

September–October 2014

Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

"Engage Others with Jesus."



*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.
(Ecclesiastes 3:1)*

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From the President

Dear members and friends of our ELS:

I happen to be a bit of a news junkie. I try to stay up on world events. If you are reading this article, chances are you also have a hearty interest in the news—synod news, yes, but far beyond. We Christians want to be aware of others' needs and predicaments as we add them to our prayers ascending the throne above.

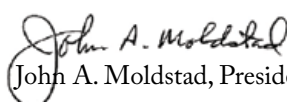
The prayer-plate has been crowded in recent days. At the hour of my writing this article several concerns compete for spots on the plate: horrible persecution of Christians in Iraq; bloody conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip; Ferguson, Missouri, in chaos because of a young man shot dead by police; the Ebola virus threatening the world scene; Ukraine and Russia poised for escalated warfare; U.S. politics exposing a great divide; morals in our country eroding; news of a prominent suicide; and people close to us suddenly coping with serious illnesses. . . . Yes, pray we must.

Looming over the airwaves with its flood of bad news is the elephant-in-the-room query: Is evil in control? Sadly, so many people do not know the Savior, do not know of the solid hope for the future by faith in Him. They are unaware of the proper Book where guidance and answers are found. People quickly despair and wonder, "Is evil winning?"

Answer: a resounding **NO!** Here is why:

- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come into the world and defeated sin, death, Satan, and hell through His holy life, innocent death, and triumphant resurrection. This was prophesied at the time of the fall into sin. To Satan God said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15). In the course of time, God fulfilled His plan of hope for all: "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons" (Galatians 4:4–5).
- God assures us that He has all things under His control for the benefit of His Church. He will sustain us from evil forces at work against us: "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18). "For he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones" (Proverbs 2:8).
- When evil signs surround us, the prophetic words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 24 come to mind. Hard times for the Church have been foretold and are to be expected. This testifies to our Lord's powerful rule, "For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again" (Matthew 24:21).
- By faith in the Savior's atoning work for sinners, we confidently look forward to the ultimate Victory Day of the blessed resurrection of the saints and life everlasting. "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5:5).

Neither evil nor the Evil One can ever win. Jesus Christ is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with Him in heaven will be His called, chosen, and faithful followers (Revelation 17:14). With our risen King, we hold the victory! May we help others join the celebration.


John A. Moldstad, President of the ELS



Through Word-and-Sacrament Worship God Motivates His People in Their Vocations

Some Christians have been known to sing: “*Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*” Well, actually, no, you weren’t there.

“*Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*” I wasn’t. I did hear about it, though. That’s when I learned that, though I myself was not there, my sins were. They were taken up in Jesus. They were lifted up in Him and put to death, to the very last sinful impulse and wandering thought. My sin caused His suffering and death. I know this. You do, too. That is why you sing as you do.

Why is it, though, that you tremble? Is it because you must, in order to be assured that what happened there is actually going to benefit you in some way? Does it seem a bit strange that with all that the Lord is doing, you focus so much on yourself? Does it bother you that, if sometimes it causes you to tremble, then, sometimes it doesn’t?

Tremble or no, from the smallest infant who cannot articulate her faith; to the penitent in confession, who trembles, but with grief; to the communicant who looks up for the Host [consecrated bread] in Holy Communion, *even in your receiving*, what makes all the difference is Christ and what He does for you. Not what you do for Him.

Think like a child would. Before I even came home from school, mother thought about me. She planned a meal for me. She killed a chicken, plucked it, and roasted it, before I even gave supper a thought.

Then she called me. At the table she put the meal in front of me. The food itself was sustenance for me. It saved me from going hungry. I’ve come to believe that it keeps me strong and living.

Spiritually speaking, that is the benefit we have in being sacramental Christians. Your Jesus, roasted for you on the Cross, cooled in the tomb, began to serve Himself up as soon as we found Him alive again! “Receive the Holy Spirit,” He said. ‘Whosoever’s sins you forgive, they are forgiven’ (John 20:23). He promised this: “I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19). He puts the Spirit and the Word together.

False teachers, by their teaching, separate them. Words without the Spirit are just information. Water without the Spirit is just symbolic. Bread and wine apart from the Body and Blood of Christ can only memorialize an absent Jesus. That’s what *men* do.

What does *God* do? He puts His Spirit and Word together, for you to know when you hear it that sins are truly forgiven. He puts water and His Spirit together, to wash sins away and grant new birth. He puts His very Body and Blood in the bread and wine to be received by you,

for the remission of sins. Then you are being taught to look outside of yourself to Jesus, present here and now, to benefit you by what He did for you on the cross so long ago.



Aaron Hamilton is pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

Christian Vocation Is God's Hidden Help to Others

A couple of years ago I tagged along on a class field trip with my oldest sons to a coal-fired power plant. The tour guide showed us many things that day, but what stuck with me the most was what we learned in the control room. The turbine generating the electricity doesn't move at a constant speed; instead, its speed depends on the demand of the power customers. If somebody turns a light on in a bedroom, for example, the computers (and the people manning them) sense the increased draw of electricity and compensate by speeding up the turbine.

At that moment it became clear just how many different people saw to it that I had all the electricity I needed: the people who unloaded the coal; the people who manually operated and maintained the furnace; the people who ran the control room and watched over the steam turbine and the generator. All those people—and I never knew about them! Their help had been hidden from me.

That is the nature of living where God has called us to live. Our vocations are God's hidden help to other people. We do not know how the Lord will use us to help others.

God Gives Our Vocations Purpose

At times not knowing can frustrate us. Certain tasks seem menial and pointless. Aspects of daily life seem trivial. We try to avoid paying the bills, not because it bothers us to part with the money, but because it's boring.

Where God has kept some things hidden, He has revealed others. St. Paul reminds us that even the seemingly small matters of this life, such as eating and drinking, are to be done to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). In His Law He has commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18).

So it is that God gives our vocations purpose. The next time you find yourself balking at one of those unpleasant menial tasks, remind yourself: "I am doing this for God's glory and out of love for my neighbor." Think about how what you are doing will be a help—perhaps even giving people opportunities to learn about Jesus.

God Promises to Bless Our Vocations

In addition to giving our lives direction, the Lord also has promised to bless our daily callings. First of all He promises to work through your life—your words and actions. God "works in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). When you work hard at your vocation, whether it's in the area of your career, in your roles as husband and wife and mother and father, or even in the vocation of friend and neighbor, God's hidden hand will be working through your hands to be a hidden help to people you never met.

Most importantly, when we fail—and we will, as fallen sinful beings—God has promised to be there with His forgiveness, given to us for the sake of the One who perfectly fulfilled all His vocations in our place. "And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:1–2).

We may never know how something we did was a help to someone else. Yet we know that the greatest hidden help we have in our vocations is the help God already provides.



Piet Van Kampen is pastor of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

How God Blessed the Reformation through Katie Luther

Katharina von Bora was born January 29, 1499. Much about her life must remain a mystery to us, but some sources give us glimpses and insights.

Prayer and faith. As a young girl, Katharina von Bora was sent to a convent for education. Though it was an isolated life of prayer, schooling, and work, she had two aunts who were also nuns at the convent. When some of the nuns embraced Martin Luther's teaching of the Gospel, Luther himself arranged to help them escape. Katie's religious life continued outside the convent, as she eagerly read the Bible. Martin said: "My Katie now understands the Psalms better than all the papists put together."

Hostess and diplomat. When Katie arrived in Wittenberg, she had to learn how to interact with men, women, children, families, peasants, merchants, nobility, and even royalty. In the Reichenbach and Cranach households, she learned how to host prominent visitors, a skill useful later with the many people who came to meet her husband and other Reformers.

Pastor's wife. Many of the nuns who escaped returned to their families, and most of them married quite soon. Katie had a suitor early on, but it became impossible for them to marry because of his socio-political status and family situation. Eventually God brought Katie together with Martin Luther. Both had strong wills and personalities, but they respected and supported each other. Katie encouraged Luther in his theological work. Luther helped Katie in running the boarding house and in purchasing her precious farm at Zuhlsdorf. In his will, he designated her as sole heiress and guardian for the children, even though the laws of the time would not allow that.

Supporting the Gospel. Katie did not blindly follow her husband. Supporting him meant supporting the Gospel. She urged him to answer his critics, for the sake of the Gospel. One result was the famous *Bondage of the Will* in response to Erasmus' *Freedom of the Will*. Katie did not change Luther, but added to who he was.

Mother and caretaker. Martin and Katie were loving parents, raising not only their own cherished children, but also several nieces and nephews, as well as many boarding students. Much of this responsibility fell to Katie, but

Martin was active with the children and even played games with them, such as bowling. Martin and Katie grieved the loss of two children, but were comforted by the hope of the resurrection in Jesus Christ.

Household management. Katie Luther was an industrious businesswoman, managing the household while her husband preached and taught and wrote and traveled. She ran a boarding house for university students, tending them when they were ill. She provided for the family, managing the budget, farms, servants, and household staff. She had horses, cattle, pigs, sheep, goats, chickens, and geese.

Persistence in poverty. Katie is an example of persistence, bearing a cross that would crush most people, enduring unimaginable ridicule from friends and foes. After Luther's death, she eventually lived in poverty, when only the King of Denmark-Norway gave reliable support. More than once she had to flee Wittenberg because of war and plague, the final time leading to her death. Katie jumped from the wagon, fell into cold water, and caught a chill. After lingering for three months, she died on December 20, 1552, in Torgau.

God blessed the Reformation through Katie Luther's support of Martin's preaching and teaching the Gospel, and her setting a model for the Christian family, her household, and Christian businesswomen.

Recent interest has resulted in *Katie Luther: The Opera*, which debuted in 2013. A play will debut in 2014. Learn more about Katie from these sources:

- *The Mother of the Reformation: The Amazing Life and Story of Katharine Luther*, by Ernst Kroker.
- *Katharina von Bora: A Reformation Life*, by Rudolf K. Markwald and Marilyn Morris Markwald.
- www.facebook.com/KatieLutherProject



Mark DeGarmeaux is a professor at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota, and a translator of Dr. U. V. Koren's sermons.

God Asks Them to Be the Salt of the Earth, the Light of the World, and a City Set on a Hill

One of the central themes of this year's *Lutheran Sentinel* is vocation. Thus it is only fitting that the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) should be addressed. The restoration of vocation has some important roots in this famous discourse of our Lord.

Few other sections of God's Word have received as much ink or variation in interpretation than what Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354–430) first called the Sermon on the Mount. The common thread of nearly all its different interpretations is that the sermon should be understood as Law. But by the time of Thomas Aquinas (A.D. 1225–1274), Christ's exposition of the Law contained herein was deemed so rigorous that it was distinguished (evangelical counsels, etc.) from the Ten Commandments and reserved for the so-called "religious vocations," i.e., monks/nuns and friars/sisters, who alone were deemed capable of achieving its higher spiritual standard. Everyone else, conversely, was merely expected to adhere (from their faith in love) to the lower demands of a muted Ten Commandments to ensure their salvation, all the while knowing that they would still have to spend many years of purification in purgatory.

On the basis of the Sacred Scriptures, Martin Luther (A.D. 1483–1546) challenged this denial of a vocation to the laity, the downgrading of their spiritual character, and above all else the dangerous notion that the Law could actually be kept by anyone. He not only reasserted the spiritual quality of the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:5–9), but he also maintained that the Sermon on the Mount was the proper explanation of the moral law binding on all. Much like Justin Martyr (A.D. 100–165) in the second century, Abraham Calov (A.D. 1612–1686) and others further reminded the church that the sermon's call to be the salt of the earth, light of the world, and city set on a hill (Matthew 5:13–16) was not limited to the clergy, but pertained to every Christian as well (Philippians 2:15; Luke 14:24–35).¹

With this in mind, the severity of the sermon is rightly intended to drive *all* man to despair of themselves and their righteousness. But this same truth also drives man to cling to Christ who perfectly fulfilled it and bestows upon us the higher righteousness that alone exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:17–20). After all, we can only reap the wondrous benefits of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1–12) by being incorporated in Christ's body, the church, (Romans 6) through Baptism. How else could we who are incapable of the sermon's perfection (Matthew 5:48) receive the kingdom of heaven, be comforted, inherit the earth, be satisfied, receive mercy, see God, or even be called the sons of God? Christ was perfectly poor in spirit for us. He mourned, hungered, and thirsted for righteousness for us. He alone was truly merciful, pure in heart, and was the peacemaker between God and man.

¹ Abraham Calov, *I. N. J. Biblia Novi Testamenti Illustrata* (Frankfurt am Main: Wustius, 1676), 1:182–83.

For this reason, believers are not told to *become* the salt of the earth, light of the world, and a city set on a hill. Our God-given faith, created and preserved by the Word and Sacraments alone, has already made us so. What a truly magnificent new reality God's Word is able to unfold! Then when Christ warns us not to let our salt lose its saltiness, He is not suggesting that good works preserve us in the faith any more than He is saying that we are saved by works. We will remain saint and sinner until our full transformation in Christ on the last day. Rather, Christ is calling us to confess God's Word in both word and deed. An authentic faith is a "living, busy, active, mighty thing" that cannot help but express itself in love (*Formula of Concord*, SD IV:10). But woe to the faith or the church that has become incapable of expressing itself! They will be all the harder to win back for Christ (Luke 11:24–26).

The sermon should also not be construed as empty moralism. It is a call to authentically confess our faith by our lifestyle, service, and above all else a Law-Gospel witness to others. This call likewise is not a pretext for anarchy in the church. Christ incorporates His clergy and laity into different roles within His body, the church, so that His mission may be organically carried out within the spheres of our integral and complementary vocations and gifts (1 Corinthians 12).

Finally, it must be remembered that the Lutheran Reformation did not restore the sanctity of seemingly ordinary vocations only to suggest that our confessions should only be ordinary. Christ states, **"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"** (Matthew 5:16). Strive to be the best daughter, father, nurse, businessman, soldier, etc. that you can be. Even if we are the only light left in our town, a single light in the darkness can still be seen for miles around, bringing faith, hope, and love to all who still sit in darkness. Such a confession will never be without the cross. But can the wonders of the Beatitudes yet to be fully realized in us compare with the very best this fallen world has to offer?

Dr. Timothy R. Schmeling is assistant professor of theology and history at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota.



“Engage Others with Jesus” Retreats: A Final Update

- *“This retreat was very informative, spiritually uplifting, and encouraging.”*
- *“I thoroughly enjoyed the retreat. The information was very helpful and made me start thinking of more and better ways to reach out to people.”*

(Comments from participants of the “Engage Others with Jesus” retreats)

In keeping with our synod’s strategy to “Engage Others with Jesus,” in late 2012 the ELS Board for Home Outreach embarked on an aggressive plan to conduct retreats throughout the synod to help congregations and pastors in their outreach and evangelism efforts. Over the course of a year, the board held retreats for nine of the synod’s circuits. Most of the retreats were conducted over a Friday night through Saturday afternoon timeframe at a local hotel conference center. Some of the retreats took place at a local church on a Saturday.

All of the retreats were packed with much useful material.

Each retreat started with a devotion and introduction by Pres. John Moldstad. The first main portion of the retreat addressed the topic of our motivation for evangelism and our love for souls. The second portion covered how we can reach out with the Gospel within our various vocations. In the following section, various fears about evangelism were addressed, including ways in which we can work around such fears. The fourth portion of the retreat gave practical information regarding what to say when engaging someone with Jesus. The fifth section addressed the area of how a congregation can identify and nurture prospective members. After a brief section regarding a demographic tool available to congregations, the retreat concluded with a round table discussion for each congregation to determine how best to move forward with their own plans for outreach and evangelism once they returned home.

How were the retreats received by the participants? Overall, fairly well. At the end of each retreat, participants filled out feedback forms. Some of the comments from these forms were listed above. Here are a few more.

- *“Becoming more aware of the need to reach souls for the kingdom of heaven motivated all who attended from our church to adopt and implement new ideas to reach our community. Outreach, followup, ideas, are becoming reality.”*
- *“The retreat was a good starting point and stepping stone for us. The information provided was good and can be used by the congregations. It is now up to the congregations to use the information to their benefit.”*
- *“Good focus on how we already have the right tools. They are God-given tools of Word and Sacrament. Maybe mention that it is important that we not compromise on doctrine for the sake of sharing Jesus.”*



The board is currently making plans for another synod-wide retreat, which will address particular aspects of outreach and evangelism.

The entire “Engage Others with Jesus” retreat is available on DVD with the accompanying workbook material. Every congregation that participated in one of the retreats received these materials. If your congregation still needs a copy of these materials, please contact the synod’s Communication Director, the Rev. Paul Fries (paul.fries@blc.edu). May God continue to bless our synod in our efforts to engage others with Jesus.



Michael K. Smith serves as a professor at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary and as chairman of the ELS Board for Home Outreach.



On the Synodical Scene...

ELS Teachers Meet in D.C.

The ELS Teachers' Conference was held at the Marriott near the Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C. on August 7–10, 2014. Allen Labitzky, principal of King of Grace Lutheran School in Golden Valley, Minnesota, was the organizer of the conference. Two professors from our Bethany Lutheran College, Dr. Polly Browne and Dr. Jennifer Wosmek made presentations. Dr. Browne spoke on "Creating a Common Vision—The Future of Lutheran Education" and Dr. Wosmek's presentation was titled "Vocation: Creating and Encouraging Community."

Ample time was given for visiting historic sites and museums in our nation's capital. On Sunday, August 10, a communion service was held for about 100 attendees; ELS Pres. John Moldstad preached on Matthew 14:22–33 and the Rev. Alex Ring, chairman of the Board for Lutheran Schools of America, served as the liturgist.



Columbia Lutheran School Opens This Fall

On Sunday, August 24, 2014, Bethany Lutheran Church in The Dalles, Oregon, dedicated Columbia Lutheran School. The school will serve for both the education of children in the congregation and for outreach into the community. The Rev. Jesse Jacobsen was installed as principal and Mr. Doug Radliff as teacher. We wish them God's blessings as they work to feed Christ's lambs.



Youth Camp in Florida

Twenty-four youth enjoyed the ELS Circuit 1 City Camp from July 28–31, 2014. The camp was held in the largest Orlando city park, which is surrounded by the Florida Turnpike and high-rise apartments. Despite being located in the city, the campers enjoyed much of God's creation and traditional camp activities such as staying in cabins and nightly campfires. The Rev. Matt Moldstad served as the coordinator. The Revs. Peter Heyn and Andrew Burmeister also helped with leading the group in devotions and Bible class along with fun campfire songs. Three other ELS members served as camp counselors. Much fun was had by all, and Circuit 1 looks forward to making this a yearly event.



Naomi Petersen, 1929–2014



Naomi Petersen was visiting in Madison, Wisconsin, when she suffered a stroke and died on August 24, 2014. She was 84 years old. Her funeral was at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota, on August 29. Naomi was born on December 12, 1929, to the Rev. and Mrs. Norman A. Madson in Princeton, Minnesota. She attended Our Savior's Lutheran School in rural Princeton, Bethany Lutheran College, and Norwegian American Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. She married the Rev. Wilhelm Petersen on July 19, 1953. The Lord blessed them with three sons and three daughters. Along with helping her husband, she also worked in hospitals and nursing homes in Madison, Wisconsin, and Mankato, Minnesota. Naomi is survived by her husband, Wilhelm; six children; 17 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; brothers Paul, Norman, and Andrew Madson; and sisters-in-law Esther Faugstad, Clarice Madson, Amanda Madson, and Margaret Madson, and a brother-in-law John Moldstad, Sr.

Elizabeth Krause, 1965–2014



After a difficult time with cancer, Elizabeth Krause died on September 1, 2014, in Madison, Wisconsin. Her funeral service was at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Madison, Wisconsin, on September 5. A memorial service was held at Zion Ev. Lutheran Church in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, on September 6. "Beth" was born in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, on November 4, 1965, to Robert and Carol Krause. She attended Zion Ev. Lutheran School in Rhinelander, Bethany Lutheran College, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She taught at Holy Cross Lutheran School for 22 years, primarily 5th and 6th grades. She is survived by her parents and five siblings.

Pastor, I Have a Question...

Question: *I am living with a chronic alcoholic. He refuses to go to church or seek help with his disease. This has affected my health. I am not able to afford living alone nor do I have family in the area. What do I do?*

ANSWER: For the comfort of all those who suffer, God assures us that He is always with us. His Son was born one of us to bring us God's grace. God said: "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:4-7). Because of Jesus, God promises, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). On His cross, Jesus did His greatest work. He redeemed us from the threat of hell. He assures us He will take care of the smaller matters we suffer in this world.

We struggle. We have sorrows and trials. We may feel as if God has left us. Through His Word and His Sacraments, He comforts us and assures us. He is as close as a prayer. Day by day and minute by minute give your struggle to the Lord. Ask for His help and strength.

The struggle may get you down. It may work to weaken your faith. Turn to your pastor for assurance from God's Word. Regularly receive strength from the Holy Sacrament. The members of your congregation are also there for your support.

You must also do what you can to ensure your own safety. If your spouse is a threat to your body or life, seek protection from the authorities.

There is little we can do to change others, even those close to us. This is especially true for alcoholics. Alcoholics Anonymous' first step is this: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable." Those who live with alcoholics need to learn this too.

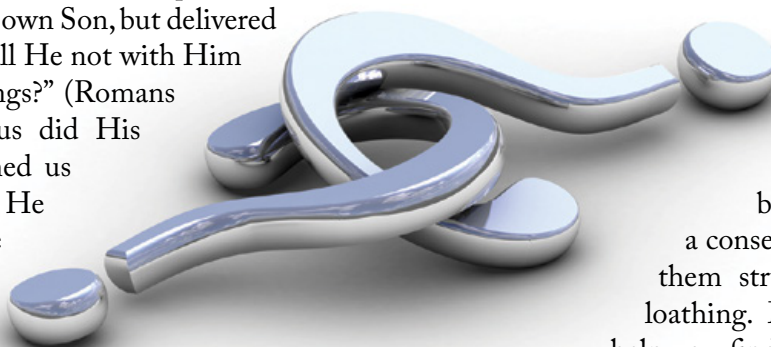
Of course, our gracious God can do all things, and He promises to work in this world by means of His Word. If there are quiet and peaceful times at home, gently and with love, you might express your faith in Jesus in your spouse's hearing. Gently and with love, when possible, continue inviting your spouse to join you when you worship. Continue to ask God's Spirit to work on your spouse's heart.

It is also important to find a helpful group of like-minded sufferers such as Alcoholics Anonymous (Al-Anon). Alcoholics are masters at avoiding responsibility for the consequences of their drinking.

They are masters at blaming those they love. As a consequence, those who live with them struggle with guilt and self-loathing. Members of Al-Anon can help you find your way through all this.

Though there is little you can do to affect the behavior of your spouse, there is much you can do to separate yourself from the effects of your spouse's drinking and behavior.

We are all sinners, but we have a gracious and loving God. Jesus took the sins of alcoholics and suffered the punishment. God loves and forgives alcoholics. He loves and forgives us all. We continue our walk through this valley of sorrow with our eyes on the goal, paradise earned for us by our Savior.



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.





Cross Currents

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree...*
— S. T. Coleridge

Faith Chapel Christian Center in Wylam, Alabama, celebrated the opening of a 26 million dollar facility this past summer. Built on a 137-acre site, it features six domes under which can be found:

- A 12-lane bowling alley
- A basketball court
- A fitness center
- A banquet hall with a café
- A teen dance club
- An adult alcohol- and smoke-free night club

The church's leader, Michael Moore, is quoted by the Christian News Network as saying: "People may not want to come to a church, but they'll come to a bowling alley. People have needs other than spiritual needs. There's a need for safe, clean, uplifting, family-oriented entertainment." (christiannews.net)

Now, to be sure, it may be a commendable thing to make the church the center of a community's life. This is something that is fondly remembered by many of our own circle from the days prior to the dramatic array of entertainment options that have forced their way *and* been invited into our lives. Indeed, there were even some *Lutheran* churches that had similar entertainment options built into their facilities *including* gymnasias and bowling alleys. (*German Lutherans*, of course!)

These, though, were not meant to be the draw to bring people from the community *into* the church. Rather, they were an expression of the unity of faith, community, and family that already existed *within* the church. This is similar to the way that today's much more informal "coffee time" after the divine service is a reflection of the fellowship created in the more formal time in the sanctuary where God's gifts are given.

The landscape is littered with projects such as this. One need only look back to the late 1970s when the Christian-themed Heritage USA amusement park opened. By the mid-1980s Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker were able to claim

that with an annual attendance of nearly 6 million visitors they were the third-most-visited such facility in the nation.

Today, though, Heritage USA lies in ruins. It was abandoned after the scandal that sent Jim Bakker to prison and his "ministry" into the hands of others. You can even find pictures of what's left of this place that was once claimed to be proof of a loving God and the prosperity He promised His followers. (Or should that be "god" and "he" and "his"... as in Jim Bakker?)

That word, "prosperity," is what links these two places together, even though over three decades divide their founding. One look at the website of Faith Chapel Christian Center will show that the siren song of unbiblical teachings continues (unsurprisingly) to wail and draw many, many to their destruction. The current teaching series is titled "The Prosperous Mind" and it's *not* talking about prosperous in a good way, but in a "six-domed-church-and-entertainment-center-that's-more-entertainment-than-church" kind of way.

We *are* prosperous, though. Rich in the grace of our crucified Jesus, as St. Paul states so clearly: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). The Church is all about *this* grace—the absence of the Father's wrath over your sins that Jesus took unto Himself—that it offers to the world, not a grace that grants only "stuff."

With all due respect to Olivia Newton John, one can only hope that this "spiritual" Xanadu suffers the same ignominious end as did her movie.

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



GREETINGS TO THE SAINTS IN CHILE AND PERU

At the conclusion of Paul's epistle to the Romans, he greeted Phoebe, Priscilla and Aquila, Epenetus and two dozen more people mentioned by name, people who had been helpful to him in the mission work at Rome. After a recent trip to Chile and Peru, I thought of the people I met in those mission fields who are so helpful to the church.

In Santiago, Chile, I met a woman named Patricia who was looking for a church that was more focused on God's Word than on emotions. She has found a spiritual home in our church that fills her with joy as she studies the Scriptures. She longs to share the Bible with others and has set up an email list to write to friends, sharing what she has learned from the Scriptures, encouraging and helping to spread God's Word.

Mario is currently studying in the seminary in Santiago and serving as a vicar, preaching God's Word in one of several area churches on Sundays. He, too, has been deeply moved by the Gospel message he has learned at our mission. In addition to his church work, he supports himself by running a karate school. A few years ago, he was the world champion in Kenpo Karate. But the work of his church and sharing the Gospel are top priorities for him. It was a joy to meet Mario and his family to share a meal with them and to learn more about the culture of Chile.

In the city of Linares, we met Chelsea, Arron, and Seth, three North Americans currently serving as teachers of English as a Foreign Language. Arron and Seth teach at the public school in nearby Longavi. Chelsea teaches her classes in Linares. These Lutheran teachers have many opportunities to share their faith

with their students and their families. In addition, they serve as volunteers for our mission congregation in Linares.

We spent time with ELS missionary Tim Erickson and his wife, Ellen. Tim, of course, has pastoral duties and teaches the seminary students. In addition, both of them have a wonderful gift of being able to bring the Gospel into conversations with people that they meet in stores or on the street, sharing an invitation to learn more about our church and its saving message.

We traveled to Tarapoto, Peru, where we met Ronal, the pastor of the church and a professor in the

Bible Institute of the Amazon. The day after we arrived, we observed Ronal teaching a number of vicars and students that come from the Shawi villages in the Amazon. These classes help to prepare the men to become vicars and pastors, taking the Gospel message to their villages in the Amazon.

Jaime, a professor at the seminary in Lima, also travels to Tarapoto once every two months. He and Ronal travel twelve hours to the

villages in the Amazon where they conduct services in the Shawi villages, and then, together with the Shawi students, travel back to Tarapoto, walking through the jungle, then traveling by bus to Tarapoto. There the students spend a week with Jaime and Ronal in the Bible Institute to continue their studies.

From Tarapoto, we traveled to Lima, Peru. We met with the national Board of Directors to discuss the future work of the church in Peru considering the assistance that our synod is able to provide. We encouraged them to become more self-sufficient, recognizing that our



Jaime teaching at the Bible Institute of the Amazon

resources have become more limited. These men are dedicated pastors, seminary students, and vicars who are eager to share the Gospel message. The majority of the pastors in Peru, as well as in Chile, are bi-vocational workers. They work as pastors, but also have other jobs to support themselves and their families.



English teachers: (left to right) Arron, Chelsea, Seth

These are but a few of the people working with our missionaries in Chile and Peru. May God bless them all.



(left to right) Tom Heyn, Patricia, Ellen and Tim Erickson, Alejandro (Patricia's husband)



Tom Heyn is pastor of Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove, Wisconsin.

2014 Youth Convention



"I will lift up my eyes to the hills" (Psalm 121:1).

This was the theme of the ELS 2014 Lutheran Youth Association Convention (LYA) in Missoula, Montana. At the end of July, senior high school youth from across the country met at the University of Montana in Missoula to worship together, study God's Word, and partake in activities like white water rafting, contra (folk

dancing, a high ropes course, the sights and sounds of an Irish music festival, a magic show, group singing, sports activities, mountain hiking, and of course... shopping.

Each student was given the opportunity to sign up for three "break-out" sessions. Each session dealt with various topics concerning culture and Christianity. The Rev. Donald Moldstad's keynote address tied all of these topics together and dealt with the difficulties of staying faithful to God and His Word in today's social climate.

Speakers representing Bethany Lutheran College and Kingdom Workers also engaged the students.

Next year the LYA conference will be held at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota, from July 23rd to the 26th, 2015. Spread the news. LYA is a fantastic resource for our youth both spiritually and socially...and it's an awful lot of fun.

Peter Bloedel is a member of the ELS Board for Youth Outreach

What if Being an Adolescent Is the Pinnacle in Your Life?

The Juvenilization of Christianity

Each stage of life has its own developmental challenges and trials. The adolescent time period was once considered to be one of the most difficult and stressful times in one's life. Stereotypically marked by immaturity, rebelliousness, and striving for a sense of independence, the adolescent years would not seem to be the pinnacle in one's life course.

However, for many decades Christian churches and youth ministries have been packaging content and worship practices that focus on a "youth version" of Christianity. Motivated by a desire to hold on to the next generation, church leaders have attempted to construct worship practices and programming to which youth can relate. The result of these attempts has shifted, perhaps inadvertently but not without major effects, as the adolescent emphasis is now seen as perhaps the pinnacle moment in our lives. Instead of bridging the gap from youth into adulthood, this juvenilization of church practices is now becoming the hallmark of many adult lives in the Christian church.

So what does the juvenilization of American Christianity look like? A significant mark of youth-focused Christianity is an emphasis on the body, or as described by others, a "theology of the body." Examining adolescence in a physical sense is when a person transitions into his or her adult body, and therefore much of the efforts of juvenile Christianity focus on remaining "pure and perfect" in this new adult body. Here we might see a focus on youth service projects where youth can use that able and willing body to serve others. Additionally, there might be a focus on purity and abstinence of sexual thoughts or avoidance of addictive chemical vices.

Working to serve others and keeping the body pure surely are goals of a sanctified Christian life; however, there also tends to be very little if anything in these youth ministry practices that keeps the focus on the only pure example of the bodily perfection that we have in Jesus Christ. The movement begins to place an emphasis on works righteousness, and clearly we as sinful beings have numerous daily reminders of how we fail the theology of the body.

Not straying far from the theology of the body, the juvenilization of Christianity also has a focus on the mind

and specifically the much sought after desire to keep youth attentive and energized. This is where we see church worship that is filled with rock music, PowerPoint presentations, and anything that is perceived as more entertaining than traditional worship. The effort and emphasis are no longer on the Word and Sacrament, as has always been the guide in liturgical worship, but instead the effort is made to organize the worship service around whatever is the most uplifting, attention seeking, and emotionally exhilarating. Once seen exclusively at youth conventions and rallies (which is devastating in and of itself) this form of praise worship can

now be seen throughout Christian churches in America.

The effects of this juvenilization of Christianity are not seen just in the way that the youth are leaving the church but the ways that adults have conformed to this juvenile form of Christianity. Instead of trying to focus on doctrinal truth and purity that can keep the theology of the cross as our focus, we have watered down our training and worship to continue to market to the juvenile.

The end result of such a preposterous movement is quite clearly an immature and shallow Christian church, which is more vulnerable to the attacks of Satan and the sinful world. A return to Luther's model for juvenile training into the adult life is perhaps most significant at this time. To catechize youth (and perhaps adults who have been passed by in the juvenilized version of Christianity) is not to water down church practices but to train and educate the youth in the most valuable theological truths that we have in Word and Sacrament. Within the catechesis model Luther has encouraged pastors, parents, and adults to embrace the important vocation of educating youth and presenting material whereby the Holy Spirit can develop a mature and strong adult faith. Youth ministers, pastors, and parents, put away the guitars, drums, and catchy PowerPoint presentations and grow up!

Joshua T. Mears is a counselor for Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service.



Christian Education Is for All

We live in a culture where people are turning away from the truths of God's Word. The pressure on our young people to conform to anti-scriptural ideas and morality is tremendous. The television programs, movie subjects, and advertising are symptoms of this pressure. Since we cannot keep the world's view away from children and young people, the need for Christian education at all age levels becomes insistent.

Over the past three issues, the editorials in the *Lutheran Sentinel* have dealt with the need for Christian education—at Bethany Lutheran College, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, and Christian day schools. It was not my intention to create an editorial series, yet the subject of Christian education is vital for the Lutheran church and for our Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Many other Christians have lived under similar circumstances of growing indifference to the Bible. Just 200 years ago, the Enlightenment—a philosophy that claimed to know the laws of nature and concluded that God was not needed—destroyed the faith of many people in Europe and America. Today the church is challenged by post-modernism—a philosophy that rejects all claims of absolute truth and divinely revealed truth. Many young students who once trusted in the Bible have succumbed to this philosophy and live as their own gods of truth. Yet they live alone, unanchored and drifting in a raging sea of unbelief.

God has given the Church only one “weapon” to counter the false assumptions of the unbelieving world—His holy, inerrant Word. The Bible is not to be used as a weapon to kill opposing ideas, but as a light that shines in the darkness to point the spiritually blind to know the truths of God's salvation, grace, and mercy. Through that Word, the Holy Spirit works to enlighten hearts to know the depravity of their sinful natures and to believe in the salvation that Jesus won by His life, death, and resurrection.

The Bible is clear so that even a small child can know that God loves him and that Jesus died for his sins. The Bible is rich enough that through a lifetime of study a person will never plumb the depths of the riches of God's mercy and revelation.

Christian education in God's Word is an absolute necessity for all believers. Before Moses died, he spoke about the necessity of education activities: “Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children..., that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them” (Deuteronomy 11:18–21). Note the dual emphasis of activity—lay God's Word in our hearts and teach it to the children. You know what happened to the people of Israel when they failed to do this (see Judges 2:10–14).

We live in a world filled with secular ideals, wicked lifestyles, ungodly temptations, substance and human abuse, and self-centeredness. The devil finds more tools with which to corrupt minds, tempt to sin, and destroy faith. Only through a diligent and continual study of the Bible—personal reading, family devotions, public worship, Bible and confirmation classes, and Christian education in our schools—will we be prepared to resist the fiery attacks of Satan, to avoid the temptations of the world, and to remain steadfast in the faith.

Consider how Jesus spoke about Christian education: “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32). The word “abide” means in Greek, “to make your dwelling with.” Jesus wants His children to dwell constantly in His Word. Only then will they remain in the truth about God, sin, death, God's love, Jesus, salvation, faith, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, eternal life, and Jesus' return in glory.

The Internet allows us to learn about many things. We can find an answer to almost any question. But only the Bible—God's inerrant Word—will inform us about the salvation God provided for us in His Son, Jesus. We should always thank God that He revealed in the Bible how He accomplished our salvation through Jesus.



Theodore Gullixson is an ELS pastor emeritus living in Mankato, Minnesota.

Seminary Begins a New School Year

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary began its new school year with an opening service on August 25 in Good Shepherd Chapel. Because St. Bartholomew's Day is celebrated on that date, Prof. Adolph Harstad based his message on texts concerning the disciple Bartholomew and made applications to the lives of seminarians. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, when Catholic Christians slaughtered Huguenot Christians in France, should cause us to shudder in repentant embarrassment if we harbor a self-righteous superior attitude when thinking about Muslims killing Muslims today.

"Bartholomew" means "son of Tholomaos" and also "son of the furrow" (plowman). The two names remind students of the help of parents and relatives who contributed to their ability to become seminarians and also of the "humble plowmen" they are training to be. The other name of Bartholomew was Nathanael. His full name was thus Nathanael Bartholomew. Now we know more about the man because of the account in John 1 of the calling of early disciples. Jesus called Philip, and Philip in turn invited his friend Nathanael (Bartholomew) to "come and see." The importance of serving as good brothers and friends at the seminary is a natural application of Philip encouraging Nathanael. Bartholomew/Nathanael was at first an arrogant skeptic. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" He came and saw the Savior, sat at his feet, and witnessed the

perfect life and redeeming death that lead to redemption. Seminarians who want to grow in grace and in humble service to God's people have only one place to go—to Jesus and His means of grace. A personal devotional life is therefore encouraged at the seminary along with a rigorous academic life. Tradition says that after Easter and Pentecost, Bartholomew boldly spread the saving message in India as well as in the regions around Armenia. Finally, he was martyred for the faith and lives forever as "St. Bartholomew" in the presence of his Savior. Praise to God for that saint and all the others who have gone before as humble servants of Jesus.

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

The seminary enrollment this year numbers nine. There are one vicar, five seniors, two middlers, and one junior. The vicar is Michael Lilienthal at Redeemer Lutheran Church (Iola, Wisconsin). Also we have one student in the Master of Arts in Lutheran Theological Studies program.

