedy God provides (Word and Sacrament). Our church teaches these scriptural truths correctly "so your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on the power of God" (I Corinthians 2:5).



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**Matthew Lutmann** is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Vero Beach, Florida.



# Our Comfort in Christ's Work of Justification

## Part 2

If we may use the analogy of a courtroom scene in conveying the comfort of our justification before God as stated in the previous article of this series (June 2012), we may also find consolation in several of the words and phrases used by our Lord, written down by the holy authors.

The Holy Spirit used words common to the world's social legal systems throughout the ages: sentence, condemnation, and guilt; charge, imputation and accusation; verdict, decree, and ruling; lawful, righteous, and blameless; innocence, acquittal, and free; advocate, mediator, and priest; record, evidence and testimony; just, holy, and saintly, etc. God used language that was familiar to many cultures concerning the concepts of people on trial before divine truth and justice and the sentence of "guilty" is pronounced because all have sinned.

However, in His mercy, God did not let that sentence of "guilty" be the last word. God responded by declaring mankind's guiltlessness and Christ's guilt! Jesus has won complete atonement for all sin, meaning that His sacrificial death paid in full God's justice. Jesus Himself says this in John 17:4 and 19:30. He paid the wages of sin by His dying and being forsaken by God. He was regarded as the sinning party (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Then God justified Jesus by raising Him from the dead. The Sin-bearer was declared innocent and free from the guilt that He bore on the cross. The sunshine of God's grace casts a glow over all the world wherever the Gospel is proclaimed. How do we know? Had Jesus remained in the grave, sin would have won! The holy writer says, "Christ was raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

Because of Christ's resurrection, we can see that we were justified by God before we were even born, as the Bible assures us: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not charging to them their sins" (2 Corinthians 5:19). God's justification and reconciliation of the world took place before all faith. Because at Calvary, long before you and I came along, divine love forever settled the issue for all of us. Through Christ, the world was declared forgiven.

Why, then, do not all sinners in the world go to heaven? The answer is that not everyone believes what Jesus accomplished on the cross. For Jesus stated, "Everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life;

and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). So what is the place of faith?

Faith saves, not by its own virtue or work, but by the virtue of its object—Christ as Savior. Faith, created in us by the Holy Spirit, receives what God has done in Christ. Faith is the receiver; it is meant to be passive. The Holy Spirit works faith through His Gospel to accept as fact the teaching that God has already declared all people just because of Christ's sacrifice. Faith does not cause God to justify us; it only accepts what is already accomplished by Christ. Saving faith is the trust that comes from hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17; 1:17). When faith trusts God's promise of forgiveness, it receives the benefits of the reality of Christ's saving work. Faith that trusts this reality and accepts it as

true indeed becomes active in love and good works as fruits of faith. Works are not the cause of one's justification in Christ.

Faith is confidence in what Jesus has done and God has promised. God cannot lie! The pardon God proclaims makes us certain of salvation from death and hell. As our bodies live on the same nutritional foods year after year, so the soul lives on the same good news—the suffering and death of Jesus Christ for the sins of

the world. In order that the devil does not sow doubt in God's Word so that we lose our trust in Jesus, we need to continually hear the message of this Gospel over and over for spiritual nutrition. This is how God set things up.

In the courtroom on Judgment Day, God will acquit all those who believe on Jesus and give them eternal life. God has promised to do this.



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

# Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

## Graduate Vitae

*The Lutheran Sentinel is pleased to restore this feature so that the people of our synod can get to know those who have recently graduated from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.*

### Nathanael Abrahamson

Nathanael (Nate) Abrahamson was born on October 22, 1985 in Midland, Michigan. His parents are the Rev. Harvey and Kristine Abrahamson and the late Ruth Abrahamson. He was baptized into the Christian faith at Holy Scripture Lutheran Church, Midland, Michigan, and confirmed in the faith at Redeemer Lutheran Church, New Hampton, Iowa. He has lived in Midland, Michigan; Princeton, Minnesota; Suttons Bay, Michigan; Ulen, Minnesota; New Hampton, Iowa; and North Mankato, Minnesota. Nate graduated from New Hampton Community High School, New Hampton, Iowa, in 2004. In 2008, he graduated from Bethany Lutheran College with a degree in Broadfield Social Studies.

Nate has been blessed with a variety of ministry experiences especially in the area of youth work. During the summer of 2007 he took part in a youth ministry internship at Bloomington-Living Hope Lutheran Church (WELS) in the Twin Cities. Starting that fall he then led **CROSSED** Youth Ministry of Peace Lutheran Church, North Mankato, Minnesota, for the next four years. From the fall of 2009 to the spring of 2011 Nate also served a senior-year vicarage with Hope Lutheran Church, Farmington, Minnesota. He worked extensively with the outreach efforts of this young ELS mission congregation. This past year he served his vicarage under the Rev. Nathan Krause at Abiding Shepherd Lutheran Church, Cottage Grove, Wisconsin.

Nate and his wife Stella were joined together in marriage on May 27, 2012. They spent the next two and a half weeks after their wedding visiting Greece, where much of Stella's family still resides. She was born in Orange County, California, and was raised in Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota. She is a graduate of Minnesota State University, Mankato and works in Special Education.



### Timothy Grundmeier

Timothy Grundmeier was born, baptized, and raised in Houston, Texas. In seventh grade, his family moved to Stavanger, Norway, where he was confirmed by Pastor Egil Edvardsen at St. Lukas evangelisk-lutherske forsamling (St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church). Tim's two years in Norway have made him somewhat well-known among those at Bethany with deep Norwegian roots.

Tim attended high school at Luther Preparatory School in Watertown, Wisconsin, and college at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. He graduated from the latter in 2007 with a BA in Biblical Languages. After graduation, Tim married Erika (nee Schreiner). In 2008, he enrolled at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. While at seminary, Erika taught at Crown of Life Lutheran School in West St. Paul, Minnesota, while Tim commuted from the Twin Cities.

Last year, Tim and Erika had their first child, a daughter, Emma. She continues to bring them lots of joy. Tim's vicarage took place at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Okauchee, Wisconsin, under the supervision of Pastor Jonathan Madson.

Overall, Tim has thoroughly enjoyed his time at Bethany Seminary. The instruction of the professors, the camaraderie with his fellow students, and the privilege of studying God's Word have all been memories that he will cherish for a lifetime.



### Peter Heyn

Peter Heyn was born on March 27, 1980 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The following day he was baptized into the family of God. He is the oldest of nine children born to the Rev. Thomas and LaRue Heyn. As Peter grew up, he was blessed to live in many places, as his father served WELS congregations in Wiloughby, Ohio; Bogotá, Colombia; Madison, Wisconsin; and El Paso, Texas. For this reason, Peter attended Lutheran elementary schools in Madison, Wisconsin; El Paso, Texas; and Appleton, Wisconsin. He was confirmed in the Christian faith at Mt. Olive Lutheran (Appleton, Wisconsin) in 1994.

Peter attended high school at Fox Valley Lutheran (Appleton, Wisconsin) and Lakeside Lutheran (Lake Mills, Wisconsin), from which he graduated in 1998. His family had moved back to Madison in 1995. His father currently serves as pastor of Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church outside Madison.

After high school Peter studied at Marquette University (Milwaukee, Wisconsin), Martin Luther College (New Ulm, Minnesota), and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 2004, he received his Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from UW-Madison, with an additional major in History. Shortly after



graduation, Peter began his Greek and Hebrew studies, still at UW. He also substitute taught in Madison for a year and a half before starting his seminary studies.

Since 2008, he has attended Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota. During his last two years of classes, he was privileged to work as the seminary librarian. He was able to volunteer parts of two of his seminary summers working with the Thoughts of Faith VBS program in Ukraine. The last two summers of seminary he also was able to enjoy the Bethany Bible Land tours of Greece and Israel.

The Lord blessed Peter with a vicarage in sunny California over the past year. There he served Living Word Lutheran (WELS) in Petaluma, and Christ Lutheran (ELS) in Windsor under the supervision of Pastor Jeff Smith. He is very appreciative of his year spent there, and of all of the amazing people he met in both congregations!

Peter enjoys running and he completed his fourth marathon in California. He also has a great passion for music. He plays guitar and a little piano and has been blessed with the chance to play in numerous bands.

## Matthew Moldstad

Matthew Moldstad was born on April 19, 1982, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the third child of ELS President John and Joslyn Moldstad. He was baptized at Bethel Lutheran in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and confirmed at Mt. Olive Lutheran in Mankato, Minnesota. After attending grade school at Holy Cross in Madison, Wisconsin, and later at Mt. Olive in Mankato, Matt went on to high school at Minnesota Valley Lutheran in New Ulm, Minnesota. He graduated in 2000 and continued his studies at Bethany that fall. Upon receiving his Associate of Arts degree at Bethany Lutheran College in 2002, Matt joined the United States Navy. He graduated from the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, in 2003 with an Associate of Arts Degree in Hebrew. From 2004 to 2006, Matt was stationed as a Hebrew Linguist at Fort Gordon in Augusta, Georgia. He returned to Bethany in 2006, where he completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Liberal Arts in December of 2007. He began his studies at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in January of 2008. Matt vicared under Pastor Herbert Huhnerkoch in Kissimmee, Florida. He completed his vicar year in December of 2011. He was installed and ordained as pastor of Peace Evangelical Lutheran in Kissimmee, Florida, on January 1, 2012.



With his background in Hebrew, Matt has taken interest in Old Testament studies. His senior paper at Bethany Lutheran College considered connections between biblical prophecy and the actions of the Israeli government in a military operation in the early 90s. The paper is entitled, "Operation Solomon: An Exercise in Israeli Religion and Politics." His Master of Divinity thesis focused on the fulfillment of certain Old Testament prophecies, entitled, "The Restoration of the Ten Lost Tribes: Prefigured in the Return from Exile, Fulfilled in the Gathering of the Elect." Matt was thrilled to be able to go on a trip to Israel last May offered through Bethany Lutheran College.

Matt married Joni Dukleth on December 17, 2004. Joni is the daughter of the late Rev. John Dukleth. Their first child, Christian Erik, was born on November 10 (Luther's Birthday), 2005. Christian has just finished Kindergarten at Peace Lutheran School. Their second child, Caleb Ethan, was born on December 14, 2007. Caleb will be attending Preschool at Peace in the fall. Their third child, Levi James, was born on July 26, 2010. Matt and Joni just purchased a home in Kissimmee and are adjusting to the life of a pastor's family.

## Luke Willitz

Luke John Willitz was born 9 June 1985 in Spooner, Wisconsin. He was born again by water and the Word on June 16, 1985. The son of the Rev. Joel Willitz, Luke grew up in the states of Arizona, Wisconsin, Georgia, and mostly Florida.

After he graduated from George Jenkins High School in 2004, Luke moved to Mankato, Minnesota, and enrolled at Bethany Lutheran College. He graduated in December 2007, majoring in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Ancient and Medieval studies.

On 21 June 2008, Luke was united in marriage to Kim (née Grunke), a native of Fairfax, Minnesota. Luke and Kim made their first home together in Mankato. The following fall Luke began his studies at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The Lord has blessed Luke and Kim with two children. Aurora Dawn was born 11 May 2009 and Levi Joel was born 8 June 2011.

On 26 June 2011, Luke was installed as a vicar at Bethany Lutheran Church and School of Port Orchard, Washington. He has greatly enjoyed sharing the blessings of the ministry of this congregation.

Luke and Kim enjoy playing with and reading to the kids, being outdoors, walking, camping, horsebackriding, hiking, and playing board/card games together. Kim's interests include genealogy, leatherwork, beadwork, baking, running, writing, and reading. Luke's interests include unicycling, motorcycling, wheel throwing pottery, winemaking, beer brewing, skiing, classic video games, and reading.







# On the Synodical Scene...

## Rev. Longshore Installed at Ulen, Minnesota

The Rev. Boyd Longshore was installed on the afternoon of Sunday, June 10, 2012, at Calvary Lutheran Church in Ulen, Minnesota, with 72 in attendance. The Rev. Mark Faugstad served as liturgist and the Rev. David Thompson preached the sermon on the text 2 Timothy 4:1-8, entitled "Preach the Word, In Or Out of Season." Rev. Thompson, the Visitor of Circuit 8, performed the rite of installation. Also participating in the service from Circuit 8 were Reverends Joe Abrahamson and Nile Merseeth. Following the service, a meal served by the Calvary Ladies Aid was enjoyed by all.



L to R: Reverends Joseph Abrahamson, David Thompson, Boyd Longshore, Nile Merseeth and Mark Faugstad.

## Scottsdale, Arizona Hosts Mission Rally

The Arizona/California Circuit Women's Mission Rally was held at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Scottsdale, Arizona, on April 28, 2012. There were 33 people in attendance, representing the ELS churches in Irvine, California; Lake Havasu City, Arizona; and Scottsdale.

The opening devotion was led by the host pastor, the Rev. Jay Webber.

Nicholas and Kerry Laper, directors of the Gift of Life organization in Ukraine, made a presentation on the humanitarian and evangelistic work of Gift of Life, which is conducted in cooperation with the Ukrainian Lutheran Church.

The Rev. Steven Petersen, ELS World Outreach administrator, made two presentations. In the morning session, he spoke about the synod's work in Europe. In the afternoon session, he covered the mission efforts that are carried out in South America and Asia.

The closing devotion was led by Rev. Carl Wosje.



Photographs of the rally can be viewed on this page in the church web site:  
[www.redeemerscottsdale.org/gallery2012Apr28.html](http://www.redeemerscottsdale.org/gallery2012Apr28.html)



## What's in a Name?

Curious about the name of our mission in Korea? About one-quarter of the Korean population is Christian, most of whom are Presbyterian or Methodist. Among Korean churches, the term "Jesus" is used in the name of the conservative branches and the term "Christ" is used in the name of the more liberal branches. When ELS Missionary Young Ha Kim established our mission in Korea in 2006, he carefully included "Jesus" in the name of the church he registered to identify the confessional character of our theological position.

Rev. Young Ha Kim and his wife Margaret standing at the front door of the mission. The Korean characters on the right read "Korea Jesus Lutheran" (the registered name of the mission) and "East Seoul Canaan Church". On the left: "Korea Jesus Lutheran Mission Headquarters."

# Pastor, I Have a Question...

**Question:** *What did God create the first day?*

**ANSWER:** Light is an amazing thing especially when all creatures see the same tiny wavelength of the electromagnetic spectrum. Of course, some creatures are able to see a larger range of wavelengths and others are limited to a lesser range, but all sight is centered on and around these same wavelengths.

Moses wrote about God creating light: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:1-5).

God's first words to us speak of the beginning. The Bible does not argue about the existence of God, it opens with "God." Before the beginning there is only God. God exists from eternity, as the Psalmist wrote, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psalm 90:2).

Dr. Francis Pieper wrote: "The phrase 'In the beginning' refers to things outside God. When they came into existence, time and space began." Time is a creation of God. Again, Dr. Pieper wrote: "God is the Creator of time without becoming temporal. He accompanies times without becoming subject to time or its laws. God's relation to time is the same as His relation to space. For though God created space and place and is present everywhere, He does not become local, but remains exalted above space and place" (*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, page 446). These concepts are beyond the comprehension of this pastor.

On the first day of creation, God created the heavens and the earth. This is Moses' way of saying that God created the universe, everything on the earth, and everything above the earth.

The term "heavens" has several Biblical meanings. The first thought that comes to the minds of Christians is that place Jesus earned for every sinner. By His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus redeemed sinners and made us worthy of being with God forever. When believers die, Jesus promises us a place with Him in heaven.

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for

you,

I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3). The

heaven promised by God and earned for us by Jesus is not a created place. It is the blessed presence of God, the uncreated One.

Dr. Pieper writes, "The light which God created on the first day was the 'elemental light,' which, on the fourth day, was concentrated in the celestial bodies."

All God's creation is amazing. It is truly wonderful that God's creatures see the same light waves.



**Send your questions to:**

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



# Cross Currents

## Heavenly Daze

A recent bestseller entitled “Heaven Is for Real” has rekindled some more discussion on the subject of heaven, particularly the Christian view of it. The subject even made the cover of *Time* magazine (April 16) and was featured in a five-page article by Jon Meacham. Disclosing that he himself is a Christian, Meacham proceeds to set forth two views of heaven, the one view reflecting that which Christianity has always held and the other view expressing something quite different: “Heaven isn’t just a place you go—heaven is how you live your life.” It is not long before one sees where Meacham’s article is headed—to just another version of the social gospel and a “heaven on earth” interpretation of heaven.

In contradistinction to the biblical teaching of a bodily resurrection from this earth to a celestial place called heaven, Meacham with much enthusiasm entertains the so-called “scholarly” redefinition of heaven as “a manifestation of God’s love on earth.” In his words, this means “the reality one created in the service of the poor, the sick, the enslaved, the oppressed. It is not paradise in the sky but acts of selflessness and love that bring God’s sacred space and grace to a broken world suffused with tragedy.” It all sounds so lovely, mankind living in harmony with one another and caring for one another, a world of selfless love. Who would not want such a world? But that still would not be heaven. Even the best that man can show toward his fellow man is tainted with sin. Heaven is a perfect place and only holiness dwells there.

The “heaven on earth” people, such as appear in the *Time* article, envision heaven only as a condition and that this condition can be achieved by man. This is in opposition to Scripture’s description of heaven as the place where God dwells. The Psalmist tells us He “sitteth in the heavens,” (Psalm 2:4) and it is God’s “throne” (Isaiah 66:1). Furthermore, this place called heaven is not attained by man’s behavior, as the “heaven on earth” people would have it. Heaven is attained only by the behavior of the One who kept the Law of God perfectly for us and laid down His life on the cross for us. The one good quote in the article by Meacham is what a Paotist minister told him: “Our entrance into heaven has nothing to do with how good we are; what matters is how good Jesus is and what he did for us.” The Bible has much to say about heaven as a definite place, and any speculation on the subject outside of Scripture will result in a “heavenly daze.”

## The Devaluation of Life

It was just a matter of time before the unthinkable would become the probable. Knowing the depravity of the human heart as described in Holy Scripture, it perhaps should not surprise us that excuses for abortion would eventually lead to excuses for infanticide. If society can justify the ending of the life of a person before it is born, why can one not then justify the ending of life of an infant after it is born?

It is this line of argumentation that is followed in an article which appeared in the March 2012 issue of the “Journal of Med-

ical Ethics.” It is co-authored by two Italian professors teaching in Australia, Drs. Albert Giubilini and Frances Minerva. Their study, of course, ignores the Christian view of life, that a fetus and an infant are not just fleshly beings, but are also living souls. Their philosophizing leads them to view fetuses and unwanted newborns as non-persons and, they conclude, “since non-persons have no moral right to life, there are no reasons for banning their after-birth abortions.” (They prefer to use the term “after birth abortion” instead of saying what it really is: the killing of a newborn.)

The ethicists set out in their study to answer the question, “After-birth abortion: why should the baby live?” and end up concluding, “The same reasons which justify abortion should also justify the killing of the potential person when it is at the stage of newborn.” It is a chillingly dreadful reality that man in his perverted reasoning can justify infanticide. The civilization that devalues life, including infant life, writes its own death warrant. “Take heed,” says the Lord, “that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10).

## Jews and the New Testament

The New Testament is not something you expect to find in a Jewish home. Amy-Jill Levine, writing in *Biblical Archeological Review*, says this is unfortunate and asserts that the New Testament is “Jewish literature.” In her article “What Jews should know about the New Testament,” Prof. Levine encourages Jewish people to read it, saying that they will find much there to appreciate. She understands that “some will conclude the text is a message of hatred for Jews and Judaism. Others will find blasphemous the announcement of Jesus’ divinity. Still others will find illegitimate the assertions that Jesus fulfills Jewish prophecy.”

Nevertheless, Levine advises them to take a second look and consider the historical context, arguing that “when this harsh language in the New Testament was written, such language was conventional rhetoric.” Using the methods of higher criticism in interpreting Scripture, Levine manages to put a slightly different face on the New Testament so that it might become more palatable to Jewish readers.

Levine’s article gives the wrong reasons for why Jews should read the New Testament, but she may have inadvertently done some good. The Jews who follow her suggestion may do so only because they are told it is “Jewish literature,” but their reading of it has potential for greater things than that. It could lead them to the truth that Christ is the only way of their salvation, for these same words are not the words of men, but are indeed the words of God. They are the vehicle of the Holy Spirit, who alone can create faith and sustain that faith. This also is why not only Jews, but also Christians, should want to read—and read again—the New Testament. It has the promise of great things and can make people “wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

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





# Treasurer's Report

## Summary of Income from Congregations

Budget	Actual	Balance
\$725,000	\$268,556	\$456,444

### Contributions for May, 2012:

**Congregations - Budget** \$54,645

### Designated Contributions

Synod Fund	\$685
Home Outreach	\$386
World Outreach (general)	\$50
World Needs	\$3,925
India	\$1,091
Peru	\$169
Chile	\$50
Korea	\$1,000
Lutheran Schools of America	\$364
Cross-stitch	\$1,270
Thoughts of Faith	\$16,979

### Other

Helping Hands	\$85,000
MAP	\$100,000
Registrations	\$1,800
Subscriptions	\$8,728
Miscellaneous	\$238

**Total** \$276,380

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

## Memorials for May 2012

### *Gifts Received for the Synod in Memory of Memorial by*

#### **Delores Petersen** **Mabel Ballard**

Raymond & Nancy Pederson - Cottonwood, MN

#### **Harriet Handberg**

Ladies Mission Guild - Tacoma, WA

#### **Harold Bruss**

Rev. Daniel & Lisa Basel

#### **Martha Carlson**

Pamela Luepke - New Ulm, MN

#### **Albin (Red) Levorson**

Judy Levorson - Northwood, IA

Conrad Faugstad - Lake Mills, IA

Dorothy Honsey - Lake Mills, IA

### *Gifts Received for the Seminary in Memory of Memorial by*

#### **Nicholas Bernau**

Richard and Leona Bjelland - Albert Lea, MN

#### **Ernest and Bernice Bjelland**

Richard and Leona Bjelland - Albert Lea, MN

#### **Douglas Hand**

Marilyn Hand - Midland, MI

#### **Albin Levorson**

LeRoy and MaryJo Levorson - New Ulm, MN

#### **Nels and Karina Stalheim**

Richard and Leona Bjelland - Albert Lea, MN

#### **Otto Trebelhorn**

Clara Trebelhorn - Eau Claire, WI

# What Does It Mean to be a Lutheran Youth...

...when it comes to science class and evolution ?

Social Humiliation—the feeling that you are all alone on stage, and completely being completely embarrassed while everyone is laughing at you. This is one of the most distressing fears for many teens. Perhaps you can remember a time when you have felt like all eyes were on you and you just didn't know the right thing to say.

Would it surprise you if I told you that this same principle of social humiliation is being manipulated by science teachers and supporters of evolutionary theory? Secular teachers and “scientists” in white lab coats have been trying to socially ridicule Christians who believe in the Bible's account of a 6-day creation for years and years. “Experts” in the field of biology or archeology use threatening, hostile language in an attempt to scrutinize and ridicule the validity of Creation research. Those same experts have a long history of attempting to force Christian scientists out of the venue of academic discussion. In classrooms all over the world students are being bombarded with a farfetched myth that starts something like, “Once upon a time a hundred billion millions years ago, there was a massive explosion.”

Perhaps you have been in a classroom and felt this uncomfortable experience already. Maybe you have had a biology teacher make a degrading joke about their perception of the stupidity of the Biblical view of creation. Movies, newspapers, and television

shows are filled with pro-evolution propaganda. The intent is to surround us Christians with so much information and instill so much doubt that we are ridiculed and humiliated into believing that the only plausible, logical explanation is to accept evolution.

This persuasive technique used by evolutionary scientists is not based on sound science. Nope. Instead, they rely on attempting to embarrass you into believing that you are the only one left on the face of this earth who would actually believe in that nonsense called “creation.”

The next time you feel humiliated, embarrassed, or “on stage” when your Christian understanding of creation is called into question, remember that you are never alone. First, God's Word does not lie and it says that God cre-

ated the universe. Second, a large community of Christian scientists has gathered a significant amount of empirical evidence that supports the theory of Divine design. The Creation Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky, is filled with scientific proof behind the Biblical truth of creation.

Therefore, you should rest assured that the teacher or scientist who is trying to embarrass you into accepting evolution is actually very similar to a school ground bully. You just ignore their attempt at embarrassment and reject their silly story.

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*Joshua T. Mears is a Christian counselor at Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service— Christian Family Counseling.*



# EDITORIAL: MEETING A NEED

Life on this world is never static. Culture, philosophy, morals, science, and the social climate are in a constant state of flux, especially so in the United States. The changes we are witnessing present great challenges to the Christian Church: 1) Remaining steadfast in God's truth in opposition to post-modern philosophy that says absolute truth does not exist, 2) Living holy lives dedicated to serving God when many people have set aside God's laws, 3) Speaking the Gospel to people who do not want to hear about God, 4) Maintaining congregations in places that are experiencing depopulation, 5) Building new mission congregations in the face of staggering costs, 6) dealing with technologies that let people break all 10 Commandments, and 7) Retaining the truth of God's Word in the face of cultural movements that reject His Word.

Conversely, these same changes in the new millennium represent great opportunities to the Christian Church: 1) Proclaiming the assurance of God's salvation to a skeptical world-view, 2) Showing the people around us our love for God in all that we say and do, 3) Telling people about Jesus and His salvation to people without love or hope in this world, 4) Using God's gifts to keep the Gospel light burning in your community, 5) Supporting with prayers, gifts, and joy the opening of new missions, 6) Using technology and media to share the Gospel with the world, and 7) Studying God's Word at home and in church so that we know what is true and what we can tell others about God and His salvation.

For over 200 years, the modern world has insisted that Christians must change their teachings to cope with all these changes. Many challenge us with the question: What truths can the Bible tell to those who have discovered new medicines, atoms, atomic bombs, computers, televisions and have made trips to the moon? The real answer is that while many aspects of modern life have changed, what has not changed at all is mankind's sinfulness, blindness to God's Word, and need for salvation.

For the past several years, people in our synod have been thinking about how our church body can deal with changes in our society while remaining steadfast in the true faith of the Gospel. How we can meet the challenges in our society and take advantage of the technological opportunities God has given us. The last two synod conventions have initiated changes to help: Reducing the number of synod boards and committees to reduce expenses; Creating a Communications Committee and adding a Commu-

nications counselor to be able to respond more quickly to challenges in technology and in the world; Calling a Home Missions and Evangelism Counselor in order to help and start new missions and to train ELS members in "engaging others with Jesus."

We thank God that He has enabled us to fund these new initiatives. We also keep in mind that the Home Mission/Evangelism Counselor will help present a series of retreat Evangelism seminars to train pastors and laymen on "engaging others with Jesus" so that they can present this information to the congregations in which they are members. Becoming mission-minded towards others as we proclaim the praises of Christ in our lives is a change God needs to work in us and an opportunity to show people our love for God.

Speaking the Gospel is the work God has given to His Church to be doing. Billions of people in the world still do not know about Jesus as their Savior, and many of our next-door neighbors do not either. Whether you engage God in prayer for mission work, or teach Sunday School and VBS, or sing in the church choir, or help your neighbor, or be kind to a fellow worker or customer, or raise children or grandchildren to know the Bible; you are engaging others with Jesus by what you do and say. You can meet their needs and give them the "one thing needful"—the message of salvation through Jesus.

As Americans, we have come to expect changes in science, technology, and our lives. Some changes are good and help us do things better. Some changes are wicked because they contradict what God has said in His Word. Knowing the difference between them and using the things of this world to communicate the Gospel is an important task we all need to think about and act on to meet the need. God will certainly bless us as we are engaged in going "into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 15:15).



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