

September–October 2013

Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

"Engage Others with Jesus."



If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

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From the President

Dear members and friends of our ELS:

A member of our synod sent me a picture. It was of gelatin, but the kind with much fruit in it. A little saying followed (you may have heard it before): “A young mind is like gelatin. The idea is to put in lots of good stuff before it sets.”

In a way, that is what our ELS Board for Youth Outreach has on its collective mind as it makes plans each year for its national convention. The more our youth are filled with the pure teachings of God’s holy Word and the more they absorb Christian influence and advice from peers, pastors, and counselors, the more pleasing will be the setting mold both now and for years to come.



The Lutheran Youth Association (LYA) gathered this year at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. Devotions and Bible class presentations focused around the general theme, “You Are the Salt of the Earth.” Those words from our Lord Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:13) speak to the value of each Christian exerting a positive influence on the world around us. Only because of our dear Savior do any of us poor sinners have value. He has made us (worthless creatures by nature) pleasing in the sight of our heavenly Father, through His work of redemption and His bringing us into His family of believers through the activity of the Holy Spirit. Through the use of God’s Word and Sacrament, every Christian—including each baptized youth—is equipped by Christ to have a savory effect and a preserving impact on people around us.

What a joy it was for me to witness personally the energy, enthusiasm, and fellowship of so many faithful Lutheran young people from congregations all across our country. The 2013 ELS convention essay drew our attention to “Engaging Families with Jesus” (available at http://www.evangelicallutheransynod.org/download/2013_convention/SynodEssay_2013.pdf). We as parents, pastors, teachers, and youth counselors strive to have the “good stuff” go into young hearts and minds. But as we expend these efforts, may we give thanks to our Almighty God for what He is working in them. What a great blessing it is to observe our teens expressing sincere interest in engaging others with Jesus!

Next year, we hear the youth convention is planned for the state of Montana. Even a rodeo is envisioned. Can we rope even more of our youth into attending?

Thanks to all for your prayers on behalf of our LYA and on behalf of our Board for Youth Outreach.



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

Jesus Assures Me of My Salvation Through His Last Will and Testament

Budapest is one of the most interesting tourist destinations in eastern Europe. It is a beautiful city, with the Danube River running through the middle of town. It is also of interest to Lutherans, since a Lutheran Museum is in Budapest. This museum has many items detailing the history of Lutheranism in Hungary, but it also has several original documents from the pen of Martin Luther. One of these documents is his Last Will and Testament.

We all hear about the importance of having a will today, but it was important in Luther's day as well. Luther was not keen on the idea of writing a will, but concern for his wife led him to do it. The laws of those days were not favorable toward wives. Children were given the bulk of the estate so widows had to depend on their generosity for survival. Luther wanted to be certain that his wife would be self-sufficient, so he indicated a desire to make her the "universal heiress" of his estate. His will reflected this sentiment. We can't imagine how relieved Katie Luther must have been when Luther's will was certified after his death. She was certain she would not have to worry about her earthly existence. Her husband was gone, but he had provided for her. If she ever questioned that fact, she could just pick up the document and read it. The proof was there in black and white.

Martin Luther assured his wife of his love by leaving his Last Will and Testament. Our Lord Jesus has done the same thing for us. In the Scriptures our Lord tells us, "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This is His gracious promise of forgiveness and salvation for all who believe in Him. Jesus is not currently present in human form to repeat this promise to us. We might wonder whether this promise will be fulfilled, especially when we see sin and death all around us. We also look into our own hearts and recognize

that we have disobeyed our heavenly Father and do not deserve to enter into His presence.

Jesus left us His Last Will and Testament to assure us of our salvation. He delivered it to His disciples the night before His death. While observing the Passover He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples saying, "Take and eat. This is My body." Then He took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you. For this is My blood of the New Testament, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:26–27). The next day Jesus died on the cross, putting His Will into effect.

The Scriptures record our Savior's Last Will and Testament in writing, but He also invites us to come to the Supper often to receive His body and blood with the visible elements of bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins. Luther's *Small Catechism* tells us, "For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation" (*An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism*, 2001, p. 24).

Before His ascension our Lord told His disciples (of every age) that He was going to prepare a place for them (John 14:2). The Sacrament of the Altar, Jesus' Last Will and Testament, assures us we will receive our eternal inheritance in heaven.

(Scripture passages from AAT)



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



Our Joy in the Lord's Sacraments

A few weeks ago we had a rare occurrence in our church: a Baptism and the observance of the Lord's Supper on the same Sunday. That rarity isn't because we celebrate the Lord's Supper that infrequently at Good Shepherd, but because at our aging congregation baptisms are rare—fewer than five in the past ten years.

On that Sunday, it struck me how those two Sacraments appeared so externally different. With the Baptism, a single child was brought forward and presented for the Sacrament. The extended families of both the father and the mother had gathered to witness and celebrate the blessed occasion. The obvious joy surrounding the Sacrament of Holy Baptism contrasted with the somber visages of the nine-at-a-time communicants who knelt at the rail to receive the Sacrament of the Altar. Receiving the Lord's Supper is serious business, but where is the joy at the announcement of God's gracious forgiveness?

Yet, in truth, these two Sacraments have much in common. In both the great treasure of spiritual goodness they convey is tied to the earthly elements. Baptism's water washes away sin. As Doctor Luther wrote and confirmands memorize: "Baptism effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, just as the words and promises of God declare" (*ELH*, p. 34). The Lord's Supper, likewise, under the bread and wine, conveys to the recipient the true body and blood of our Lord, and with them the same forgiveness of sins as Baptism. Jesus makes that abundantly clear when He tells His disciples: "Drink from it all of you. This is My blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:27–28).

Both Sacraments were given to the Christian Church by the Lord Jesus Himself. He commanded His disciples, "Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). He commanded them to baptize. He commanded them to instruct. When our Lord Jesus gathered His disciples together for the Passover meal, He instituted His Supper. He gave them the bread and wine. He also gave them His body and blood. And then, Jesus gave them this command: "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19).

Both Sacraments present a visible Gospel—a forgiveness we can feel, touch, or taste. Our Lord Jesus provides this great blessing to His Church because He knows the human condition. From the time of the Fall, our Lord, the eternal Son, witnessed the depth of depravity sin brought upon the world. He experienced true human weakness when He took upon Himself human



flesh. He personally understands temptation and the wiles the devil employs to lead the faithful astray. To address the need of fallen man and to strengthen the believer in his weakness, Jesus gave to His church His Gospel message of forgiveness, redemption, and salvation in concrete means.

The greatest similarity, however, is that both Sacraments draw their power from the clear Word of God. Luther wrote: “Baptism is not just water but it is the water used according to God’s command and connected with His Word. ...It is not the water that does these things, but the Word of God which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word of God in the water. For without the Word of God the water is simply water and no baptism; but with this Word of God it is a baptism” (*ELH*, p. 34). And in his instruction and explanation of the Sacrament of the Altar, Luther answered the question “How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?” with these words: “It is not the eating and drinking that does this, but the words here written, ‘Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.’ These words, along with the eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament” (*ELH*, p. 36).

And how do we properly understand that Word in connection with the Sacraments? To be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is not just a formula to be spoken over the infant or the person being baptized. Baptism asks the baptized, as well as those who witness the Baptism and will later share with the child the truth that he or she has indeed been baptized, to remember the entire message of the Word of the Lord—the creation of the world and man, the promise of a Savior, the fulfillment as God carries out His work of salvation.

Baptism in the name of the Father connects the baptized to the creating and preserving activity of the Father. Baptism in the name of the Son connects the baptized to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and His full payment for the sins of all. Baptism in the name of the Holy Spirit

connects the baptized to the Holy Spirit who uses Word and Sacrament to call the sinner from unbelief to faith and to provide spiritual gifts in abundance to keep the baptized in the faith. This is why instruction must precede and/or follow the Sacrament so that those who are baptized know and understand the true significance of the water connected with the Word of God.

The same holds true for the Sacrament of the Altar. In the Lord’s Supper, the communicant receives in, with, and under the bread and wine the very body and blood of the Lord Jesus. Those earthly elements and the real presence of our Savior are, just as in Baptism, tied to the Word. Again, this is not the Word in a ceremonial ritual, but the Word communicating to the recipient the whole work of God. The remembering, therefore, is more than remembering who Jesus was. It is being tied to the heavenly Father who sent His Son. It is being tied to the Son, Jesus—tied to His incarnation; to His coming to earth as Savior; to His perfect life before His Father; to His sacrifice on the cross; to His death in payment for sin; to His glorious resurrection; and to His triumphant ascension. It is being tied to the Holy Spirit who creates, nurtures, and maintains faith in the heart and life of the believer and empowers him or her through the Sacrament to lay hold of Jesus.

So, in Baptism and in the Lord’s Supper, in both Sacraments, their power and efficacy lie in the all-powerful Word of God. That Word is not a spoken formula or spiritual incantation. It isn’t just a few holy and rightly uttered words. In the Sacraments the believer is being inexplicably connected to the saving work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This union between recipient and the Triune God makes these Sacraments, which have the all-powerful Word of God in common, a means whereby faith is truly created and rightly strengthened. And this, my friends, is the most common and most blessed thing of all.

Robert Otto is pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Bloomer, Wisconsin.



Living in My Baptism, Strengthened by the Supper

Is Baptism a work of God or a work of man? The Bible leaves nothing to the imagination. We can firmly declare: “It is the work of God!” Dr. Martin Luther summarized the work of God in Baptism with these words from the *Small Catechism*:

What does Baptism give or profit?

Baptism effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, just as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are these words and promises of God?

Christ our Lord says, Mark 16:16: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (ELH, p. 34)

The profit of Baptism never loses its worth. The gracious power in Baptism creates children of God out of nothing by God’s grace. The miracle bath of Baptism makes what was once dead now a living, breathing servant of the gracious God.

However, baptized children of God still live in this world. We know from first-hand experience that within the world evil is lurking around every corner where we live, work, and play. Satan never rests in his efforts to lead the baptized away from the Christian faith. He fights, claws, and scratches with no rules of engagement in order to weaken the baptized with the damning goal of unbelief. Against such a powerful opponent, how can any Christian possibly stay true to the faith of his Baptism?

How the Christian stays true to the faith is again the work of God through hearing His Word and partaking often of the Lord’s Supper once one is confirmed. The Sacrament of Baptism creates faith in the heart. The Sacrament of the Altar keeps faith in the heart. The Lord’s Supper strengthens and encourages the baptized in the daily battle waged against the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh. There is not a day that goes by that this unholy trio isn’t plotting constantly to deceive the Christian.

Baptism does not remove us from sin or guarantee that no temptations will ever give us fits again. Dr. Luther addresses this issue in his *Small Catechism*:

What does such baptizing with water mean?

Such baptizing with water means that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts; and that a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever. (ELH, p. 35)



Within the holy meal of Christ’s body and blood are you not only reminded that Christ’s death paid for all sin, but the Holy Spirit also brings the benefit of His death to you—your sins are forgiven! St. Paul confirms this truth of God’s goodness for the weak and needy sinner: “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).

As we live in our Baptism and are strengthened by the Supper, God is at work in us forgiven sinners. The 15th century German folk hymn summarizes the Christian’s confession of God’s gracious work:

O Lord, we praise Thee, bless Thee, and adore Thee,
In thanksgiving bow before Thee.
Thou with Thy body and Thy blood didst nourish
Our weak souls that they may flourish.
O Lord, have mercy!
May Thy body, Lord, born of Mary,
That our sins and sorrows did carry,
And Thy blood for us plead
In all trial, fear, and need:
O Lord, have mercy! (ELH 327:1)



Jonathan Madson is co-pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Okauchee, Wisconsin.

e-Vangelism: Disinhibition

You've probably noticed already that people behave differently online; namely, they lose some of their inhibitions. The causes of this disinhibition are debatable, but the results are easy to see. For example, if your Facebook friends list is anything like most people's, each day your news feed is filled with political diatribes and links to specious, barb-filled rants. These are friends who can, in person, have completely normal, civil conversations about politics (or politely avoid the subject altogether), but something about being online seemingly turns them into nutjobs! That is disinhibition, and it means a great deal for us when we share the Gospel in an online environment. The same effect that turns a normal person into a complete punk online can make an ideal environment for spreading the Word.

The negative effects of disinhibition are the easiest to see, and several new terms have developed to describe particular anti-social behaviors: flame wars, trolling, cyberbullying, grieving, and digital piracy to name a few. In online interactions, individuals are more likely to abuse trust, engage in illegal activity, lash out, and take extreme positions. The devil has plenty of weaponry at his disposal thanks to disinhibition. This would make it seem as though the internet is the *worst* place to conduct evangelism!

However, there is a flip side to the disinhibition coin. When interacting online, people are more likely to form friendships, open up to new ideas, self-disclose, and trust. For a Christian it's an amazing opportunity. In online conversations, people are more likely to open up about their lives, insecurities, and problems. This means there are more obvious opportunities to apply the message of grace. When you share that message, a person will generally be more receptive than in face-to-face interactions. If you are encouraging someone to give church a chance, it's easy to provide a link to a congregation's website or a pastor's sermon, and the recipient is likely to give it a look.

Many of the principles of witnessing online are the same as they are in person. Consider Facebook again. Just as using a bullhorn on a street corner is not the most effective witnessing strategy (in fact, it's likely to turn people off), frequent, particularly pointed or belligerent status updates are not likely to win people for God, even if they are of a religious nature. Another person's aggressive post, however, may serve as an opportunity for you to reply, ask questions, or show interest and care. The conversational interaction is more likely to bring about results. And this effect is not limited to Facebook. Most people will know others through games, blogs, message boards, or one of the other ways that

we interact online. This means that opportunities for witnessing range from talking to a guildmate in an online World of Warcraft game who is going through a rough time, to engaging in a gentle conversation with someone who just posted something insulting on their blog.

Best of all, the effects of disinhibition extend to you as well. Most of us have a hard time sharing the Gospel in person. Oftentimes we beat ourselves up, wish we were more outgoing, or feel guilty

that we're not doing all we can. But the nervousness that we feel in face-to-face encounters is greatly reduced when we have these conversations online instead. Since much online interaction is written, you have time to consider your responses carefully, so everything has a less intense, immediate feel. If you've lamented the difficulty of engaging others with Jesus, try online witnessing instead, and turn what the devil often uses as a weapon into a tool for building God's kingdom.



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



On the Synodical Scene...

Teachers Installed in Florida

On Sunday, August 4, 2013, at the regular morning service, Justine Smith and Sara Hoffman were installed as teachers at Peace Lutheran School in Kissimmee, Florida. Sara Hoffman had already served Peace Lutheran School in a temporary call previously and has now joined the staff in a permanent call. The Rev. Matthew Moldstad, pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, conducted the rite of installation. A reception followed the service.



Left to Right: Justine Smith, teacher grades 1–2, Sara Hoffman, teacher grades 3–5.

Left to Right:
Principal Jason Draeger, Sara Hoffman, Justine Smith, Danielle Powers, Barbara Huhnerkoch, and the Reverend Matthew Moldstad.



Pilgrim Lutheran Installs New Pastor

Rev. Matthew Brooks was installed as pastor of Pilgrim Lutheran Church in Waterloo, Iowa and Faith Lutheran Church in Parkersburg, Iowa, on July 14, 2013. Circuit Visitor Rev. Wayne Halvorson served as liturgist and lector and performed the rite of installation. The Rev. Shawn Stafford, Pastor Brooks' seminary classmate, preached the sermon, "A Noble Task," based on 1 Timothy 3:1. Other pastors participating in the laying on of hands included the Reverends Wes Bruss (WELS), Glenn Smith, and Martin Hoesch.



Left to Right: The Reverends Shawn Stafford, Wes Bruss (WELS), Matthew Brooks, Glenn Smith, Wayne Halvorson, and Martin Hoesch.

King of Grace Lutheran Installs New Pastor

On August 25, 2013, Rev. Ron Pederson was installed as pastor of King of Grace Lutheran in Waukon, Iowa. Rev. Kincaid Smith, former pastor of the congregation, served as liturgist; Rev. Wayne Halvorson, Circuit 7 Visitor, performed the rite of installation; and Pres. Moldstad preached the sermon on Joshua 1:6–9. Other pastors who participated in the service were the Reverends Dan Basel, Glenn Smith, Shawn Stafford, David Locklair, Martin Hoesch, and Matthew Brooks.



Left to Right: The Reverends Dan Basel, Kincaid Smith, David Locklair, Wayne Halvorson, Glenn Smith, Ron Pederson, Martin Hoesch, John Moldsad, Shawn Stafford, Matthew Brooks.

The Importance of a Liberal Arts Education to the Christian Church

The Greeks called it *enkyklios paideia*, a “well-rounded education,” from which the word encyclopedia is derived. The Romans renamed it *artes liberales*, the “liberal arts,” referring to the academic subjects to be studied by freemen, as compared to the manual labor skills learned by slaves. But it was not only pagan Greeks and Romans who established the liberal arts tradition. In fact, during the Middle Ages Christian theology was known as the “queen” of all the sciences taught at the university.

During the Reformation, the Lutheran faculty at the University of Wittenberg championed the liberal arts in service to the Christian faith. This tradition continues today at Bethany Lutheran College. A liberal arts approach to education has several characteristics that readily submit to a Christian worldview.

First, a liberal arts education returns students to the sources. A college history class, for example, does not center on a modern textbook, but on the writings of influential people who lived long ago—primary source documents like the Magna Carta or the Gettysburg Address. Just as theology properly returns to Holy Scripture as the source of all doctrine, so also other disciplines must continually revisit their roots.

Second, a liberal arts education seeks to understand the connections among different disciplines. Philosophy does not stand alone, but partakes of a common conversation with the study of literature and history. All three subjects embark on a journey to discover the triumphs and tragedies of the human condition.

Third, a liberal arts education cultivates a student’s character for service in God-given vocations. A well-rounded education does not seek simply to develop skills, but also to shape attitudes and to evaluate aspirations. Biology students at a liberal arts college learn more than the nuts-and-bolts of biochemistry; they also ponder the ethical responsibilities that come with such knowledge.

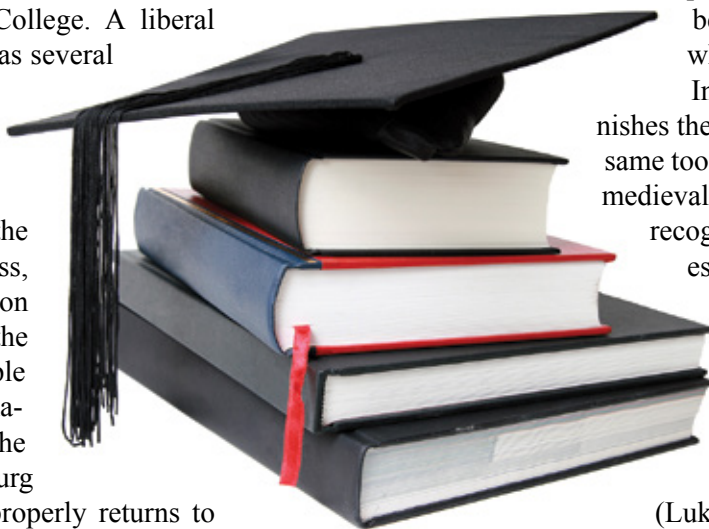
A liberal arts education does not churn out graduates with maximum efficiency, but instead pauses to allow time for reflection and conversation. For example, psychology students at a liberal arts college do not simply check off requirements toward a career in counseling, but more fun-

damentally consider the assumptions that underlie various psychological theories.

Of course, a liberal arts approach does not by itself guarantee good results. Rather, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). Does a psychological theory deny the doctrine of original sin? Then such a theory lacks wisdom. Does a biological theory deny God’s work of creation? Then such a theory is foolish (see Psalms 14 and 19). Does one’s view of history celebrate human achievement as a progressive liberation from the religious beliefs of the past? Then such an interpretation lacks the proper discernment to know which beliefs of the past were true and which were false.

In brief, a liberal arts education furnishes the mind with useful tools, but those same tools also can be abused. That is why medieval Christians wanted theology to be recognized as the queen of the sciences. Even today, the motto at Bethany Lutheran College remains “One Thing Needful,” in reference to Christ’s instruction to Mary and Martha that attention to God’s Word must take priority over all earthly affairs (Luke 10:38–42).

When pursued in service to the Christian faith, a liberal arts education has great value. Students not only acquire skills that are needed in the workforce, but also develop talents and aspirations for service in their homes and in their congregations. An English major may find her highest fulfillment reading bedtime stories with her children. A music minor may one day direct the choir at his congregation. A business major may serve as chairman of the church finance committee. Often God prepares students for futures that they cannot predict. By laying a broad foundation, a liberal arts education seeks to equip people for any vocation to which God may someday call them.



Dr. Ryan C. MacPherson, a member of Mt. Olive, Mankato, Minnesota, teaches at Bethany Lutheran College and is editor of *Telling the Next Generation: The Evangelical Lutheran Synod’s Vision for Christian Education, 1918-2011 and Beyond* (2011).



Pastor, I Have a Question...

Question: *If you are living in a deliberate sin (e.g., living together without the benefit of marriage), should you be denied helping on any committee at church?*

Answer: The church is filled to the rafters with sinners. The church regularly calls all sinners to confession and repentance. By God's grace in Jesus' work of salvation, the church is empowered to forgive sins. Jesus accomplished forgiveness for us. He obeyed God's Law in our place. By Baptism, He covers us with His holiness. He took all our sins to the cross, and He suffered sin's penalty. By faith in Him, we are forgiven. Repentant sinners, with the help of the Holy Spirit, intend to amend their sinful lives. We make this confession every time we partake of the Holy Supper, and He strengthens our faith.

The writer to the Hebrews speaks about deliberate sin, "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin" (Hebrews 10:26). St. John also writes, "Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him" (1 John 3:6).

These passages speak of people who claim to believe but deliberately continue in sin. No one who truly believes in Jesus will be proud of sinful conduct. Christians will not live in a particular sin with no care that we are sinning against God.

At the same time, there are sins of weakness. Christians struggle with sin until God grants us a blessed end and takes us to heaven. They struggle because some temptations are very strong. The American Medical Association recently declared obesity to be a disease, showing that even secular scientists recognize the power of the temptation to overeat.

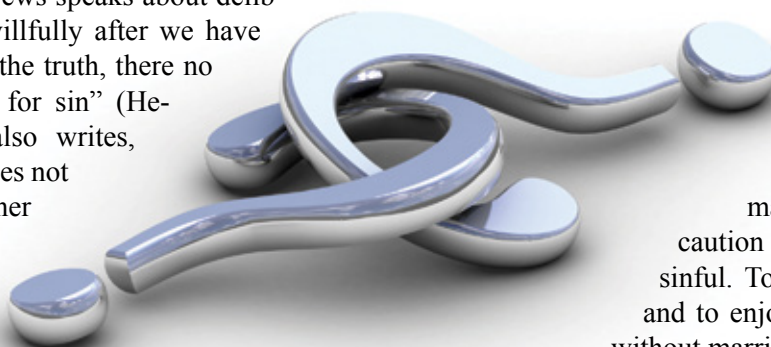
In our Christian lives, we battle these desires, as St. Paul confessed in Romans 7. At times we slip. Then Christians confess their sins (1 John 1:8-9). God, again, forgives them for Jesus' sake. God's Spirit and His Word are our help and strength. If we fall again in weakness, we flee to the cross again for forgiveness in Jesus. God helps us amend our sinful lives. We take no pride in sin. Nor do we believe that we can continue living contrary to God's Law without repentance.

Every sin is serious and is not to be taken lightly. However, it is also true that the blood of Jesus Christ wipes all our sins away. Jesus' forgiving love leads us in faith to want to do no sin. On this side of heaven, our sinful nature will often get us to commit sins. But again, the love of Jesus leads us to offer our bodies in service to Him. We return to our Baptism for strength to live new lives each day (Romans 6:1-11).

To live in sin is not compatible with our confession as Christians. In faith, we can not defend our sins. We will try to stop with God's help through His Word. That resistance to sin is one fruit of our faith.

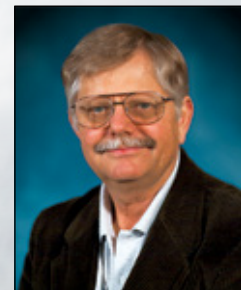
The questioner points specifically to "living together without the benefit of marriage." We must exercise caution here. To live together is not sinful. To live as if we are married and to enjoy the benefits of marriage without marriage is sinful.

Those who live in sin, whatever that sin may be, need to confess it. They need to strive to stop their sin. If a pastor is aware of the sin, he will admonish the sinners. He will ask them to refrain from the Holy Supper until they repent. Should they be office holders in the congregation, the pastor will ask them to relinquish their offices if they do not repent. If the sin is public, unrepentant sinners (pastors or office holders) need to be removed from their offices in the church.



Send your questions to:

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

When a Loved One Serves in Harm's Way

When a son, daughter, or other loved one tells you they are going to join the fire department, police, or military it is easy to have a flood of fear fill your heart. One does not need to go into detail about the horrors of war and service in dangerous situations. From being killed, wounded, or even tortured as a prisoner, the worries of a parent or friend or family member can be overwhelming.

In truth, as the hymn puts it, we all walk in danger all the way. Satan pursues us all. The devil ambushes us. We have to contend with our own sinful nature. God allows crosses and trials to enter our days. Death itself pursues us. The dangers in our own homes in America or on the battlefield far across the world are essentially the same. We all walk in danger all the way. However, when some new danger appears to us it can strike great fear and bring much new worry. And when the danger is being shot at, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), or other hostile threats in the line of duty, it really gets our attention.

Our Lord has given us the safety we so desperately need. For our bodies, He provides not only our daily needs but also protection. These petitions of the Lord's Prayer speak of God's providence of the body: "Give us this day our daily bread" and "Deliver us from evil." We can have peace knowing that God cares for us at all times and in all dangers: "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7).

If our Lord wills that we suffer harm we are still always in His loving care. He will give us the strength and patience to endure what He allows to come our way. "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons" (Hebrews 12:7-8).

If death should come, the same comfort that is for a civilian is there for the soldier: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). Our Lord Jesus has brought you safely into His Kingdom by grace through Holy Baptism.

The soldier, fireman, or security personnel has the Gospel of perfect safety: "Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:14-17). When they are attacked spiritually by the enemy, they are kept safe in Jesus' Word.

Martin Luther offers this prayer in his tract "Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved":



Heavenly Father, here I am, according to your divine will, in the external work and service of my lord (nation/government), which I owe you first and then to my lord for your sake. I thank your grace and mercy that you have put me into a work which I am sure is not sin, but right and pleasing obedience to your will. But because I know and have learned from your gracious

word that none of our good works can help us and that no one is saved as a soldier but only as a Christian, therefore, I will not in any way rely on my obedience and work, but place myself freely at the service of your will. I believe with all my heart that only the innocent blood of your dear Son, my Lord Jesus Christ, redeems and saves me, which he shed for me in obedience to your holy will. In this faith I will live and die, fight and do everything else. Dear Lord God the Father, preserve and strengthen this faith in me by your Spirit. Amen. (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 46)

So if we are in our homes, serving in our cities, or far away across the sea, we are all in battle and in danger; but we walk with Jesus as our walk is heavenward all the way.

Robert A. Harting is pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Indianola, Iowa.



The Other Side of the Altar

One day, a pastor went to call on a parishioner who was now only scarcely coming to worship since her elderly parents died. The entire family had faithfully attended the same congregation for three generations, so this was most unusual indeed.

When the compassionate shepherd asked why she had not been coming to church, emotions came pouring over her and she said, “Pastor, I just can’t bear it! Each time I try to come back, I sit in that sanctuary and so many memories come flooding back. I miss worshipping with my Mom and Dad so bad! No matter how hard I try, I just can’t escape the fact that they are not there with me anymore. I don’t know how I can come back to church ever again.”

The pastor knew how hard this could be for some people. In fact, this wasn’t the first time he faced such a situation. For all who take the faith seriously, one of the main goals Christians have is for their children and children’s children to grow in the truth of God’s Word and remain faithful in worship and the Church. To have a spiritual bond of fellowship that transcends even flesh and blood is among the greatest of God’s blessings that a family can enjoy! But oh how hard it can be when that tight bond is suddenly severed by death. What was once a great blessing now becomes a painful memory and pierces even our soul!

So the pastor said, “Do you realize that when you commune at Church, we only gather on one side of that altar?”

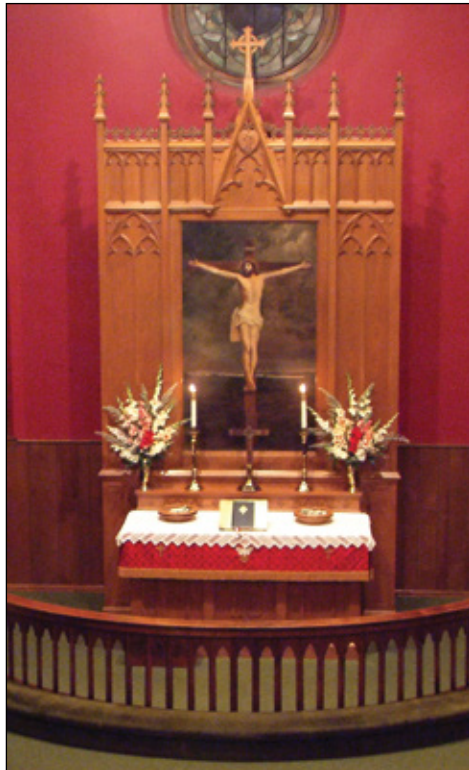
A silent, “So what?” was the returning blank stare!

“Well, let me tell you something about that,” he said. “I remember learning in seminary that in many churches, the altar was placed against the wall with a purpose in mind. We worship and commune on only one side of the altar to remind us that there are two sides to worship: one side is our worship here on earth,

and the other side is in heaven. So when we come to worship and commune, we join the celebratory feast of heaven! Do you realize what that means?”

Again, the blank stare was deafening!

“It means that when you come to worship, you are joining with Mom and Dad again in worship! They are ‘on the other side’ of that altar, worshipping together with you in heaven. The liturgy also resonates this truth when we say, ‘Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying...’”



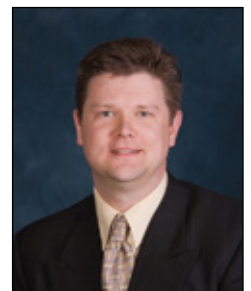
What was once a blank stare, now turned to tearful eyes that finally understood. And with that she said, “Funny, isn’t it, how we can come to the same place and do the same things time and time again and miss the deeper understanding?”

“I think we all do this,” the pastor replied, “and more times than what we know.”

It is reported that she started coming to worship again. And even though her newfound understanding did not take away all of the pain, it is amazing how only Jesus can reach through the deepest hurts of our lives and can bring us back to Him! Ever the Good Shepherd, Jesus lifts

the weak and wounded onto His strong shoulders, and gently brings them back to His flock. He said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life” (John 10:27–28). No matter which side of the altar we worship from, we will ever thank Jesus for this!

Dan McQuality is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Lincoln, Illinois.



2013 Meeting of the Theological Commission of the CELC

The Theological Commission of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) met May 28–30, 2013, in Mequon, Wisconsin. The members of the Theological Commission are Prof. John Brenner, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS); the Rev. Andreas Drechsler, Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (ELFK), Germany; the Rev. Davison Mutentami, Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Zambia (LCCA-Z); the Rev. Takeshi Nidaira, Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church (LECC), Japan; Prof. Gaylin Schmeling, Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS); and the Rev. Daniel Koelpin (WELS), CELC president, *ex officio*.

The Theological Commission is writing a document summarizing the five essays delivered at the 2011 CELC convention in New Ulm, Minnesota, on the doctrine of the church. In addition, the commission completed its review of a statement titled, “Make Known God’s Manifold Wisdom,” focusing on outreach, for publication and presentation to the 2014 CELC convention. The convention topic on the church will be Article VI of *The Eternal Word: A Lutheran Confession for the Twenty-First Century*. Article I is a study of the doctrine of Holy Scripture, Article II of the doctrine of justification, Article III of the work of the Holy Spirit, Article IV of the person and work of Christ, and Article V of the doctrine of eschatology. These statements may be found in PDF form on the CELC website under the heading “Eternal Word: A Lutheran Confession” www.celc.info. The triennial convention of the CELC will be held in Lima, Peru, in 2014. The officers of the CELC are: president, the Rev. Daniel Koelpin; vice president, Prof. Michael Smith; secretary, Prof. Thomas Nass;

planning committee, the Rev. Michael Duncan and the Rev. Steven Petersen.

The CELC is the third largest worldwide Lutheran fellowship, following the larger Lutheran World Federation and the International Lutheran Council. It was organized in 1993 at Oberwesel, Germany, and represents 24 church bodies with approximately 450,000 members. The conference accepts the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments (the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God) as the sole authority for doctrine, faith, and life. The conference also accepts the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, not in so far as but because they are a correct exposition of the pure doctrine of the Word of God. The CELC continues to strengthen each of its member churches through mutual encouragement and consultation. We praise and thank our Triune God for

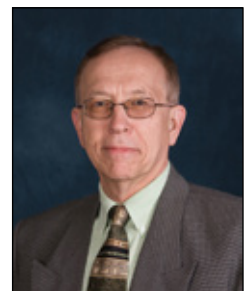


(Left to Right): the Rev. Takeshi Nidaira, Prof. Gaylin Schmeling, the Rev. Daniel Koelpin, Prof. John Brenner, the Rev. Andreas Drechsler, and the Rev. Davison Mutentami.

having permitted us to establish this confessional organization on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word.

having permitted us to establish this confessional organization on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word.

Gaylin R. Schmeling is president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota.



The Cost of Education

The 2013 Synod Report shows that the Evangelical Lutheran Synod has about 4,000 children as members in its congregations. The statistics also reveal that 1,721 attend Sunday Schools and 844 attend Christian day schools. Even allowing for some baptized members being too young to attend either, it means that almost one-half of our children are not enrolled in some form of Christian education.

One prays that the parents of those children not attending Christian day schools and/or Sunday schools are diligently training their children to know God's Word. Dr. Luther says that there is no greater sin parents can commit than failing to teach their children about God and Jesus. Conversely, there is no greater legacy for parents to leave their children than to be well-educated in the Bible and the *Small Catechism*.

What a blessing it would be if every congregation of our synod would operate or support a Christian day school! Such schools would be a source of spiritual strength against the forces of the devil at work in the world. Our young people need to know God and His truth, to trust in Jesus alone as their Savior, and to abide in the grace of the Holy Spirit. With the armor of God, they will be able to withstand the attacks upon the Christian life that seem to increase in our culture.

But the cost! Yes, the cost of such education is huge. The school building, teachers' salaries, books and supplies, and the time involved to keep a Christian day school running are more than what many congregations in our synod can afford. Some will also object that funding a Christian day school will interfere with the vital mission work the congregation also needs to do.

On the other hand, consider the costs to our children if they do not know well the Bible accounts of God's people, if they have not memorized Bible passages and hymns, if they cannot understand the relationship between their lives as Christians and what they study in other subjects. Consider the cost of our young people who do not know what Jesus said and did for them.

Christian education teaches children to read, so they can read the Bible. It teaches them math and science, so they can appreciate the order God has created in our universe. It

teaches them music, poetry, and art so they can appreciate beauty in their God-given world and lives. It instructs them in using language to help them communicate verbally and in writing what blessings God gives them each day. It teaches them to distinguish between right and wrong, between truth and falsehood, between what God says and what the devil and the world say. It teaches them history and social science so that the students can understand the world God has placed them in, how their lives are affected by the past, and how God has turned the evils of history and culture into blessings for His Church. It teaches how students are to treat each other in Christian love, forgiveness, and humbleness.

All these things should also be taught in the home and in Sunday School and confirmation classes. However, the instruction time is limited when compared to a week of instruction in a Lutheran elementary school or high school or college. Time is critical in raising up a future generation to know God, His Son Jesus, and His Word. Without such Christian education, the congregations in America will continue to lose a

majority of those who are confirmed every year. The losses are staggering even among those educated in a Christian school. The decision to no longer worship God in church can lead to terrible consequences. For while that decision may be personal, it eventually may involve descendants who do not hear God's Word and are eternally lost.

Christ made Christian education the Church's responsibility when He said, "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). We should thank God for the many ways in which that teaching is carried out in our congregations and in our Christian schools. Also thank those who devote their time to teaching. Let us support this teaching by our presence in Bible classes and our gifts for Christian education at all levels.



Theodore Gullixson is a retired pastor living in Mankato, Minnesota.



Treasurer's Report

Memorials given from 12/1/2012 – 6/30/2013

Gifts Received for the Synod in Memory of Memorial by

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Ever Ready Circle - Holton, MI

Annette Wulff

Silas and Mary Born - Mankato, MN

Caryl Browne

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Conrad Faugstad

Steven and Kathy Petersen - North Mankato, MN

Cora Gunderson

Norseland Lutheran Ladies Aid - St. Peter, MN

Daphne Bakke

Michael Klebig - San Jose, CA

Edwin Sell

Lois M. Sell - Juneau, WI

Evan Medes

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Gladys Wilks

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Shawn Stafford - Hartland, MN
Glenn Smith - New Hampton, IA
Trinity Ladies Aid, Calmar - New Hampton, IA

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Our Savior's Ladies Aid - Belview, MN

Viola Bartz**Jean Cox**

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Norma Tostenson**Lowell Johnson****Ella Boldt****Jean Olson****Naomi Natvig****Gretchen Wobrock****Clara Norell**

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Myrtle Poff

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Rosemary Doehling

Norseland Lutheran Ladies Aid - St. Peter, MN

Ruth Abrahamson

Rev. Nathanael H. Abrahamson - Cottage Grove, WI

Ruth Berglin

Silas and Mary Born - Mankato, MN

Stella Larson

Calvary Ladies Aid - Ulen, MN

Stella Wilinski

Steven and Kathy Petersen - North Mankato

Thelma Lippert

Rock Dell Church Ladies Aid - Belview, MN

Isabel Arneson

Silas and Mary Born - Mankato, MN

Anju's Birthday

Shawn Stafford - Hartland, MN

Gifts Received for the Seminary in Memory of Memorial by

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Joyce Kushman - Marinette, WI

Alice Trulock

Zion Lutheran Church Women - Tracy, MN

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Vernon Hoyord

Thomas and Ann Hoyord - Scandinavia, WI

Warren Daehnert

Martin and Martha Doepel - Eau Claire, WI

Bethany Seminary Begins 2013–2014 School Year

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary began its new school year with an opening service on August 26, 2013, in Good Shepherd Chapel. Dr. Thomas Kuster based his message on Isaiah 40:1–5, which he called

“The Great Commission of the Old Testament,” addressed to all preachers. By referencing the six chief parts of Luther’s *Small Catechism*, he found in God’s call to “Comfort ye My people,” whispers of the whole counsel of God: a God who cares for His people, who redeems them, sends them a Comforter, welcomes their prayers as the Lord taught them to pray, calls them to repentance and forgives their sin, urges the message be made known to all nations/all flesh through Baptism, and proclaims the “glory of the Lord” most clearly seen on the cross and brought to each of us through the Holy Supper. This is God’s message we are to bring to comfort His people.



Pictured from left to right: Michael Lilienthal, Matthew Behmer, David Covell, Daniel Ruiz, Aaron Ferkens-tad, Andrew Soule, Josh Mayer, Michael Willitz, Kurtis Freimuth, Paul Lange, Jeff Hendrix. Not pictured: Paul Webber.

The teaching staff for the seminary this year is as follows: Professor Thomas Flunker is teaching Hispanic outreach; Professor Adolph Harstad is teaching in the areas of Old Testament, world religions, and homi-

letics; Professor Thomas Kuster is teaching communication; Professor Michael Smith is teaching in the areas of New Testament, hermeneutics, and homiletics; Professor Erling Teigen is teaching dogmatics; and Professor Gaylin Schmelting is teaching courses in church history and homiletics.

The seminary enrollment this year numbers twelve. There are one vicar, three seniors, five middlers, and three juniors. The vicar is Paul Webber at Mt. Olive Lutheran (Mankato, Minnesota). The seminary also has one student in the Master of Arts in Lutheran Theological Studies program.