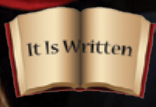


# Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

*"Engage Others with Jesus."*



*For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. (2 Corinthians 4:17)*



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# From the President

Dear members and friends of our ELS:

There is silence in the courtroom. The judge has invited the victim to address the accused, who has now been found guilty. The assembly waits with interest to hear what will be said. Will emotional outbursts be heard because of the hurt endured? Surprisingly, when the victim speaks directly to the perpetrator, the anticipated deep-seated resentment toward the shackled, guilty, and yet now remorseful defendant is lacking. In place of the expected righteous anger, a spirit of mercy is shown. Even *forgiveness* is announced, calling on the name of God to grant this to the very person who caused the indescribable harm. It is a touching moment.

What Christian is not moved by such a pardoning and magnanimous spirit? At the center of the Christian faith is the reality of what is most needed by every person in this world—**forgiveness**. The need is, above all else, the forgiveness that comes from God. But it includes forgiveness expressed by fellow sinners toward one another. The apostle Paul describes the pardoning spirit this way: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

A quick overview of Scripture reminds us how forgiveness is God’s main business for His perfectly created, but now fallen world. We think of Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son; the account of Zacchaeus; the repentant woman caught in adultery, who heard the pardon of the Savior; the healing of the paralytic where it was first things first — “Your sins are forgiven.” Paul’s powerful sermon at Pisidian Antioch is summed up this way: “Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the **forgiveness of sins** is proclaimed to you” (Acts 13:38, emphasis added).

God wants every person to sorrow over his or her sin so that God Himself may apply directly to the individual the forgiveness that He already has won for all people through the work of His Son (1 John 2:2). This is God’s foremost aim, as He has His Holy Spirit make that application of forgiveness to our sin-damaged hearts through use of His Word and the Sacraments. We are eternally grateful that this is God’s chief message to us throughout our lives! Luther exclaimed: “I am completely steeped in, and saturated with, the article of the forgiveness of sins. I am dealing with it constantly, day and night; and all my thoughts are of Jesus Christ, my only Savior, who has atoned and paid for all my sins” (TR 6, 6827).

If forgiveness is God’s chief business for the world, the church also has this as its highest endeavor. A tombstone out East is adorned only by a single-word inscription: “FORGIVEN.” It’s a comprehensive summary of a lifetime. What more needs to be said?

So, if God—our Creator—*can and does* forgive each of us our own sins, should we not gladly be moved to carry on the same “business of forgiveness” toward our fellow spiritual beggars all around us?

May God help us do so.

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



## How Can We Say That the Holy Spirit Works Only Through the Means of Grace?

God's Word testifies to the fact that the Holy Spirit works only through the means of grace. And there are numerous passages to support this truth. So we confess that the Holy Spirit works only through God's Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper—the means of grace by which we receive God's loving gifts of forgiveness, faith, and eternal life in heaven. Here is a short list of Bible verses concerning this work of the Holy Spirit:

**God's Word**—2 Thessalonians 2:13–14; 2 Timothy 1:9; John 17:17; Ephesians 2:10; John 17:3; John 1:12; Romans 8:14; John 16:13; Romans 3:28

**Baptism**—John 3:5; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38–39; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 5:25–26; Titus 3:5–8; 1 Peter 3:21

**Lord's Supper**—Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–29

Martin Luther wrote the *Small* and *Large Catechisms* as summaries of the main teachings of the Christian faith. He clearly described the active work of the Holy Spirit in the meaning to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. In the *Small Catechism*, Luther wrote, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the one true faith; just as He calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives me and all believers all our sins; and at the last day He will raise up me and all the dead, and will grant me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true." Notice that the Holy Spirit does the work—He enlightens, He sanctifies, and He keeps the person and the Church in the true faith. There is nothing here to indicate that a person does anything to earn their faith or deserve the credit for being a Christian.

Unfortunately, some churches promote the error "that the Holy Spirit comes without the external Word but through their own preparations and works" (*Augsburg Confession, V: Ministry of the Church*). Perhaps you know people who think that the Holy Spirit works in them without the means of grace. You may hear people claim that the Holy Spirit works through their prayer, good works, speaking in tongues,

dreams, and direct revelations from God. The sinful nature wants signs and visible evidence of God's presence and love. God knows how much we desire a direct revelation, and He gave us His Word, the Bible. Luther commented that God does give certain signs along with His Word for us to believe His promises. Water and God's Word belong to the Sacrament of Baptism. The bread, the wine, and God's Word are the Lord's Supper. God gives His blessings in ways and means that He has put in writing so that we can be certain that they come from God and not the devil.

The Augsburg Confession states, "That we may attain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, who works faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear the Gospel. That is, God, not because of our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into favor for Christ's sake" (*AC, V: The Ministry of the Church*).

The unbelieving person has no natural knowledge of Jesus to make a decision for Christ or to accept Him. St. Paul wrote, "No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). Faith is the work and gift of the Holy Spirit, who operates only through the means of grace. The church was established to teach God's Word and administer the sacraments to believers. We thank God for the work of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify the holy Christian Church and keep us in the true faith.



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**Mark Faugstad** is the upper grades teacher at Christ Lutheran Church and School in Port St. Lucie, Florida.

# How Does Baptism Connect Us to Jesus?

It's fascinating to consider the world from the point of view of a newborn baby. Their consciousness forms in a world of total darkness. We know that they are somewhat aware of the sounds in their mother's environment, but I would imagine that those sounds would be muffled, and I wouldn't expect that they could even *begin* to understand them. Then, suddenly they're born into a world of light! As their eyes slowly adjust, they would begin to pick out shapes, and their minds would slowly learn to make sense of visual information.

Even though we all began our lives this way, it's so strange for us to imagine what it must be like for babies! For example, what would it be like to feel hungry for the first time? I could be wrong about this, but I would imagine that, when a baby is hungry, he or she would cry without even the foggiest idea of what the pain in their stomach is, or what the remedy for that pain could possibly be. They just—cry. Fortunately for them, their mothers hear their cry, understand exactly what they need, and so provide the needed remedy by feeding them. Their need is satisfied even before they understand it. That is my point.

That is pretty much the same way that God satisfies our spiritual needs in Baptism. My Baptism happened when I was eight days old. At that age, I would not have been able to understand much about the needs of my body, much less the needs of my soul. And that's to say nothing of the articles of the Christian faith, which I would later learn in Sunday School, catechism class, and seminary. However, the Bible makes it clear that our Baptism connects us to Jesus by creating faith in our hearts—even in a newborn baby. "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus," it says, "for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Galatians 3:26–27). And St. Peter explains that the faith that we receive in Baptism

gives us "a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21). Faith in Jesus—which God creates in us through Baptism—satisfies the spiritual need for forgiveness with which all mankind is born.

What a blessing it is for a person to begin his life this way. Blessed is everyone who finds this faith at any point in their lives. And blessed are we when, throughout our lives, we maintain, cherish, and ponder this connection with Jesus that we have. He has fully satisfied our need for forgiveness by earning our place in heaven with His innocent life as our substitute and by His sacrificial death for us. He became our Brother so that we should all become children of the heavenly Father.

Baptism connects us with Jesus, in that Baptism is where our faith in Him came from. And every time that we return to our Baptism

in repentance, it is also a re-connection with Him. Luther described the Christian life in those words that catechism students memorize: "The old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die." But, even in this daily struggle—and it certainly is a struggle!—even here we, like newborn babes, trust the Holy Spirit to teach us how to pray, how to repent, *and* how to receive the full and free forgiveness with which our Savior feeds us. So, whether Baptism is a call to repentance, or a comforting reminder of forgiveness, or simply a thankful description of what it is to be a believer, the words of the hymn writer are appropriate for every station and time of life: "God's own child, I gladly say it: I am baptized into Christ!" (*ELH* 246:1).



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**Daniel Finn** is pastor of Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia.





# What Spiritual Sacrifices Are Acceptable to God?

Both Saints Peter and Paul refer to “spiritual sacrifices”:

“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:4–5).

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1).

What are they talking about, and how does this shape our Christian walk with Christ?

God’s Word teaches us that we are not saved by our own sacrifices, for “Jesus answered them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent’” (John 6:29), and “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28). Only the work of Jesus on our behalf can save and redeem us to make us children of God.

The question for this article is not what saves you; rather, now that you are justified before God in Christ, how shall you live? What does it mean to live as a Christian? The holy apostles write that we are being made something more than we were. We are being built into “a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5), and “We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Romans 12:5).

As Christians, we are being transformed corporately, not as disconnected individuals; for we are together being formed into the Church. And that makes sense, for it is through our assembling together in worship that we receive our Lord’s gifts of Word and Sacrament. And these gifts change what we are together, even as they transform each of us individually.

Salvation is already ours through faith in Jesus. Now it is given to us to be together the royal priesthood of God. In the Old Testament, the priests principally fulfilled two duties: they prayed and they made sacrifice—first for themselves, and then on behalf of others.

Jesus has made the sacrifice once and for all for our sins, so we no longer may make sacrifice for ourselves. However, we may offer to God an acceptable spiritual sacrifice on behalf of others. It is an offering of thanksgiving for Christ’s gift of salvation. And this most often will be informed and shaped by the daily roles in which we find ourselves.

So we can care for those who live and work alongside us. We love our neighbor for Jesus’ sake, and in our daily vocation help and support him, living in such a manner that our fellow believer is encouraged and strengthened, and that even those who are lost and dying may see such hope and grace in our daily dealings that they may wonder and ask about the hope we have which so transforms our behavior (*cf.* 1 Peter 3:15).

Your acceptable spiritual sacrifice, as one redeemed by Jesus, may have a thousand and one ways of expressing itself, according to your vocation and the needs of your neighbor. We can summarize

this joyous work in Peter’s instruction: “Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor” (1 Peter 2:17).

As a Christian you are called to a life of willing submission and service to others. In Christ you already have forgiveness, life, and salvation. Now you are called in your ongoing prayer and labor to serve one another in such a way that your fellow believers are encouraged, and your neighbors may see your hope in Christ.

*Your acceptable spiritual sacrifice, as one redeemed by Jesus, may have a thousand and one ways of expressing itself, according to your vocation and the needs of your neighbor.*

---

**Jim Wilson** is pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church in North Bend, Oregon, and co-pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Sutherlin, Oregon.

# What the Supreme Court Ruling on Same-Sex Marriage Means for Confessional Lutherans

“What God has joined together, let man not separate.” These words of Jesus have been pronounced at weddings over married couples for centuries, and in so doing there is public acknowledgment that marriage belongs to God: it was His idea, He created it, He defined it. And even though since the fall it has been troubled by sin, it remains a divinely established estate by which God blesses and protects every man, woman, and child. Through marriage man and woman are complemented and completed and cared for to a degree they could not be otherwise (Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5). Through natural marriage, children are conceived, born, and raised in a way that could not be done if either a father or a mother were not a part of the divine package (Genesis 1:27–28; Ephesians 6:4). Through God-ordained marriage the fallen nature of man is kept within bounds so unbridled sin does not reign (1 Corinthians 7:1–2).

Marriage is the foundation for civilized society. Without it, nations crumble. But even more, earthly marriages are reminders of a greater and eternal marriage (Ephesians 5:22ff.). A bride and a groom here reflect (albeit dimly) the forever marriage between the Church and Christ. When culture abandons the sacred understanding of marriage, it also abandons a testimony to the eternal Bride and Bridegroom relationship and the Gospel that established it.

Things have dramatically changed. Society has gone from the understanding that marriage has a transcendent source to a new understanding where human beings say, “No, marriage is ours and we can do with it as we please.” And now this arrogant lie has been crowned by the Supreme Court decision of June 26, 2015. A lie is now the law of the land. And as Hermann Sasse wrote,

The lie kills nations. The most powerful nations of the world have been laid waste because of their lies. History knows of no more unsettling sight than the judgment rendered upon the people of an advanced culture who have rejected the truth and are swallowed upon in a sea of lies. ... Where man denies that he and others are dying, the terrible dissolution [of his culture] is held up as a glorious ascent, and decline is viewed as an advance, the likes of which has never been experienced. (*Union and Confession*, 1936)

Over the last 14 years, marriage laws were changed

in various states with numerous sad consequences felt by many in widespread places. The difference now—with a nation-wide ruling—is that this lie will become legally binding in more ways, places, and on more people than ever before. It will impact not just a small segment of the population, but federal and local governing bodies, schools, businesses, families, individuals, and even Christian colleges and churches. God’s ordained ordering for culture and civilization is at great risk. Christians and our confessional Lutheran churches will be persecuted.

Pressure through name-calling (“intolerant,” “bigoted,” “hateful,” “discriminatory”) to conform will continue. But with this legal court ruling that now applies across the board, the pressure may come in the form of lawsuits, court costs, fines, firings, businesses and institutions forced to close, and even prison.

Parents will have little recourse when their children are taught that same-sex marriage is good and traditional marriage is bigoted. Already many county clerks have had to resign because they in good conscience could not issue marriage licenses to homosexuals.

Pastors will have an exemption from having to perform same-sex weddings for the time being, but the tax-exempt status of steadfast churches will likely be challenged. Updates to church constitutions may be helpful, but these are no guarantee when dealing with a new “constitutional right.” The hardest challenge may come to our dear Bethany Lutheran College. Federal money and grants, along with its tax-exempt status, will become issues as long as we teach and practice as we do. Not providing housing for same-sex married couples could be tested. So even with a clear confession of faith by our church body, college policies and practices could still be found to be unconstitutional.

The government could easily say, “We demand that your business, your job requirements, your words, your actions, your churches, your college be used to support the decision of the Supreme Court in spite of and contrary to your sacred beliefs.”

We are not used to this sort of thing in the Land of the Free. But it should not come as any great surprise, for Jesus has told us that as long as we live in the Church Militant we will be hated, persecuted, called names, and even delivered over to death (Matthew 10). So we remember that “our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20). And this implies that



we have already won, or, more accurately, that Jesus the Son has already won everything for us. “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (Romans 8:32, 37). The nation we now live in is temporary. The Kingdom we have through faith in the crucified, risen, and ascended Savior is eternal. He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, where He rules all things for the good of the Church, even though we often can’t grasp how.

So we walk by faith in Jesus. And that includes confessing our sinfulness, a sinfulness that puts us in the same boat with any and all enemies. We claim no moral superiority. We are by nature, with everyone else, sinful and unclean. What we do claim is grace: that we are undeservedly cleansed by the blood of Christ in the waters of Baptism, comforted and sustained through the Gospel found in the Word and the other sacrament. This we trust, even as the world and Satan press hard against us.

And since we are in a spiritual war (Ephesians 6:12), we also fight, but not as the world fights (2 Corinthians

10:4–5). We hold to and faithfully teach the Word of God, especially to our children. We defend the Word of God—with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15)—in our churches, college, seminary, and in the public square. We need to be ready to take lawful legal action to defend ourselves from wrongful intrusion by the government. But we also fight in another way: We love the very ones who oppose God’s Word, God’s Christ, and God’s children. We love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5). While they place before us the fiery furnace, we hold out to them a cup of water and, when the opportunity arises, the Water of Life for their salvation, for they are loved by the God of all mercy just as much as we are.

Therefore we pray, confessing our many sins and praising God for His free forgiveness. We pray for steadfastness, for we will be tempted to compromise when we shouldn’t and even deny our Lord. And we pray for our neighbor: our pastors, our churches, our synod, our nation, our governing authorities, and our enemies. And then we wait for the return of the King and the new heavens and the new earth.

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**David Thompson** is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas.





# 2015 Convention Resolutions

## President's Message and Report

The synod thanked the following for their service to the Lord: Dr. Dan Bruss for his 12 years as president of Bethany Lutheran College and the Rev. Theodore Gullixson for nearly 20 years as editor of the *Lutheran Sentinel*.

## Doctrine

It was resolved that representatives of the synod continue informal talks with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and formal meetings with the Church of the Lutheran Confession. The Doctrine Committee was urged to work with the Communications Director to communicate its findings with regard to present theological trends.

## Finances

Regarding the proposal for a special offering to be collected for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the synod, it was resolved that the Anniversary Offering Committee continue to implement the special offering, beginning in June 2016. The Planning and Coordinating Committee was urged to pursue the development of an updated strategic plan by 2017. The 2016 budget for congregational giving was set at \$760,000, with any offerings above \$725,000 to be allocated to the Board for Home Outreach.

## Higher Education

The convention ratified the election of the Rev. Nick Proksch as a Type B member of the Board of Regents. Pres. Dan Bruss was thanked for his 12 ½ years of service as president of Bethany Lutheran College. The synod gave thanks to God for calling Dr. Gene Pfeifer as the new college president. Because both Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary need students, it was resolved that families, pastors, and congregations be active in recruiting students to these institutions.

## Home Outreach

The synod congregations were urged to make use of the new Evangelism—Missions Counselor, the Rev. Lawrence Wentzlaff, who can assist with outreach and evangelism. The board was asked to evaluate the effectiveness of evangelism retreats as it prepares for another series.

## World Outreach

The board was encouraged to continue its support of the mission fields that the Lord has given the synod in India, South Korea, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Peru, and Chile. It was noted that the mission in South Korea celebrated its tenth anniversary. Synod members were encouraged to donate to the Gift of Life program operating in Ukraine.

## Elementary Education

The Board for Lutheran Schools was encouraged to upload educational resources to its website. Existing congregations were urged to consider using Early Learning Centers as part of their Christian education outreach efforts. The Lord was thanked for the increased construction of Christian schools in the synod.

## Parish Services

The Board for Youth Outreach was asked to recommend resources for teaching Bible history to the young people of the synod. The board is also to maintain an annual record of ELS youth camps. The synod congregations were encouraged to explore offering Christian counseling to its members through Wisconsin Lutheran Child & Family Services. The synod pastors and congregations were urged to inform the Board for Christian Service of service members on active duty and to inform the service members of the website for veterans ([els.org/resources/military](http://els.org/resources/military)). The Committee on Worship should explore publishing an Agenda for the synod and prepare vocal recordings of the liturgical services of the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal*.

## Synodical Membership

It was resolved to receive into permanent ELS membership the Rev. David Emmons. The synod also resolved to acknowledge fellowship with Grace Lutheran Church, Crookston, Minnesota, an independent congregation. The synod also extended clergy roster status to the Revs. Erik Gernander, Dale Jaech, and Greg Sahlstrom, at their request.

## Miscellaneous

The Centennial Committee was asked to consider publishing an updated ELS pictorial directory of ELS pastors and congregations. The synod revised the bylaws of the Lutheran Schools of America, Inc. The synod also adopted guidelines for a Board for Education, which will oversee the work of the synod's traditional Christian schools and classical education schools. The synod also adopted the Synod Review Committee's revisions of synod guidelines as part of the Committee's ongoing review.

## Pastoral Conference Records & Resolutions

The synod took note of those pastors, professors, and their wives who were transferred to the church triumphant: Mrs. Naomi Petersen, the Rev. John Krueger, the Rev. Herbert Larson, the Rev. Mark Harstad, the Rev. Jeffrey Londgren, Mrs. Violet Holte, and the Rev. Ted Aaberg, Jr.

The synod also congratulated those who celebrated anniversaries of ordination: the Rev. Paul Anderson (70 years), the Rev. Harry Bartels (60 years), and the Rev. James Braun (25 years).



# President's 2015 Annual Message

A patrol during World War II made it through an enemy minefield by putting their feet exactly in the spots where their leader had stepped. Jesus has walked through the devil's minefield and emerged victorious over Satan. He was tempted as all people are, yet without sin. He perfectly kept God's Law and taught God's Word to the people. He endured the cross as our substitutionary sacrifice for sin. And He proclaimed His victory over Satan by His resurrection from the dead.

Since Jesus has secured for us salvation from sin, death, and Satan, He invites His children to walk in His footsteps, armed with God's Word and strengthened by His Sacraments. In His Word, Jesus helps us navigate the perils of this wicked world to our heavenly home. This requires great vigilance.

Our 2015 convention essay focuses on the necessity of studying God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions to know the truth God has revealed. When many teachings are under fire from the world, it is important to become more fully aware of what the Bible teaches and why we confess the truths that we do.

When we see and hear so much that violates what is good, pure, and true, discouragement can set in. On many levels, the society we live in is putting pressure on confessional Lutheran churches to turn away from God's Word. In addition, a growing number of people express a lack of interest in organized religion, making our evangelism efforts more difficult. People claim to be open-minded to

the world, but are close-minded to traditional teachings of Scripture. Our synod pastors express concern over a lack of church attendance and apathy among members.

How can we respond? First, pray that God's Word would enlighten minds with the Gospel. Second, admit that we are sheep who are prone to stray and who need the Good Shepherd to lead us to the truth. Third, build ourselves up in the faith and keep ourselves in God's love (Jude 20–23).

Rescuing souls requires thoughtful planning on how best to use the resources God has given us. The Lord has given our congregations a new resource in calling the Rev. Lawrence Wentzlaff as our Evangelism–Missions Counselor.

While there are no easy answers to reaching out with the Gospel, God has given us His Word, which is the power for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). That Word is being taught in our synod's educational schools—Bethany Lutheran College, Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, and our K–12 schools throughout the nation.

Another common malady with living in perilous times is doubt—questioning some part of Scripture, or Christ's work of salvation, or our Christian lives and church work. The

struggle against doubt can be aided by joining with fellow Christians in worship to hear God's Word directing us to all that Jesus has done to save the world.

*The annual message by President John Moldstad was redacted by the editor.*



# Presentations at the 2015 Convention

## Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

Pres. Gaylin Schmeling spoke about the acute need for seminary students in the synod. In times of stress, the answer comes from the ministry of Word and Sacraments. This year, the seminary graduated one, Michael Lilienthal, who will be ordained on July 5, 2015. There are five men serving as vicars. Pres. Schmeling also spoke about the future Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference triennial meeting in Germany from June 28 to July 2, 2017. He noted that the Bjarne Teigen Reformation Lectures' theme is "Luther and the Arts" held on October 29–30, 2015.



The Rev. Petersen also noted the 45 years of mission work in Peru, especially work in the Amazon jungle. He told how the Gift of Life mobile clinics are helping people displaced by the fighting in Ukraine. In South Korea, a new institute was established to train men as pastors and missionaries. The Rev. John Vogt is teaching there, and Dr. Gyu Choi will also be teaching seminary classes. New schools have been built in India.



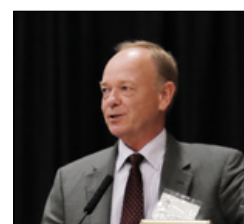
## Bethany Lutheran College

Dr. Dan Bruss addressed the convention for the last time as president of Bethany Lutheran College. He noted that the 2015 fall enrollment was 502 full-time equivalent students. A total of 117 students graduated during the academic year. While annual cost of tuition and board is \$32,550, this is the least expensive college among Minnesota private colleges. He spoke about a March "Speechless Film Festival" that saw 175 submissions worldwide. He noted that Director of Nursing Sara Traylor is developing a nursing program at the college. He noted that Bethany students are well-prepared for the workplace and for graduate schools. He spoke about the important focus of Bethany on God's Word and its influence in the students' lives and faith.



## WELS President Mark Schroeder

The Rev. Mark Schroeder, president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), spoke about difficult times for the Church, which may see persecution in the future. Jesus reminds us about the end of the story—we win. Jesus wants us to be bold in proclaiming the Gospel. He noted opportunities in the WELS for new mission starts, work among immigrant populations in America, and schools with stable enrollments.



## Lutheran Military Support Group

Erhard Opsahl, with 26 years of military service, spoke about forming the Lutheran Military Support Group, similar to Organization of WELS Seniors. The group's motto is "Shoulder to shoulder." He stated that the group's purpose was to share the Gospel, work with addicted veterans, provide help for pastors to understand veterans' issues, and serve as an auxiliary to provide information and expertise. ELS member Dennis Behr also serves on this group.



## Board for Home Outreach

Chairman Prof. Michael Smith introduced the new Evangelism–Missions Counselor, the Rev. Lawrence Wentzlaff. The Rev. Wentzlaff stated that his top priority was working with existing ELS congregations. Meanwhile, Prof. Smith would continue to supervise the work of the six home mission congregations. During the past seven months, the Rev. Wentzlaff has visited 26 congregations to assess their needs. He reported a recent trip to California to explore Hispanic outreach, and he reported contacts with pastors working with Sudanese and Hmong people in America. He reported that the Board of Trustees gave a \$100,000 grant to support outreach work.



## Giving Counselor

The Rev. Dan Basel reminded the convention that the anniversary offering will begin in June 2016. He produced a new Planned Giving Program brochure that has useful information for estate planning.

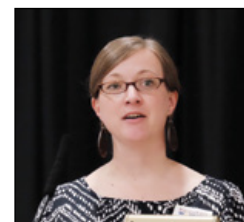


## Board for World Outreach

Missions Counselor, the Rev. Steven Petersen, introduced the Rev. Timothy Erickson, missionary to Chile, who spoke to the convention via Skype. With him were four men who were studying to be ministers in Chile. The Rev. Erickson reported that the churches are growing. Two Kingdom Workers have arrived to teach English classes, through which Chileans are introduced to the mission congregations.

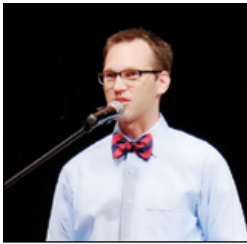
## Kingdom Workers

Mrs. Laura Harstad spoke about Kingdom Workers, whose members work in all parts of the world. Members in Chile teach in public schools and also teach English classes to adults. They do canvassing projects, sports camps, building projects, and training for diabetics patients.





# Cross-stitch 2015 Meeting



*Seminary student Aaron Ferkenstad leading the opening devotion.*



*Dr. Thomas Kuster discussing the work of Christ in Media Institute.*



*The Rev. Larry Wentzlaff speaking about his work.*



*Lydia Hartwig and Joseph Roemhildt performing songs from the musical Annie.*

The 17th annual meeting of Cross-stitch was held on Monday, June 22, 2015. Seminary student Aaron Ferkenstad led the opening devotion with a talk based on Psalm 16.

Mary Born introduced Lydia Hartwig and Joseph Roemhildt from Mt. Olive Lutheran School, Mankato, Minnesota, who sang songs from the musical *Annie*. After that, Mary noted that because of extra donations, Cross-stitch was able to give an additional \$2,500 to Gift of Life in Ukraine and \$2,000 to the Asia Committee for education. One goal for 2015 is to use funds to help build a school in Linares, Chile.

Next, Dr. Thomas Kuster spoke about the work of Christ in Media Institute in equipping missions with technological

items to proclaim the Gospel. Missionaries from Colombia, Haiti, India, and South Asia expressed their thanks for equipment and help to utilize it. Kuster said that the Institute is focusing on using mobile technology.

The Rev. Lawrence Wentzlaff then spoke about his new vocation as the Evangelism-Missions Counselor, which began on September 15, 2014. He noted that during the past ten months he has visited 29 ELS congregations. Much of his future work will be to train people to find the lost. He also works to identify cultural changes as they apply to mission work, does planning for mission work, and does outreach counseling.

## Youth Honor Choir 2015

With a smaller group of singers this year, director Dennis Marzolf introduced the young people to bells along with their work on choral pieces. By starting practice on Saturday, June 20, 2015, the choir was able to sing during the afternoon Synod Sunday service. The choir members played bells for the Wednesday afternoon convention devotion and

sang during the Wednesday communion service. The closing recital was on Thursday at noon. Prof. Mark DeGarmeaux accompanied the choir on the organ. Supporting this activity with administration, meals, and transportation were Susan Harstad, Steven Jaeger, and Lois Jaeger.



## “Engaging One Another with Jesus’ Teachings”



*The Rev. Jonathan Madson delivered the essay.*

What does your church believe? What makes you different from other churches? Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31–32). Engaging one another with Jesus’ teachings requires that we regularly review what Scripture teaches. The pamphlet *We Believe, Teach, and Confess* will serve as a resource to see the unity of the saving message and answers to those outside our fellowship.

### Refreshing Our Understanding of Confessional Lutheran Doctrine.

**God and His Word:** We confess that the Scriptures are inspired by God and are without error. Therefore, they are true in all that they report. With Scripture as the only sure and certain authority of what is believed, taught, and confessed, there is to be no hesitation in holding to it and proclaiming it. Only in the Bible do we learn about the almighty, eternal, and triune Savior God. God’s Word alone establishes articles of the Christian faith.

**Knowing and Professing the Truth:** The Christian faith is based on the facts revealed by God to mankind in His holy Word and not on fiction. It is true for every generation.

**Creation and Fall:** Since God is the source of truth, we confess that the universe was created in six days without sin. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s clear command, the perfect, pristine creation of God was lost. Then God promised to send the Savior.

**Christ’s Person and Our Justification:** God’s promised Christ is the antidote to the poison of sin, which man ingested

by his own free will. The work of Jesus Christ accomplished salvation for the world. By raising Jesus from the dead, God justified the whole world. Sinners receive that work of Jesus through faith in Him.

**The Means of Grace:** The victory over sin won by Christ needs to be distributed to sinners. The heavenly delivery system, God’s Word and Sacraments, is the means through which the Holy Spirit distributes forgiveness, life, and salvation to sinners. The Gospel is the giving instrument that creates faith, Baptism distributes Christ’s salvation, and the Lord’s Supper provides Christ’s body and blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.

**Conversion, Good Works, and Prayer:** Our conversion from sinner to saint is entirely the work of the one true Triune God. The evidence of this conversion or change in man’s heart is seen in good works. Good works are expressions of thanks to God for His mercy and grace provided in Christ Jesus. Prayer is powerful because of who commands it and who answers it—the Lord God of heaven.

**God’s Election of Grace:** Like other doctrines in Scripture (the Trinity, real presence, justification, etc.), the doctrine of election defies human logic and reason. “Why are some saved?” It is only by the grace of God. “Why are some not saved?” It is their own fault. Since God alone is responsible for saving us from hell and damnation, and He does everything perfectly, we take comfort in the teaching of election.

**Church and Ministry:** All who believe in Christ Jesus as the Savior, confessing Him by word and deed, are members of God’s Church. This Church is one, holy, Christian, universal, militant, and invisible. The Means of Grace are the “marks of the church” because these means indicate to us where the one, invisible church of Jesus can be found. To carry out the work of the church, God has instituted the office of the public ministry—calling qualified men to publicly administer Word and Sacraments and calling people to serve in the teaching ministry.

**Last Things:** Scripture clearly teaches that the soul will either go to hell or heaven at death. Jesus’ return will mark the division of unbelievers from believers. Since eternity is at stake for souls, it is vital that we remain faithful to the teachings of God’s Word.

**Church Fellowship:** Practicing church fellowship is joining in activities with others whereby we confess our common Christian faith—pulpit fellowship of confessional pastors, Lord’s Supper fellowship of those who confess the truth, and prayer fellowship of like-minded believers.



# Engaging One Another with Jesus' Teachings

John 8:31-32



**Church and State:** Christians have the responsibility to obey the established government by serving as law-abiding citizens and praying for its leadership, recognizing that God gives government its authority for the benefit of society. Should the government command us to do sinful things, Peter proclaims: “We must obey God rather than men!” (Acts 5:29).

**Human Life and Sexuality:** In the matter of human life, abortion, and other efforts to shorten life, laws in our country have been instituted that allow such sinful actions. God’s Word directs what we believe, teach, and confess regarding the sanctity of life and His will in regard to marriage.

**Lutheran Confessions:** What we believe is anchored in the hope of heaven, earned by Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. The Lutheran Confessions serve as a filing cabinet that categorizes the teachings of Jesus for us to have and use when others ask us about specific teachings in the Bible.

## The Unity of the Saving Message Revealed in Scripture

The Lutheran Confessions are not additions to the Bible that supplement what God reveals in the Bible. The Confessions do not contain more complete truths, as if the Bible is somehow inadequate to teach the way of salvation.

The unity of Scripture lies in the fact that the Holy Spirit is the divine author of everything written in the Bible, because all of Scripture is “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). The authority of God always remains the same despite the many worldly changes that take place in every generation. Engaging others with Jesus’ teachings will always be honest and trustworthy because the Word of God is always honest and trustworthy.

*The convention essay by the Rev. Jonathan Madson, Okauchee, Wisconsin, was redacted by the editor.*

## Engaging One Another with Jesus’ Teachings When Challenges Arise

God’s Word reveals much for us to know, especially when opportunities arise to answer those who challenge what God’s Word teaches or to answer those who ask out of ignorance.

Each of the doctrine paragraphs listed above has elicited challenging questions from the unbelieving world. It is important for God’s children to know God’s Word so that they can answer those challenges with His truths.

## Conclusion

When Jesus engaged others with His teachings, He knew their motives for approaching Him. Even to those who came with evil intentions, Jesus spoke His Word out of love for their souls. Peter directs Christians to be ready to answer questions when they arise, and then adds this instruction, “But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (1 Peter 3:15–16).

The sinful world in which we live provides many opportunities each day to confess what we believe, teach, and confess from Scripture. Holding to these teachings in our lives requires regular hearing, reading, and digesting of God’s Word.

Everything in the Bible is united around Christ Jesus—who He is and what He has done to save the world from death and hell. These truths provide us courage and certainty when opportunities arise for us to answer questions and challenges to what we believe, teach, and confess. For when we answer the questions and challenges with God’s Word, we will engage others with Jesus’ teachings.

# ELS Historical Society 2015 Meeting

The ELS Historical Society presented a symposium in the evening of June 21, 2015. The topic dealt with the liturgy and agenda of the 1913 *Hymnary*. Prof. Erling Teigen spoke about the historical development of the 1913 *Lutheran Hymnary*, with its hymns, liturgy, and agenda dating back to 1537 when Johannes Bugenhausen came to Denmark to organize the church on a Lutheran basis. His liturgy is the form of Rite 1 in the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnal*.

The second presentation was by Vicar Andrew Soule. He gave information on some of the early Lutheran hymnals that were used by the Norwegian immigrants to the United States. Popular hymnals were by Kingo (1699), Langstad (1869), and an 1879 hymnal produced by the Norwegian Synod. Translation into English brought 72 new translated hymns to the 1913 *Lutheran Hymnary*.

The Rev. Peter Faugstad's presentation described the 1913 *Lutheran Hymnary*. This hymnal was produced to unite the various Norwegian Lutheran synods in America, which occurred in 1917. While this hymnbook

preserved much of the Lutheran heritage, Pastor Faugstad noted that it contained too many pietistic hymns and non-Lutheran authors, and a poor selection of sacramental hymns. Many ELS congregations used this hymnbook until 1996 when the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary* was published.

After the symposium, Professors Dennis Marzolf and Mark DeGarmeaux led the singing of hymns from the 1913 *Lutheran Hymnary*.

At the annual meeting of the ELS Historical Society, Prof. Erling Teigen served as chairman and called the meeting to order. Mrs. Lois Jaeger read the secretary's minutes from the previous year, which were approved. There was no treasurer's report. Teigen announced that the Rev. Paul Madson was retiring from managing the synod archives and that the Rev. Theodore Gullixson would replace him. It was also announced that the Rev. Peter Faugstad was appointed to the board by Pres. Moldstad, replacing the late Prof. Mark Harstad. Both Bergetta Abrahamson and Marge Lilo were elected to the board.



Professor Erling Teigen



Vicar Andrew Soule



The Rev. Peter Faugstad



Professors Mark DeGarmeaux and Dennis Marzolf led a hymn sing in the choir room.



# 50 Years in the Wilderness

Camp Lor-Ray, Twin Lake, Michigan, Celebrates 50 Years

“Camping is not new. Man’s first nights in this world were undoubtedly spent under the newly created stars. The Children of Israel spent forty years in tents. And God’s church convened regularly in a tent. Nevertheless camping possibilities are still new ... in the field of camping there are no prescribed limitations.” These words were penned by the Rev. Robert Moldstad during a presentation to the ChicLa District of the Lutheran Pioneers at Palos Heights, Illinois, on May 28, 1963. The Rev. Moldstad was the driving force behind Camp Lor-Ray, the ELS summer camp near Muskegon, Michigan, now celebrating “50 years in the wilderness.”

The Rev. Moldstad developed a love for the outdoors while serving as a counselor at Camp Indianhead in Minnesota. When he was called as vicar and pastor in Chicago, he began a circuit camp for youth of the Lake Michigan circuit at Herrick Lake. The Rev. Theodore Kuster served as assistant director. In its first year, 166 campers and counselors attended. The next year, up to 250 were present. Lorlie and Raymond “Ray” Reiser, Jr., were youth leaders of this camp. Tragically, on August 3, 1963, the Lord called them home in an automobile accident.

In 1964, the ELS Youth Board reported the possible “acquisition of area campsites for redevelopment.” The Rev. James Olsen, pastor of Holton Lutheran Church, had heard about state-owned land for sale nearby. Later that spring, the Revs. Olsen and Moldstad formed an association of ELS pastors and laymen to purchase the property. They named it the “Lor-Ray Camp Association” in memory of Lorlie and Ray Reiser.

The original purchase was 23 acres surrounding a 16-acre lake. Eventually the association owned a total of 165 acres. The lake was named “Lake Setterbo” in memory of a couple from Suttons Bay, Michigan, who died in a car accident on their way to Camp Lor-Ray in 1966. Youth from Holton Lutheran camped on the property in 1965, making this the first “kids’ camp” at the site. An outdoor chapel with an altar surrounded by oak trees was constructed by the youth from Holton that year.

The ELS Youth Board counted Camp Lor-Ray as one of three official Synod youth camps (along with Camp Indianhead North and Camp Indianhead South) until 1970, when control of Kids’ Camp was given to the association.

Fifty years later, over the 4th of July weekend, Camp Lor-Ray hosted a celebration and anniversary worship service in observance of the formal organization of the association on May 22, 1965. ELS Pres. John Moldstad gave the sermon based on Psalm 78:1–7, speaking on the great wonders God did for Israel as they wandered in the wilderness and for



*Pres. John Moldstad preached for the 50th anniversary service at Camp Lor-Ray, using the text Psalm 78:1–7.*

everyone at Camp Lor-Ray. The Rev. Fred Adrian (WELS), a former superintendent of Kids’ Camp, served as liturgist. The board of directors hosted a lunch and dinner. Participants were able to camp in the Family Camp area and enjoy the camp’s trails, activity areas, and lake.

The youth camp retains the same Christ-centered emphasis that was its foundation back in 1962. In 2015, Kids’ Camp is hosting 168 campers and counselors under the theme “We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost,” which is the



*(L to R): Pres. John and Joslyn Moldstad, Kids’ Camp Superintendent Jeff Hendrix and his wife Carla with Kathy Bruss and Tim Moldstad (daughter and son of Robert Moldstad).*

third year in a three-year-long study of each person of the Trinity. “We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost” was also a fitting theme as the camp prays for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in its next “50 years in the wilderness.”



**Jeffrey Hendrix** is vicar at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Indianola, Iowa, and superintendent of Lor-Ray Kids’ Camp.



# On the Synodical Scene...

## Groundbreaking in Madison, Wisconsin

Members of all ages from Holy Cross Lutheran Church and School in Madison, Wisconsin, praised God for His perfect timing as they broke ground on their new campus Sunday, April 12, 2015. This campus will include a new facility for Holy Cross Lutheran School, which has been serving the greater Madison area since 1971, and a brand-new early learning center called Kids Crossing. Kids Crossing will



*(L to R): Pastor Bernt Tweit, Pastor Mark Bartels, Holy Cross members Steve and Beth DePrey, Principal Tim Schubkegel, member David Griffin, Tim Dittloff of Catalyst Construction, David Baum of A2K, members Randy Tiedt and Dan Thiele.*

provide care for infants through five years old and serve as the foundation for the innovative campus, which will offer a continuum of education for infants through 8th grade. God willing, classes as well as



*Noah Schauff, Ellie Griffin, and Gabby Schauff.*

worship services will be held in the new facility this

fall. For more information about Kids Crossing or the new campus, visit [www.kidscrossingmadison.org](http://www.kidscrossingmadison.org).

## Retirement of the Rev. Darryl Bakke

The Rev. Darryl Bakke was ordained July 1, 1984, in Piedmont, Missouri, where he served from 1984–1986. He resigned as pastor in Piedmont in 1986 as it seemed the Lord was leading him in a different direction. He returned to his hometown of Albert Lea, Minnesota, and to his home congregation of Our Savior's. Within a few months, the Lord called Darryl to be the visitation pastor of Our Savior's. From 1986 to 2015 Darryl served Our Savior's and the Lord faithfully by visiting the homebound and hospitalized members of Our Savior's.

This was certainly not the ministry Darryl envisioned as he left seminary to become the pastor of a congregation, but in many ways he was able to serve the Lord in a much greater capacity in this unique ministry than he imagined. Often Darryl would have a visitation list of 30 or more members each month and, without other congregational obligations, he was able to devote longer visits and greater attention to those under his care. His involvement in the community also allowed him to come into contact with many people outside of the congregation, granting him opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with many souls who had no connection to a church.

In his seminary years, Darryl received some special training through his work at Immanuel–St. Joseph Hospital in Mankato, Minnesota, in the psychiatric ward where he worked mainly with alcoholics and the mentally ill. There he developed a great compassion for these people with specialized needs. In Albert Lea God used Darryl's gifts in these areas to minister to many people who were hurting and in need of the comfort and peace that only can be found in Christ.



When Darryl resigned in Piedmont in 1986 he thought to himself, "How can God use this for good? My days as a pastor are over." Twenty-nine years later Darryl retired with thirty-one years of service in the public ministry and a great appreciation for how God cares for and guides His people.

*Submitted by the Rev. James Kassera, pastor of Our Savior's, Albert Lea, Minnesota*



## Ordination of Candidate Michael Lilienthal



Candidate of Theology Michael Lilienthal was ordained and installed as pastor of Redeemer, Iola, and Messiah, Omro, Wisconsin, on July 5, 2015. His father, the Rev. Gene Lilienthal, preached the sermon and Circuit Visitor the Rev. Robert Otto performed the official rites. Other pastors participating were: P. Van Kampen, K. Kluge, P. Sullivan, J. Smith, R. Holtz, T. Skaaland, M. Willitz, and C. Sielaff.

## 2015 – 2016 Women’s Mission Society Rallies

<u>Date</u>	<u>Site</u>	<u>President/Local Contact</u>
19 Sept	Bowling Green, OH	Flo Brueggemeier
26 Sept	East Grand Forks, MN	Terry Umphrey
26 Sept	Lakewood, WA	Jan Sparley
3 Oct	Parkersburg, IA	Carol Volker
17 Oct	Cottage Grove, WI	Joan Behr
24 Oct	Golden Valley, MN	Marlene Trebesch
14 Nov	Port St. Lucie, FL	Lori Steinberg
20 Feb 2016	Scottsdale, AZ	Carole Clingan

**Cross-stitch is the unifying network of these mission rallies**, connecting the circuits into a synod-wide organization, coordinating the offerings for maximum blessing to the missions. Much as individual congregations are clustered into regional circuits and all together are members of our synod, so also the various local and circuit Women’s Mission Societies are under the umbrella of *Cross-stitch* for the sake of good stewardship and efficiency. This year’s *Cross-stitch* projects:

- \$10,000 India – Orphan Care
- \$ 2,500 Peru – Women’s Scholarships
- \$ 5,000 U.S. – Home Mission / Evangelism Outreach Matching Grant
- \$ 2,500 Peru – Food for Amazon Lutheran High School
- \$ 5,000 Chile – Linares Church Construction
- \$ 2,500 Ukraine - Gift of Life

We thank everyone for the unified support *Cross-stitch* provides for ELS missions! It is the most effective means for supporting our synod’s outreach programs.

The Mission Society Rallies are a primary means for sharing information about our Synod’s home and world mission programs. All ELS members are invited to the rallies!



# Treasurer's Report

## Memorials given from 7/1/2014 – 06/30/2015

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

- Anarae Shunk**  
Heritage Women's Guild – Apple Valley, MN
- Barb Chrz**  
Our Savior's Lutheran Ladies Aid – Albert Lea, MN
- Bernard Westphal**  
Rev. Steven and Kathy Petersen – North Mankato, MN
- Billy Smith**  
William and Brenda Smith – Henley, MO
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Heritage Women's Guild – Apple Valley, MN
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James and Phyllis Sannes – Tacoma, WA  
John I. Harstad – Tacoma, WA  
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Michael and Lori Daniels – Tacoma, WA  
Stuart and Cecile Hedrick – University Place, WA  
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Edmund and Angeline Nelson – Albert Lea, MN
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Louise Rieger – Mankato, MN  
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Rev. Daniel and Lisa Basel – Mankato, MN
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Eldon and LuAnn Sting – North Mankato, MN  
Silas and Mary Born – Mankato, MN
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Eldon and LuAnn Sting – North Mankato, MN
- Phyllis George**  
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Rev. Daniel and Lisa Basel – Mankato, MN
- Ralph Schmidt**  
Ralph and Ruth Smith – Delta, OH
- Ray Shultz**  
Our Savior's Ladies Aid – Belview, MN
- Rev. David Hoyord**  
Heritage Women's Guild – Apple Valley, MN
- Rev. Jeffrey Londgren**  
Rev. Daniel and Lisa Basel – Mankato, MN  
Rev. Kenneth and Carol Mellon – West Bend, WI  
Rev. Martin and Catherine Hoesch – Ames, IA
- Rev. John Krueger**  
Heritage Women's Guild – Apple Valley, MN
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- Rev. Victor Roth**  
Ever Ready Circle – Holton, MI
- Robert Knott**  
Zion Lutheran Church Women – Tracy, MN
- Roy Meinhardt**  
Heritage Women's Guild – Apple Valley, MN
- Ruby Hougan**  
Rev. Steven and Kathy Petersen – North Mankato, MN  
Silas and Mary Born – Mankato, MN
- Signe Tungsvik**  
Ladies Aid Norseland Lutheran Church – St. Peter, MN
- Sylvia Ulma**  
Heritage Women's Guild – Apple Valley, MN
- Ted Aaberg**  
Rev. Steven and Kathy Petersen – North Mankato, MN
- Tillie Aichele**  
Sandra Adams – Mandan, ND
- Timothy W. Haag**  
Pamela M. Lepke – New Ulm, MN
- Tirzah Krey**  
Pinewood Lutheran Church – Burlington, MA
- Violet Holte**  
Rev. Steven and Kathy Petersen – North Mankato, MN



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

**Donald Johnson**

Mrs. LaVonne Johnson – New Hampton, IA

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Mrs. Joyce Kushman – Marinette, WI

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**Curtis Jenkins**

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Wesley and Susan Erickson – Granite Falls, MN  
David and Joan Fisher – Eau Claire, WI  
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Mr. and Mrs. Fred Kapanke – Eau Claire, WI  
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Mr. and Mrs. Richard Bjelland – Albert Lea, MN

**Geraldine A. Ciriacks**

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**Grant Seidel**

Peace Lutheran Church – Jefferson City, MO

**Howard Wangness**

Trinity Lutheran Ladies Aid – Calmar, IA

**Jeffrey Londgren**

Dr. and Mrs. Lon Knudson – North Mankato, MN  
Rev. Frederick Theiste – Eau Claire, WI

**June Patricia Rado**

Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Basel – Mankato, MN

**Karen Ogden**

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Mrs. Judy Levorson – Northwood, IA  
Ms. Kirsten Levorson – Rosemount, MN  
Paul and Helen Levorson – Oakfield, WI  
Ms. Ruth Levorson – Lake Mills, IA

**Leslie Just**

Mrs. Ruth Just – West Bend, WI

**Marie Basel**

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Dr. Thomas Ziebell – Appleton, WI

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Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Basel – Mankato, MN  
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Mr. and Mrs. Paul Fick – Sioux Falls, SD  
Esther Gartland – Stevens Point, WI  
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Mr. and Mrs. Ross Hermanson – Wells, MN  
Kathy Hintz – Plover, WI  
Richard and Ione Huseboe – Lake Tapps, WA  
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Karen Madson – Minnetonka, MN  
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Ethel Johnson – Harrington Park, NJ  
Ms. Naomi McCarty – Pennington, NJ



# GOD'S DIVINE PROVIDENCE: *A Key to Understanding Our Christian Stewardship*

*The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. (Psalm 145:15-16)*

The first thing that comes to mind when we read these verses is, "Oh, that's the table prayer!" Granted, table prayers vary. But these two verses of Psalm 145 are among the favorite words of many a family's mealtime prayer. Favorite or not, they express a foundational truth in regard to our Christian stewardship of God's gifts.

The Psalmists writes, "*The eyes of all look expectantly to You.*" This may be a bit difficult to see from our earthly viewpoint as we find ourselves in the midst of a massive apostasy in our present culture. So the question we ask might be, "Who is looking to the Lord expectantly? Do the well fed, the avowed atheist, those of heterodox religions—do they truly look to the Lord?"

But alas the Lord has revealed it. Though there may be misbelief or other hindrances, they oftentimes do look to the Lord, not knowing who He truly is. We can then find a ray of hope for the unbelieving and sadly ignorant world that knows not the Giver of all.

What is that ray of hope? Surely, and according to God's Word, most truly, the natural knowledge of God is alive and well in the heart of man. When this natural knowledge of God shows itself as we consider God's divine providence, it gives you and me opportunity to witness to the Christian faith. For our part it is not only to know God's divine providence but also to acknowledge and be conscious of it daily. Through faith's eyes we see and understand God's divine providence and recognize it for the joy it brings. We accept our gifts in thanks, confessing the greatest providence of all is our Savior, and seeking to share our faith with our families, our neighbors and others.

Jacob, later called Israel, realized this divine providence. As he surveyed his life, he saw the Lord's gracious hand at work. While he confessed all his missteps and shortcomings, he also contemplated all the good that came to him—family, earthly life, and even wealth. He saw that he did not deserve it. But God in love and mercy provided it all. So, in his words we find another prayer we can pray as we carry out our acts of thanksgiving. We pray with Jacob, "*Oh Lord, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which*

*You have shown Your servant*" (Genesis 32:10).

Knowing He provides all, even when we don't deserve it, invokes a response, a response of thanksgiving and true "in faith" giving. The bottom line is knowing that all we have and all we are is but "*a trust O Lord from Thee.*" We thus ask our Lord to guide us to plan and act accordingly.

In humbleness we confess that divine providence and Biblical stewardship are inseparable teachings brought together here in Psalm 145. The foundation for Christian stewardship starts with a heart of faith knowing and confessing that our heavenly Father provides all we need for body and soul, and we, in turn, gratefully give of our first-fruits in thanksgiving and praise of the One who does this.

Certainly in faith we do look expectantly to the Lord both in times of need as well as in times of plenty. He then reaches our ears and hearts here in this Psalm with this promise that His gracious hand opens to satisfy our desires and needs for earthly sustenance. What comfort we can take in knowing and believing and living under this promise.

An elderly friend of mine has a great way of showing his trust and thankfulness in God's dear providence. If you were to ask him, "How are you doing?" he would nod his head up and down in a positive response and quietly say, "*You know, I've been abundantly blessed.*"

Martin Luther expressed it well for us as we consider God's gracious providence. He wrote in the explanation to the first article after he lists all our blessings by saying, "and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I am in duty bound to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him." May we join our hearts to praise him and unite in our actions to glorify His name as we join in saying, "This is most certainly true."

*Knowing He provides all, even when we don't deserve it, invokes a response, a response of thanksgiving and true "in faith" giving.*

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**Dan Basel** is the Giving Counselor for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.





# Pastor, I Have a Question...

**Question:** *Has God commanded weekly worship in the New Testament church? Would a Christian be sinning by not attending worship every week?*

**ANSWER:** The Ten Commandments are an outline of God's immutable and holy Law. They apply to all people of all time. Whether in the Old or New Testament, God's Law is always God's Law. It is always sinful to worship idols, to misuse God's name, to dishonor parents and authorities, to murder, to commit adultery and fornication, to steal, lie, and covet.

And yet, Dr. Luther explains the Third Commandment, writing, "In the Old Testament God set apart the seventh day and appointed it for rest, and he commanded it to be kept holy above all days.

As far as outward observance is concerned, the commandment was given to the Jews alone" (*Large Catechism*, Tappert, paragraph 80, p. 375).

Strictly speaking, this commandment is ceremonial law (see Colossians 2:16–17). The Lord Jesus fulfilled it. By His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus gave us eternal rest by the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus invited us to "come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). He took our burdens to His cross, and in their place He gave us His holiness. St. Augustine said, "Our hearts find no rest until they rest in you."

The main part of the Third Commandment is the concept of keeping holy or sanctifying. God wants us to sanctify every day. As Luther explained this commandment, "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn it."

Again, Luther: "Since so much depends on God's Word so that no holy day is sanctified without it, we must realize that God insists upon a strict observance of this commandment and will punish all who despise His word and refuse to hear and learn it, especially at the times appointed" (*Large Catechism*, Tappert, paragraph 95, p. 378).

The New Testament commands the hearing of God's Word. Since no specific day is commanded, Christians will do what they can to hear and learn God's Word every day. The early Christians set the example. They gathered on the first day of the week when possible, to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. Many were servants who could not gather on any given day. Persecution was a regular part of their lives. They did what they could to gather whenever they could to hear and learn God's Word. So the writer to the Hebrews commanded: "Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking

the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24–25).

Another factor comes into consideration: our old nature is stubborn. It does not want us to sanctify any day. It does not want us to obey God except when we let our works undermine Jesus' work for our salvation. Our old nature needs to be commanded. It would like for us to find loopholes: Do we really need to gather together every week to hear God's good news? When we give in to this temptation, it is sin.

Praise our Lord. He called us to faith. He forgives all our sins. When we were converted, He created a new nature in us that wants to obey Him. Before our new nature can even consider if there is such a New Testament command, it is asking how we can hear and learn God's Word.

## 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.







# dig deeper

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Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who **dug deep** and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

▶▶▶▶▶ Luke 6:47-48



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# God Always Gives Us Hope

Much has been written about a recent Pew survey of religion in the United States. The survey shows that a growing number of people, especially young adults, no longer consider themselves members of a denomination. And where the numbers of Christians have declined, there is also growth in those who call themselves atheists and secularists. And twenty years ago, our nation would not have accepted the recent ruling that allows gay marriages.

These trends should give Christians a reason for alarm and a reason for purpose. We should be alarmed, especially for our young people. They are encountering relentless attacks on their faith through evolution, attacks on their morality through advocates of abortion and sexual freedom, and attacks on their character as hatemongers because of the issue of homosexuality.

Such attacks are especially troublesome for our youth because the very foundation of their faith—God’s Word—has been declared to be unreliable and out of date. For if no absolute truth exists, if truth is what each person believes, and if morality is determined by society; then what can the Bible say to the modern world?

The younger generations need protection from this impending disaster to the faith. Sunday School classes and two years of catechism instruction are not enough so that young people can remain steadfast in the true faith. Lutheran elementary schools and Bethany Lutheran College can help, but even more needs to be done through family devotions, weekly Bible classes, and youth programs.

While great majorities may follow the ways of the world, we need to understand what Jesus meant by saying, “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?” (Luke 6:39). Jesus came to a world darkened by unbelief to proclaim the light of God’s truth. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35). Jesus told the Pharisees, “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). Those who will not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, who loved them and gave His life to save them, they will suffer under God’s justice—eternal death.

While we may be stunned by the apparent collapse of Christian morality in our society, we are not to conclude that: 1) there is no hope, 2) God’s Word is not true, 3) the Gospel is not the power of God, or 4) we can do nothing. God still gives our lives purpose in this world. Jesus has called us to be salt in the world. He has placed us in communities to be a light shining on a hill. God will continue to send out His Word to accomplish His purpose—convicting the world of sin and enlightening the hearts of many people. Just as the Gospel is working among pagan peoples in India, the Amazon jungle, and China; so the message of salvation will fulfill God’s purpose in our nation.

As we prepare for whatever future God wills, we would do well to study 1 Peter, which was written to people dealing with persecution. In that letter, Peter declares the unfading inheritance of heaven, the unfailing promises of God, our blessings as a chosen generation and a royal priesthood, and the steadfast love of doing

God’s will amid evil. While we are to be vigilant against the “roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8), Peter reminds us, “When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Peter 5:4). That crown of glory is a truth we can trust and a reality for which we can hope.

It has been a privilege to serve as editor of the *Lutheran Sentinel* these past twenty years. Thanks to God for whatever blessings the *Lutheran Sentinel* has given you. Thanks to the many people who have helped me and written articles. Thanks to you readers for your faithful support and interest in this magazine. May the Lord continue to bless the Gospel message in future issues under the editorship of the Rev. Paul Fries.



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



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## 2015 Seminary Commencement Service

The commencement service for Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, which included both the assignment of calls and graduation of students, occurred on Wednesday, May 13, 2015, at 4:00 p.m. in Trinity Chapel. The Rev. Gene Lilienthal (Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Brownsburg, Indiana) served as preacher, Pres. Gaylin Schmeling served as liturgist, the Rev. Dr. J. Kincaid Smith represented the Board of Regents, and Mr. John Baumann was the organist. The sermon was based on John 21:15–17 with the theme “Pastor, Feed Jesus’ Sheep.” In the sermon, Pastor Lilienthal explained that Lutheran pastors are to feed the lambs and sheep of our gracious Savior on the green pastures of the means of grace, Holy Word, and Blessed Sacraments. They are to shepherd the flock of God.

Michael Lilienthal graduated from the seminary with a Master of Divinity degree. He was assigned as pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church, Iola, Wisconsin, and Messiah Lutheran Church, Omro, Wisconsin. Matthew Behmer was assigned as vicar of Peace Lutheran Church, North Mankato, Minnesota, and Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota; Jeffrey Hendrix was assigned as

vicar of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Indianola, Iowa; Joshua Mayer was assigned as vicar of Redeeming Grace Lutheran Church, Rogers, Minnesota; Danvicar of Hope Lutheran Church, Leander, Texas; and Andrew Soule was assigned as vicar of Norseland Lutheran Church, St. Peter, Minnesota, and Norwegian Grove Lutheran Church, Gaylord, Minnesota.



(Back, L to R) *Noah Thompson, Daniel Ruiz, Andrew Soule, Joshua Mayer, Aaron Ferkenstad.* (Front, L to R) *Kurtis Freimuth, Jeffrey Hendrix, Michael Lilienthal, Matthew Behmer.*