

Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

"Engage Others with Jesus."



For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27)

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Staff

Theodore G. Gullixson Editor
Robert Harting Assistant Editor
Paul Fries Business Manager
Erica Jacobsen Proofreader

Contributing Editors

Lutheran Sentinel
Daniel Madson, James Olsen.

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From the President

Dear members and friends of our ELS:

Entering the new year with hope? “That depends,” you might say. “Talking about the economy? Hope for America? Hope for a world with fewer wars? Hope that as another year gets tucked under the belt my health holds out? Hope for my children and grandchildren to enjoy a good and God-pleasing life?”

What if the question was simply, “Do you hope to have eternal life?” By faith in Jesus your Savior, your reply is immediate: “Well, of course! I’m certain of it!” On what are you basing your answer? No doubt you would say, “The Bible says so.” Correct.

But the little question “Do you have hope?” can derail our thinking because of the troubles we see with our eyes. We can forget the big picture. Someone has suggested this analogy for hope: It is like the sun. As we journey closer to it, it casts a wider shadow over our burdens right behind us. The closer we draw to the Sun of Righteousness (that is, HE draws us to Himself), the less the burdens and challenges of the present life remain in our view.

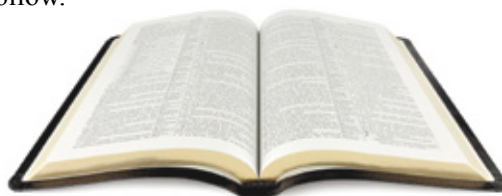
Yes, there is hope for the New Year! Where is it found? It’s in letter form—God’s letter to the world—God’s letter to you and me: “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

Plan 2013 as a year to keep this biblical letter handy. Pull it out and read it often. This “hope letter” is meant for mulling over. Why so? Here at least are four good reasons:

- 1) It has a contemporary appeal! Paul says that it is “written to teach us.”
- 2) It has a comprehensive appeal: “Everything that was written in the past...” Both the Old and New Testaments have important lessons, applications, and especially promises for our lives.
- 3) God’s “hope letter” is Christ-centered, making us wise for salvation through faith in His grace alone (2 Timothy 3:15).
- 4) It carries a practical purpose: Scripture keeps us ready for the day we enjoy heaven, but even now it provides “endurance and encouragement” for coping with whatever comes our way in 2013 and beyond.

Letter writing/reading has waned, thanks to email and Facebook. But God’s Letter of Hope—whether a printed copy or in electronic form—never fades. It’s always in! It is the living and enduring Word of God (1 Peter 1:23).

Have a meaningful read. Blessings are sure to follow.



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



Trust in Our Good God

The New Year brings hope that good things will happen during the year. But not everyone shares that hope. People with chronic pain or a long-term illness may wonder if their situation will get worse. There may be problems with family members, the lack of a job, or our marriage that see no prospect for improvement or change. People may worry about changes in the cultural and religious landscapes that could make life as a Christian more difficult.

Over the centuries, believers have faced such fundamental changes in their personal lives as well as in society. Many have grown anxious for the future of their nation, of their lives, and of the faith. Imagine how troubled Christians in Jerusalem were under the persecutions of Saul. Stephen was martyred along with other believers. Family and friends fled for safety to Samaria and other countries. Later on they could see that God was using this evil so that many more people could hear the Gospel.

Many other Christians have dealt with a society that turned away from listening to God's Word. Think of those Christians who suffered under communist rule in China and in the former Soviet Union, or whose faith was compromised by living under the Nazis. With God's grace, they suffered and died—but they continued to trust in Jesus until God took them to heaven or ended the persecution.

Trust is not a yet to be fulfilled wish for good times. Trust is not a vague hope that life will improve. Trust is faith in the promises of God given in His Word. God promises to be with us (Matthew 28:20), promises to answer our prayers (Psalm 50:15, John 15:7), promises to give us eternal life (John 6:40), and promises to guide us through all the trials and afflictions of life.

Trust is built on three basic facts of the Christian faith. First, God is our Creator and continues to preserve what He made. While Adam's sin brought evil, affliction, and death into our world, God still governs His creation. For "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends

rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Seeing a rainbow in the sky reminds us of God's promise that a flood will never again destroy the world. Though God has seen many examples of wickedness that deserved His wrath, He has kept His promise to bless our lives with good things.

Second, God is our Redeemer, who has conquered our real enemies. Before we even worried about sin and death, God sent His Son to become man and then live under God's Law to keep it perfectly and to suffer the death we deserve. Though we were bound under the Law, Jesus' life and death set us free from its bondage. The Bible says, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also freely with Him give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). And if God has given us faith in Jesus, He also gives us forgiveness of sins and promises us eternal life in heaven.

Third, God is our Comforter, who helps us live in this world as His children. The Bible says that "God is able to help us to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). As our Comforter, the Holy Spirit blesses us with understanding of our life with God. For God does not promise a better life on earth, but an eternal life in heaven. The Bible states, "We must through many tribulation enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Because God has called us by the Gospel, enlightened with His gifts, justified us by faith in Jesus, and sanctified us through His Sacraments, we can trust Him to bless us in the New Year. St. Paul declares, "We **know** that all things work together for those who love God" (Romans 8:28, emphasis added). With such knowledge and trust, we can truly have a real hope for a good New Year.

The editor



Our Thanks for God's Providence

How important is thanksgiving? Ask a mother who gets meals ready three times each day. Ask an organist who has played for fifty years. Ask a husband who goes to work each day. Ask a nurse or doctor who provides help with illness or injury. Perhaps saying "thanks" does not take much effort, but its absence speaks volumes about our attitude toward others and toward God.

Consider the ten lepers whom Jesus healed. When only one returned, Jesus asked, "Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:18). These words of Jesus teach us that God also desires that we give Him thanks for all the blessings He freely gives us. The leper who did return to give thanks also received an additional blessing when Jesus told him, "Your faith has made you well" (Luke 17:19).

Jesus blessed all ten lepers with physical healing, but the returned Samaritan was given spiritual blessings. In the same way, God gives physical blessings to all without our asking, as Dr. Luther states in the explanation to the Fourth Petition, "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" (*ELH* p. 33). Here Jesus is not teaching us to ask God for more, but to thank God for all that He has bestowed upon us. We can also trust that in this New Year God will continue to bless our lives with His good gifts—for both body and soul.

Thanksgiving is very important to our faith. By faith we understand that God gives us every good thing we have: food, house, clothing, work, health, government, peace—everything. Faith also understands that God provides all these good things through the work of other people. Martin Luther calls these people God's "masks," that is, the many people through whom God works to provide for our needs. They may be the farmer and grocer, the mechanic and computer technician, the physician and nurse, the pastor and school teacher, the store owners and distributors and truckers, the government workers and bankers.

Because God works through others, many may not recognize God's hand in His bountiful providence, nor give thanks to Him. Faith, informed by God's Word, believes that "He gives to all life, breath, and all things" and that "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:25, 28). The psalmist states that all of God's creatures "wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season... You open Your hand, they are filled with good" (Psalm 104:27–28).

Through giving God thanks for His providence, we therefore humbly admit our dependence upon God to supply our needs each day and throughout the year. Thankful humility is the opposite of pride, as St. Paul wrote: "What do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Thanksgiving is important because it leads us to be content during this year. Whether God gives us much, little, or something in between, we are to trust that God will supply our needs, that His gifts are right for us, and that He will bless us with good things all the days of our lives.

Thanksgiving is important because it moves us to share the Lord's blessings with others. Since God "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20), He is also able to enrich us with every blessing and grace so that we give liberally to His Kingdom and to those around us of our time, abilities, help, and money.

Thanksgiving is good for family time, as children see parents thank God for His gifts. Especially in difficult times, they need to consider the psalmist's words and our prayer, "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever" (Psalm 136:1).

The editor



What Can You Trust in a Zombie Outbreak... or Any Other Time?

How prepared are you for a zombie outbreak? You can't just wait until the undead start scratching at your door, there is a lot to consider! Nearly everything that we count on to keep life neat and orderly gets taken away when zombies roam free. Hollywood indicates massive infrastructure failures, so police and firemen are unavailable, and roads will be a nightmare to navigate. Money won't be any good, plus nobody will be around to sell stuff anyway. Food and water will be major problems; you may not have enough, and what you do have might be contaminated. You'll have to be very wary of other people, too. Thieves and looters will be more dangerous than the zombies! Whatever plan we come up with, it had better be one that acknowledges that the things we put our trust in for much of life will be trustworthy no more.

Wait, do you think a zombie outbreak is far fetched? Ok, maybe it's not exactly the most pressing concern you face today. There is a bigger problem, though: it won't take zombies walking the earth for each and every one of those things we trust to let us down. Money, health, a sense of security, other people—all of these things routinely fail us, even when life is going along normally. Money loses value, and the most valuable things in the world aren't for sale anyway. An errant sneeze on a plane is all it takes to send your health into a tailspin. Police and firemen might make us feel secure, but we can still be victims of crimes, accidents, and disasters. And, of course, other people routinely let us down—be they friends, family, or strangers. Every blessing comes up short of being trustworthy, no zombies required.

Alright, you've been to church before, you already know where this is heading and might be thinking, "Ok. God is great and all, but in a zombie invasion I think I'd rather have a katana." An encouragement to trust in God

is not some fatalistic statement, like, "Well, if God doesn't want zombies to eat you, they won't eat you." It's like Solomon wrote, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6). The trust that we have in the Lord does not remove the paths that we walk, it strengthens us while walking them. Trusting in God's promise to work good in our lives, our paths are clarified, joyful, meaningful, and purposeful.

Just how trustworthy is God? Consider the final path

we walk, when all earthly blessings fail us. On your deathbed, abandoned by money, health, security, others, but still clinging to Christ, you have all of these blessings in greater measure than you ever possessed them on earth. You have more wealth, because God has turned over the riches of heaven to you. You have more health, because Christ's death guarantees you eternal life in perfection. You have more security, be-

cause everlasting joy is reserved for you beyond any power's ability to touch it. You have more friends and family, because by God's grace they too endure, along with every believer. Knowing that He's trustworthy in the face of our most hopeless trial empowers us to lean on Him in all of life's other struggles. Remember that, as you assemble your zombie survival pack, or as you face any of the real challenges this world offers.



Brian Klebig is an ELS clergyman enrolled in graduate school at the University of Central Florida.

The New Normal for Marriage:

How a False Worldview Undermines Christian Thought and Truth

The trend is clear. Surveys have shown a steady and growing acceptance of homosexual marriage. In 1996 (when nationwide polls began) it was opposed by more than two to one. It is now favored 50–48%. So in 16 years there has been a significant swing in the perception of homosexual marriage (not to mention, homosexuality itself). Fifty years ago no one would have imagined that this new thinking would become commonplace. This “new normal” is the consequence of a false worldview, and it ought to concern anyone who values true Lutheran teaching and the good of society. Why?

As Christians we confess the following regarding marriage and the current controversy:

- There is one and only one definition of marriage that God instituted and intended for all people of all time: “The lifelong union of one man and one woman into one flesh, entered into by mutual consent and promise.” (*Evangelical Lutheran Synod Catechism*)
- This universal understanding of marriage is clearly attested to in Scripture (Genesis 1:27–28, 2:24; Matthew 19:4–6; 1 Corinthians 7:2–3; Ephesians 5:31).
- This understanding of marriage is also confirmed throughout history where no government has ever given clear legal sanction to homosexual marriage, until the last eleven years in which 12 countries and nine states are now engaging in such an experiment.
- The purpose of the God-ordained marriage is for establishing the most unique loving companionship and the raising of godly children by *a father and a mother*. Families injured or broken by death and divorce ought to receive the compassion and help of Christians.
- God also intended such marriages to be the foundation of civil society; where such marriages break down, are dishonored, or redefined, civil society is endangered.
- Cultural trends cannot trump the revealed will of God; and, therefore, Christians are to stand firm on the timeless truths of God’s Word rather than allow popular trends to frame their beliefs.
- Christians, like Christ, love sinners. In fact, we are sinners. We come to church because we seek, find, and receive full and free forgiveness in Christ who offers to us what He so painfully bought on the cross. For that reason, we invite to our worship services anyone—the selfish, proud, greedy, idolater, thief, adulterer, homo-

sexual, murderer—who wishes to find real forgiveness and help in a world that can be so burdensome, painful, and hopeless. We can offer no greater love.

But this Christian and biblical approach to marriage has been pushed aside in favor of the postmodern worldview that has quickly and effectively altered the way people, even Christians, view divine matters, often with no critical thought—they just absorb it because it is popular.

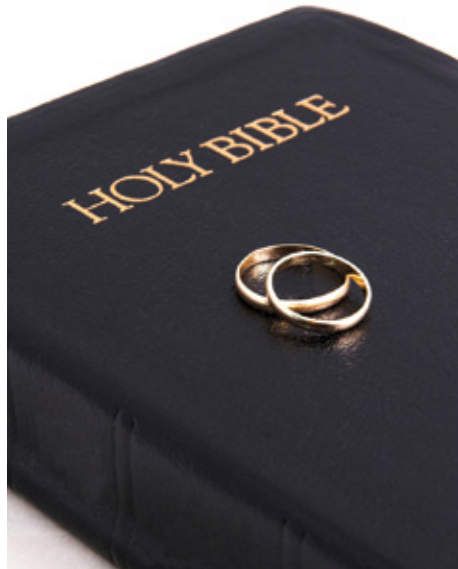
Postmodernism teaches that there are no timeless truths that apply to all people of all time; there are only humanly constructed “truths” developed by certain cultures or groups over time, which they then hope to impose on the rest of culture. Therefore one man–one woman marriage, the postmodernist believes, is

not really something from God, but a humanly-constructed concept that one group naively believes is really true and wishes to force upon culture at large. A (postmodern) pastor recently argued this way in a letter to a local paper. He essentially said that his church holds to one teaching on marriage, another church has a different version of marriage; government, therefore, must not impose one church’s version or “truth” on everyone. If marriage is merely a matter of personal or church preference, as this pastor believes, then the door is wide open to allow for any and all definitions. If we cannot limit marriage to one man and one woman, we cannot limit it at all.

The truth is: our understanding of marriage does not originate from behind our church’s doors. It transcends from the very mind of God. It is one of those in-

alienable truths given to all mankind, based in nature, attested to throughout history, and clearly taught in Scripture. Here we and our children must stand.

*Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word;
Curb those who fain by craft and sword
Would wrest the Kingdom from Thy Son
And set at naught all He hath done.
(ELH 589:1)*



David Thompson is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Audubon, Minnesota.

EPIPHANY:

Arise, Shine; for Your Light Has Come!

The Feast of Epiphany flows naturally from the birth of Jesus on Christmas. In the dark of night, the Child was born and revealed only to a few shepherds, who came and saw, and then made widely known what the Angel of the Lord had told them (cf. Luke 2:8–20).

Epiphany steps out of the darkness of that midnight hour. The appearance of God in the flesh is now manifested and made known at home and abroad, as the Epiphany epistle declares: “Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you ... The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising ... They shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord” (Isaiah 60:1, 3, 6b).

No wonder the Gospel for Epiphany is the story of the Wise Men following the miraculous star. The ancient prophesy of the Light of Christ guided them on their way, and when the star stood over where the young Child was they fell down and worshiped Him. Their gifts fulfilled what was foretold, and they also told forth what was to come. Gold proclaimed Him King of kings and Lord of lords. Frankincense confessed Him as God of God, Light of light, very God of very God, even as David prayed, “Let my prayer be set before You as incense” (Psalm 141:2). And myrrh revealed the content of Isaiah’s “and they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord.” For myrrh touches the great mystery of the incarnation: “God was manifested in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16), who “also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). With myrrh, Nicodemus would prepare the lifeless body of Jesus for burial. It points to the holy cross as the center of the faith “preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world” (1 Timothy 3:18), as St. Paul proclaimed, “I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). These are “the praises of the Lord they shall proclaim.”

In the prophetic scene of the Wise Men before the Christ Child, something sacramental is in the air. It pictures you kneeling before your tender Savior in your Bethlehem. In your church, you gaze upon Him as they did, not in fear of His divine majesty, but under the humble, friendly forms of bread and wine called to be His body and blood. Like the Child, they do not frighten, but embolden you to draw near, as we sing:

*“Draw nigh and take the body of the Lord
And drink the holy blood for you outpoured.*

*By that pure body and that holy blood
Saved and refreshed, we render thanks to God.”
(ELH 314:1–2)*

With this how can you not arise and shine? “The true Light which gives light to every man” (John 1:9) has come into the world for you and your salvation. But what about those all around you who still do not know Him because of “the darkness covering the earth and deep darkness the people” (Isaiah 60:2). What can you do to shine the true Light on them?

First, love your church and congregation, “among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel” (Augsburg Confession VII). Don’t change anything here, for “through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel” (AC V). Only be sure that you are part of this regular gathering of believers. Nothing shines brighter to those outside the Church than Christians who love to go to church.

Second, be willing to share “the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). This is a little harder, so let me share a recent event of our church as an example. Small towns in New England have a custom of holding Christmas Strolls on the weekends before Christmas. This year our town asked us if we would host some event for the Stroll. We said, yes, but what to do? It was decided to hold an art exhibition of the religious paintings hanging in our sanctuary and nave. A brochure explaining each painting was prepared. In addition, another member displayed her collection of nativity crèches from around the world. After that, we hosted a holiday jazz concert in the social hall, featuring jazz musicians, all pros from our little town, who were willing to do a free concert for the celebration. Following the concert, our women’s group prepared a lovely reception.

We had no idea if anyone would show up, but our members worked hard to spiff up the church and decorate it like I had never seen it. To our delight, the place was mobbed with visitors, and we all simply got to know one another. In our rather Lutheran-less area, it was an opportunity for people to see that we are fun-loving enough to put on a jazz concert, yet deeply in love with our church, where the Gospel is so clearly portrayed, yet done in meekness and fear.

From a pastor’s view, I saw Christian people in love with their church, arising and shining with the warmth of the Light, who came in meekness, who still comes in His Word, and who will come again in glory. “Arise, shine; for your light has come!”

James Krikava is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Brewster, Massachusetts.



On the Synodical Scene...

Katherine Oesleby (1915–2012)

Katherine (Olson) Oesleby entered eternal life on November 29, 2012, at the age of 97. She was living at Pathstone Living in Mankato, Minnesota. The funeral service was held on December 1, 2012, at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota. Burial was at Scarville Synod Cemetery in Scarville, Iowa.

Katherine was born on October 13, 1915, to Jacob and Bertha Olson in Scarville, Iowa, on the family farmstead. She attended Scarville High School and Bethany Lutheran College. She taught at several one-room schools near Scarville. On May 27, 1941, Katherine married the Rev. Nils Oesleby. The family lived in New Hampton, Iowa; Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Madison, Wisconsin; and Eau Claire, Wisconsin. The Lord blessed them with four children: John, Ruth, Esther, and Thomas. In 1972, her husband Nils died. In 2001, she moved to Mankato, Minnesota.

Katherine was preceded in death by her husband, Nils, and her brother, Harry Olson. She is survived by her four children, five grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, a sister, Eva Hausmann, and a sister-in-law, Signe Olson.

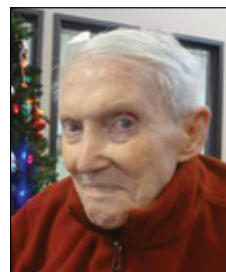
Gerhart Becker (1919–2012)

The Rev. Gerhart Becker went to be with his Lord on December 2, 2012, at the Pioneer Memorial Care Center in Erskine, Minnesota, at the age of 92.

Gerhart was born to George and Agnes Becker on December 10, 1919, in Brooklyn, New York. He worked as a drydock hand for Bethlehem Steel Company in Hoboken, New Jersey. He next served as an infantry radio operator in the 5th Marine Division during the Iwo Jima Campaign and with the 2nd Marine Division as troops occupied Japan after the war.

He graduated from Augustana College, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in 1950 and from Bethany Lutheran Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota, in 1953. He married Catherine Helen Ranzau in August 1953. The couple lived in Nigeria, and Gerhart served as a missionary for three years, supervising 15 schools. After returning to the United States, Gerhart served several churches in Iowa and southern Minnesota.

His wife Catherine died in 1988. Gerhart married Claris Helm in 1990 and lived in Ponsford, Minnesota. Claris died in 2006. Gerhart is survived by ten children and ten grandchildren.



Grace Hosts Florida Mission Society



The Florida Women's Mission Society met at Grace Lutheran Church in Vero Beach on November 10, 2012. Over 70 people were in attendance. Our day started with beautiful music rendered by the Grace bell choir. We also had a duet and a mass choir. Missionary Terry Schultz and Pastor emeritus David Lillegard also sang a duet in Spanish.

Our morning speaker, Dr. Terry Schutz, gave us a wonderful presentation on his work in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Peru. Our afternoon speaker, the Rev. Steve Petersen, updated us on world missions in the ELS. All in all, it was an inspiring day and we are thankful to all those who have a love for missions. The ladies voted to give their offerings of \$2,728 to Cross-stitch to be used where they were most needed.

Our spring rally will be held in Naples, Florida, on March 9, 2013.

–Submitted by Ione Lillegard, President



Thanks to the Rev. Paul Madson

Seventeen years ago, the Rev. Paul Madson retired as editor of the *Lutheran Sentinel*. For the past 15 years he has written the popular monthly column “Cross Currents” for the *Lutheran Sentinel*. This column informs the readers of many trends taking place in the world of religion. The members of our synod owe Rev. Madson a debt of gratitude for his many years of service as editor, writer, and staff member. The Rev. James Braun has agreed to write this column in the future.



Church Organist Celebrates 50 Years of Service

On November 4, 2012, Mrs. Robert (Darlene) Loll was honored on the anniversary of being the head organist for 50 years at First Trinity Lutheran Church, Marinette, Wisconsin. On that Sunday, a festival service of thanksgiving to God was held in her honor. Many of her family members were in attendance. First Trinity's current pastor, the Rev. E.C.F. Stubenvoll, Jr., conducted the service. The Rev. pastor em. E.C.F. Stubenvoll, Sr., presented Darlene with a thanksgiving gift from the congregation. The festival service was followed by a potluck festival dinner that was held in the church's parish hall.

Darlene Ann Raatz was born in Oconto Falls, Wisconsin. Her first experience playing the piano came when she played the melody line for her family as they sang Christian hymns at home. She took lessons while she lived in Milwaukee, Gillett, and W.W. Mariette, all in Wisconsin. As a high school freshman at Gillett, Darlene was asked to be the head organist at St. John's Lutheran Church, whose pastor at the time was the Rev. Reuben Stubenvoll, a great uncle of the present pastor at First Trinity. She played organ throughout her high school years.

Darlene then moved to Marinette, Wisconsin, married Mr. Robert Loll, and joined First Trinity. When the Rev. E.C.F. Stubenvoll, Sr., became pastor, Darlene was asked to be head organist. She began playing organ on the first Sunday in November 1962. During the next fifty years, Darlene has played organ and piano for worship services, weddings, funerals, junior and senior choirs, ladies aid, and Sunday school. She has also accompanied soloists and arranged instrumental music. Robert and Darlene currently live in Porterfield, Wisconsin, and have four children and five grandchildren.

Ordination of Peter Heyn

On Sunday, August 26, 2012, Candidate of Theology Peter Heyn was ordained and installed as pastor of Peace Lutheran Church of Lakeland, Florida. The Rev. Herbert Huhnerkoch, Circuit Visitor of Circuit One, served as the liturgist and conducted the rites of ordination and installation. The Rev. Matthew Moldstad, pastor of Peace Lutheran, Kissimmee, Florida, and seminary classmate of Peter Heyn, served as lector. The Rev. Thomas Heyn, pastor of Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church of Cottage Grove, Wisconsin, and father of the candidate, delivered the sermon based on Joshua 1:1-9 titled "Be Strong and Courageous." Others who participated in the laying on of hands were the Reverends Charles Keeler and Andrew Palmquist, Candidate of Theology Luke Willitz, classmate of Peter Heyn and pastor elect of New Life Lutheran in Sebring, Florida. Mrs. Jean McMurdie played the organ.

The WINGS (Women in God's Service) women's group prepared and served a delicious dinner of pulled pork and Swedish meatballs.



Back (L to R): Charles Keeler, Luke Willitz, Matthew Moldstad, Andrew Palmquist
Front (L to R): Thomas Heyn, Peter Heyn, Herbert Huhnerkoch

Anniversary at Zion Lutheran Church, Tracy, Minnesota

On September 16, 2012, Zion Lutheran Church, Tracy, Minnesota, celebrated the 75th anniversary of its church building and the 125th anniversary of its organization. The Rev. John Moldstad, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, was asked to preach for the festive occasion. He based his anniversary address on Psalm 100, with the theme "Sing Praise Out of Zion." The Rev. Gaylin Schmeling, a former pastor of the congregation, served as lector, and the present pastor, the Rev. Samuel Schmeling, a son of the congregation, was the officiant. The congregational choir, directed by Janel Rau, provided a beautiful anthem titled, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." John Baumann served as organist, providing inspirational music.



(L to R): Bethany Lutheran Seminary President Gaylin Schmeling, ELS President John Moldstad, Rev. Samuel Schmeling.

A superb meal and wonderful fellowship time followed the service at This Ol' Place in Garvin, Minnesota.

The Rev. Samuel Schmeling led a presentation on the history of the congregation during this fellowship time. In addition, a number of pastors and friends of the congregation spoke at the reception, including Luther Dorr, Karen Odegaard, Congregational Chairman Steven Knott, the Rev. Craig Ferkenstad, the Rev. Norman Madson, and Gaylin and Rebecca Schmeling. Seminarians Daniel Ruiz and Andrew Soule kept the assembly entertained with songs as Elsa Ferkenstad provided the music.

The origin of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church dates back to 1887 when many Norwegian Lutherans settled in the area. The congregation became a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1938. The present church building was constructed in 1937. Over the past 125 years the Lord's blessings have included a number of individuals who attended Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary. The Lord has provided the congregation with faithful members and dedicated pastors. Above all, this congregation has been blessed by the Lord through the means of grace—holy Word and blessed Sacrament. May the Lord continue to bless this congregation and all who are here served for another 125 years.

—Submitted by the Rev. Samuel M. Schmeling



Pastor, I Have a Question...

Question: *If Christ overcame Satan, sin, and death, by dying on the cross, why is he still roaming the earth seeking whom he can devour?*

Answer: “The strife is o’er, the battle done; Now is the Victor’s triumph won; Now be the song of praise begun. Alleluia!” (TLH 210:1).

During His life, Jesus resisted Satan’s temptation. Upon the cross and with His empty tomb, Jesus finished the job. He defeated evil. He freed us from Satan’s accusations, power, and kingdom. For all, and for us specifically, Jesus lived the perfect life for us. He endured the punishment we, by sin, deserve. He defeated Satan (see Ephesians 1:21–23, Colossians 1:13 and 2:13–15, Hebrews 2:14–15 and 1 John 3:8). John describes this defeat: “I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:1–3).

This world’s nations were under Satan’s dominion until Jesus finished. Before He ascended, Jesus commanded His people, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20). The last sign of which Jesus spoke before the end of the age is this: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

For a time, God allows Satan limited power and activity while the church rescues souls from Satan. God’s word liberates: “You He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:1–2).

The cross and empty tomb defeat Satan. God’s people spoil his kingdom by preaching the Gospel throughout the world. This is God’s grace in action. God does not want to lose one soul to Satan. Patiently, He delays the Judgment until every soul is invited to His wedding feast.

One pastor described the post-Ascension era as a mopping up operation. When U.S. Marines defeated the Japanese on Iwo Jima and raised the flag on Mt. Suribachi many Japanese soldiers still huddled in caves and tunnels. They continued to fight to the death. Weeks of battle followed the victory.

While we mop up by liberating souls from Satan, God warns us to beware of the roaring lion that prowls the world looking for souls. God protects us with the power of His Word as we sing in Luther’s hymn, “Tho’ devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us, We tremble not, we fear no ill, They shall not overpower us, This world’s prince may still scowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none, He’s judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him” (TLH 262:1).

God promises, “I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39).

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.

Growing Up in God's Word

"The Lord Has Not Dealt with Us According to Our Sin"

Our children are never out of the woods this side of heaven. There will always be threats to faith and good conscience, temptations, doubts, and trials of all kinds. They never cease to need our constant, earnest prayers to God for their faith and welfare.

Parents teach their children every lesson in life: how to play football, bake, or change a tire. Yet, do they scarcely hear a word of God from us—until we see them fighting, or heaven forbid, stealing, or disrespecting mother or father? Then it suddenly seems very important to browbeat them with the Commandments.

Meanwhile, where in our thoughts is Jesus, whose truth and lessons were always present in the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer? Where is Jesus in our lives, and our appreciation for Him who gave Himself for you, and continues to give Himself to us in the Word?

Take the number 18 and subtract the age of your child. That's the number of years you have left to prepare him or her so that they do not lose their faith when they leave home.

If we don't happen to have children, do we become armchair quarterbacks and criticize young parents? They are struggling to raise a family in an increasingly secular world. It is easy to shake our heads at parents, but more helpful to encourage them. It is easy to love our own grandchildren, but to ignore the needs and trials of other children.

Meanwhile young children are learning—at home, in church, in society. They will learn at least as much from what they see as they do from the words they hear. If that doesn't drive us to our knees to pray for our kids—God's baptized children!—what on earth will?

We all need Christ. We all need to hear His voice, just as desperately as Mary did when she lost sight of Him in Luke 2. As terrible as it is when a child goes missing or is hurt or in danger, to lose this Child through our neglect or a wrong example is to lose them all. Lose Christ, and we lose our very souls!

Where is Jesus? Where will we find Him? When will we see Him again? Mary and Joseph came back to God's house, retracing their steps. "After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to

them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers" (Luke 2:46-47).

Left to their own devices, children cannot seek God and His Word, much less find Him. No one can. God's Word needs to be taught to children—by parents, grandparents, and the congregation. Jesus told Peter, "Feed My lambs" (John 21:15). The Bible says, "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). Jesus astounded all who heard and saw Him. He was a good student of God's Word and studied it seriously.

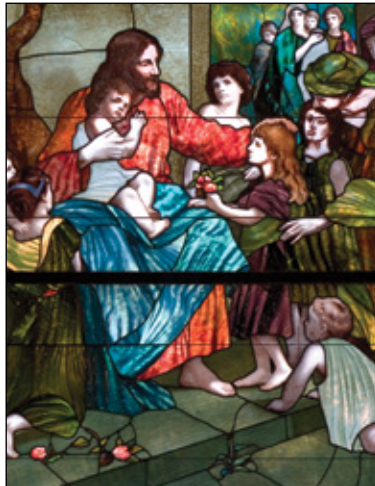
Joseph and Mary found Jesus in the Temple studying God's Word. Jesus also told us where He is to be found: "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they which testify about Me" (John 5:39).

When we know Jesus by faith, we find our perfection in God's sight, our innocence, and the hope for our families and children. By His student-ship, Jesus learned for us and drank in the Word and lived it perfectly for us. Then He died according to the purpose set for Him by His Father in heaven: to suffer for us, to bleed and die for our sins, in order to bring us to God, cleansed before Him by the washing of water with the Word. This is what children and all people need to know and believe.

The Lord has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities (Psalm 103:10)! He has come with all His compassion, in His holiness, to redeem us. He has come into this world and lived an ordinary life to sanctify and bless it. He has come to take your sins away from you—and so you are forgiven.

Children need to grow up in God's Word. Children need to know Jesus and His work of salvation. Children need many examples of Christian faith, Christian love and care, and Christian guidance in life. Where will they find these examples as they grow—in us?

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Aaron Hamilton is pastor of Hope Lutheran Church in West Jordan, Utah.

Growing Pains

Parents, do you remember being too little to do “grown up” things? The pain is nearly as real still today: too little to ride the rollercoaster; too little to use the “big-boy” potty; too little to play with mom’s jewelry; too little—too little—TOO LITTLE! But soon this pain gave way. You were growing up and enjoying it! Riding the once-off-limits rollercoaster, using whatever restroom stall you wanted, wearing mom’s jewelry (and maybe even her blush!).

And just when growing up was getting comfortable, the pains came. Yes, you may have felt some discomfort in your rapidly expanding joints, but especially I mean the realized pains of transitioning from reliance upon others to a steady diet of expectations upon you. Growing up was fun when it meant rollercoasters, makeup, and driving cars. But when growing up becomes finding (and holding down) a job to pay for gas and insurance, when it becomes the grinding process of weighing plans for college or work or military, when growing up becomes full of the heartache of dating, doting, and getting dumped. . . well. . . you long for those too little days once again when the pain could fall to someone else.



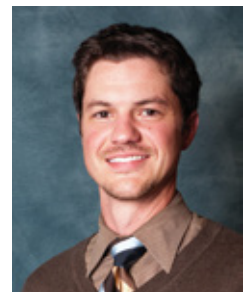
The life of Christian faith is a growing up as well. And like everyday life, growing up in Christian faith also has growing pains. The apostle Paul calls it “growing up. . . into Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). There is a significant difference, however. The pains from growing up in life come from growing out of reliance and dependence on others. Growing up in the faith and its attendant pains come from growing into dependence—growing in reliance. Jesus speaks of this growing as “becoming like little children” (Matthew 18:3). These growing pains start already with the “birth pains” of your Baptism. Your old man together with all his sinful lusts is drowned! Painful to be sure. The pains continue too: your “good” isn’t good enough so Jesus lived a sinless life for you. Your death is not sufficient payment for your sins—Jesus’ body and blood is sacrificed for you and served to you. These are the growing pains of Christian faith, but what glorious pains they are for you and for your teens. Many cultural differences, but these God-given growing pains are your common joy—growing up together into Christ.

Series Title: *Growing Up into Christ*

This series is produced on behalf of the ELS Board for Youth Outreach. The aim of the series is to invest in the youth of the ELS by building up the households and parents of those youth in the “unity of the faith” (Ephesians 4:13). While there are many cultural chasms between adults and adolescents, the body of Christ (the Church) provides us one marvelous location where post-pubescent teens and parents are meant to be together: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5)—in short, together Growing Up into Christ.

NEXT TIME: “Body-Building Christians”

Kyle Madson is co-pastor at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Frankenthum, Michigan.



A Letter from Ukraine

October 19, 2012

I, Alexander Feshchenko, currently serve as a pastor in the congregation of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC) in Tokmak, Zaporozhye region.

The history of the Lutheran congregation in Tokmak: While I was part of a youth group of the Baptist church in 1998, I strove to know the truth and began to study the Small Catechism of Martin Luther. After learning, it was clear that I could no longer be in the Baptist church and take communion with them because I did not share their teaching.

This was the motivation to act decisively and in 2000 to organize a Lutheran congregation in our city of Tokmak. Since that foundation began, I had to take on the leadership of the congregation, as I had already had the experience of serving in the church for three years while I was one of the pastors of a Baptist congregation. I asked for spiritual help from the nearest ULC congregation. This was the congregation in Zaporizhia, where Pastor Sergey Zuev served.

After strong recommendations by Pastor Sergey and at the request of the Tokmak congregation, I entered the Ukrainian Lutheran Theological Seminary of St. Sophia. After graduation in September 2007 and the service of a vicariate, on March 2, 2008, I was called to the pastoral ministry in the small congregation of my hometown of Tokmak.

Upon the sudden death of Pastor Sergey Zuev, with God's help, I now serve also as pastor of the ULC congregation in Zaporizhia. My wife Tatiana and I have been married for eleven years and we have two sons, Svyatoslav the older and Rostislav the younger. The older son was born with severe hearing loss. Probably many people realize what parents feel who know that their child will never be able to fully hear and that throughout their life their child will have difficulty in obtaining new knowledge and in dealing with other people. This is especially true because hearing is very important for a child's development, as a source of the information and knowledge necessary for one's future in order to adapt to society.

Thanks to financial aid from the Board for Christian Service of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in the United States, our son Svyatoslav is able to hear! Of course, hearing aids do not make up 100% of the hearing loss, but they give him the opportunity to study in a specialized school, to receive a full education, to develop speech, to adapt to society, to communicate with other people, and most importantly to hear the message about Jesus as his Savior.

We express our deep gratitude for the funds allocated for the purchase of hearing aids, for the fact that you are not indifferent to the problems of our son, and have given him the opportunity to fully learn and develop speech. We express our deep gratitude also for the fact that you are giving hope for the future that Svyatoslav will be able to attend a university and get an education, get a job, and become a full member of society, instead of withdrawing into himself, away from contact with other people.

May God richly bless all of you for your assistance.

Pastor Alexander Feshchenko with family



The Bjarne Wollan Teigen Reformation Lectures

The annual Reformation Lectures were held at Bethany Lutheran College on October 25 and 26, 2012. Professor Erling Teigen announced that the lectures were renamed in honor of Bjarne Wollan Teigen, president of Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary from 1950 to 1970. An endowment fund has also been established to support future lectures.

This year's lectures were devoted to Bible translation, a topic of interest for B.W. Teigen. The first lecture "Battling over Bibles: Episodes in the History of Translating the Scriptures," was presented by Dr. Cameron MacKenzie, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. The second lecture "Formal and Functional Equivalence in Bible Translation," was presented by Prof. Paul Wendland, president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin. Much of the discussion was devoted to the extent to which the translator must or may take into account contemporary attitudes in translating the Bible.

In March 1965, Dr. Herman Sasse visited the United States and was invited to speak at Bethany Lutheran College by then President B.W. Teigen of Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary, and Seminary Dean, Milton H. Otto. A couple years later, Prof. Kurt Marquardt was also

invited to lecture. These lectures demonstrated the potential for developing a meeting place for confessional members of the former Synodical Conference. The Reformation Lectures developed into sort of a free conference.

Leading theologians from Europe also presented lectures over the years: Hans Kirsten, Manfred Roensch, Wilhelm Oesch, Wilbert Kreiss, Gottfried Hoffman. There have also been such luminaries as Heiko Oberman, the Preus brothers Robert and Jacob, Robert Kolb and James Kittleson, Kenneth Hagen, John W. Montgomery, and a host of other competent theologians and scholars. Other lectures were presented by parish pastors and everyday theology professors, honestly and diligently working their craft, producing very helpful pieces of scholarship in their sacristies and academic offices. Most of these lectures have appeared in our *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*.

B.W. Teigen's presidency at Bethany reflected his concern for liberal arts education, doctrinal teaching, and the training of generations of confessional Lutherans. He had completed most of his work for the doctoral degree in Shakespearean literature. In 1979, he received an honorary doctorate from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.



(L to R): *Dr. Cameron MacKenzie, Professor Erling Teigen, Professor Paul Wendland, President Gaylin Schmeling.*

Information submitted by Professor Erling T. Teigen, Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota.

Reset

In this computer age, one necessary button or program is called “restart.” Should the machine or computer fail to work, the restart button makes everything return to pre-programmed default settings, and hopefully the device will work again.

Wouldn't it be great if our lives had a “reset” button that would put us back to “normal” mode so that we could start over again? For example, we could “reset” our words to praise and thank God, instead of words that complain, nag, or express anger, hatred, and filth. We could “reset” our minds to eliminate sinful thoughts so that “whatever things are noble...just...pure...lovely...of good report...virtue...praiseworthy [that we] meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

We could push the reset button to get rid of the evil thoughts, the suggestive ideas, the dreadful fears that inflict our lives. We often carry about in our lives the disappointments, troubles, and grievances that were the result of sinful decisions, words, or actions. A reset button would clean out the things that have messed up our relationships with others, that have made our work or career a disappointment.

Every January 1st, many people hope that they can start the new year with a new set of resolutions, a new attitude, a new prospect for the future. Such hopes are often dashed when the realities and circumstances of life have not changed from the old year. People have to deal with the same co-workers, the same family problems, the same friends and neighbors—and it may seem as if nothing can or will change.

God has not given us a reset button that returns us to the default setting of living a perfect life. He has instead given us His grace that restores our relationship with God, who declares that our sins are forgiven for the sake of the death and resurrection of Jesus. God's reset buttons are:

First, God has given us a Savior, whose birth we just celebrated. Jesus is the Word who became flesh to free all sinners from the guilt and punishment of their sins. By His death, Jesus paid the ransom for all sin, and by His resurrection from the tomb, Jesus declared that He has defeated sin, death, and the devil.

Second, God has washed our lives in the waters of Baptism, so that being united with Jesus through the washing of water by the Word, we are cleansed from sin and death (Titus 3:5). With respect to God, we are washed clean of sin. With respect to our lives, Baptism gives us a new spiritual life so that we can resist Satan's temptations and not let sin have rulership over us.

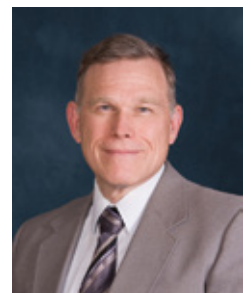
Third, Jesus has given us the Lord's Supper, in which He gives us His body and blood—in, with, and under the bread and wine—for the forgiveness of sins. As we receive the evidence of Jesus' salvation by His body and blood, we also receive strength to fight sin and live to do God's holy will.

Fourth, God has given us His Word so that we know God's holy will, His loving salvation, His eternal promises, and His help for us in this life. God's Word not only gives us faith through the promise of salvation, but it also keeps us faithful as the Word feeds our souls and guides our lives so that we avoid what is evil and do those things that please God.

We might desire a reset button that would change the past. God offers something better—complete forgiveness, which means, “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sins I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). And even if we remember those past sins, God uses that memory to remind us of His loving grace and forgiveness, to help us avoid those sins in the future, and to lead us to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation.

The New Year does not mean that we must make resolutions that we cannot keep. It is not a reset button that gets us out of trouble. However, the New Year can bring us a fresh start as we live in the grace of God's forgiveness and salvation. Faith in Jesus gives us a new perspective on our lives as God's children—that we do not live for ourselves, as St. Paul states, “The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Faith in Jesus changes us.

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



Honoring Veterans



Holy Trinity students performing I'm Proud to Be an American.



Veteran Steve Wege views the Wall of Honor.



The Holy Trinity band plays the national anthem.

On November 7, 2012, Holy Trinity Lutheran School in Okauchee, Wisconsin, held their annual Veterans Day Program to honor all who have served our country in the armed forces. The day began with a breakfast for the veterans and their families served by the seventh and eighth grade students in the school. Following the breakfast, everyone was invited to the gymnasium for the program, which was presented by students in grades Pre-K to 8. This program included recitations and songs focusing on key historical events in American history. A total of over 80 veterans and families, friends, and guests were in attendance.

This year Holy Trinity was honored to have Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch as the guest speaker. She thanked the children for their work and thanked the veterans for their service. The school also received a special recognition award from the Okauchee American Legion in appreciation for their continued support of local veterans.

In addition to thanking the veterans, this program was used as an opportunity to thank our gracious God for the gift of freedom in our country. Emphasis was given to the fact that we are blessed to have the freedom to worship and to share the Gospel message of salvation by grace, through faith in Christ.



(L to R): Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, Vice Principal and retired Air Force Major Jim Young, Okauchee American Legion Member Jim Ramsey, and Principal Shu-Ting Lai.