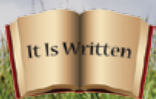


March–April 2015

Lutheran Sentinel

A Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

"Engage Others with Jesus."



"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live."

(John 11:25)

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From the President

Dear members and friends of our ELS:

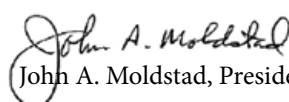
Routine reminders can get overlooked. We like fresh ways of remembering an important event or deadline. A new phone app might help us organize—maybe with a colorful pop-up, or an odd-sounding signal sent through the computer. Maybe simply a brand-new magnetic note pad stuck to the fridge. No matter what the device or method used, the day-after-day repetition may dull our senses. Does your reminder system at times receive scant attention—a passing glance—only to have you forget an important meeting or assignment? At the very least, it can be embarrassing!

We also have religious reminders around us daily. They, too, can become routine. Think of the myriad of Christian symbols to which believers have grown accustomed, symbols intended to convey God’s wonderful truths: the cross, the font, the altar, the shepherd’s staff, the equilateral triangle, the religious paintings, the stained glass depictions in our church windows, and the Easter lily. Signs in nature also yield spiritual lessons: the rainbow, the fig tree, the seed planted in the soil, earthquakes, etc. What joy to have around us these daily prompts that bring to mind messages from our gracious Lord God who loves us! “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease” (Genesis 8:22).

God also gives us a big symbol. What a reminder we have in the daily rising of the sun! The prophet Malachi spoke of Christ’s coming as “the Sun of Righteousness” rising with healing in its wings (Malachi 4:2). We sing of this in connection with Christ’s birth in the familiar carol “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (*ELH* 125:3). The routine of the light rising each morning on the horizon points most emphatically to the greatest event ever recorded on our human soil—the glorious rising of the only-begotten Son!

Because of Christ’s resurrection, we have forgiveness, life, and salvation! Because He has risen, we have the victory over death! Because He has risen, we too will rise! The hymnwriter Thomas Kingo put it like this: “Like the golden sun ascending ... / Thus my Jesus from the grave / And death’s dismal, dreadful cave / Rose triumphant Easter morning / At the early purple dawning” (*ELH* 354:1).

See the sunrise, dear friends. It is repetitive. But what a daily reminder of all that counts! The Son’s rising means our forgiveness, eternal joy, and victory! Have a blessed Easter!


John A. Moldstad, President of the ELS



Why the Christian Church Writes and Confesses Creeds

“No creed for me! Just the Bible! Churches that confess creeds are holding to man’s word, not God’s!” These are some of the arguments sometimes leveled against confessional Lutheran churches for our use of confessions and creeds. So why did the Christian Church write them, and why do we still confess them today? Isn’t the Bible good enough? Absolutely it is! But that is exactly why we need creeds.

Creeds are not meant as a replacement for Scripture, or even an interpretation of it. We also do not hold to them *insofar as* they align with Scripture. Rather, as with all of the Lutheran confessions, we hold to them because they are clear and faithful witnesses to what Scripture itself says and what we believe. (The word “creed” comes from the Latin *credo*, which means “I believe.”)

As confessional Lutherans, we read the Bible knowing that *Scripture interprets Scripture*. We absolutely hold to God’s Word and wish it was all that was needed. But we also recognize that, as some have said, “The Word of God is like an ocean, so shallow a child can play in it, yet so deep an elephant could drown.” And so, because of its depth, as well as the deceitfulness of men’s hearts, and the devil’s ongoing attempts to infiltrate the Church, we must provide clear witness as to its meaning.

And so the Lutheran Church is a “creedal church.” Confessional Lutheranism has always held to the three ecumenical creeds that date back to the early Christian Church—the Apostles’, the Nicene, and the Athanasian. The Apostles’ Creed was compiled almost directly from various Scripture passages and served as a “baptismal” creed, confessed by early Christian converts as they were baptized into the Christian Church. The Nicene and Athanasian creeds were both written in response to heresies that were threatening or infiltrating the Christian Church.

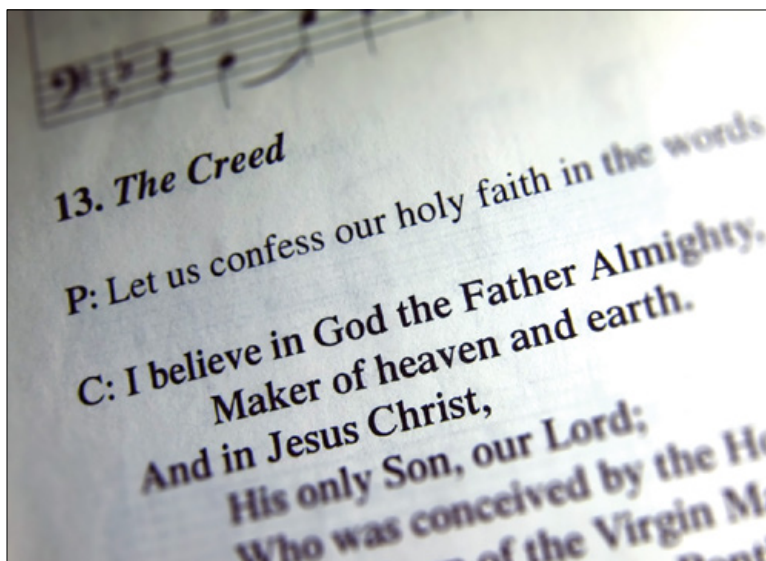
Today, congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod still confess either the Apostles’ or Nicene Creed almost every Sunday. The Athanasian Creed is often confessed on Trinity Sunday. The continued confession of these creeds today serves to define and defend our fellowship. In his first letter to the Romans, Paul warns us to “watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your

way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them” (Romans 16:17). Along with the Lutheran confessions, creeds mark out what the Bible teaches so we can more easily recognize these divisions and obstacles.

But creeds do not only guard against divisions. They also signify our unity in belief with the early Christian Church for, as Peter writes in his second epistle, we do not follow “cleverly invented stories” (2 Peter 1:16).

Furthermore, they unite us with like-minded brothers and sisters in Christ today. Paul urges us to “be *perfectly united* in mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10, emphasis added). The creeds help show our united confession. Along with the other Lutheran confessions, they are used in determining fellowship.

As one can see, creeds do not replace the Bible, speak for it, or interpret it. Instead, they lay out how the Bible interprets itself, they defend against errors, and they unite us as members of a confessional Lutheran church. May God always keep us in the one, true, saving faith. *Soli Deo Gloria!*



Peter Heyn is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in Lakeland, Florida.

Lent:

Confessing Sin and Confessing Christ

Sin was Martin Luther's business. Not just because he was a priest. Not because he was supposed to know all the Bible passages about sin. Not because he was supposed to preach against sin. Instead of being an important part of Luther's profession, sin had become for him a never-ending obsession.

He tried as hard as he could to stop sinning, but he couldn't. He beat himself up, literally and figuratively, over his sin, but nothing he did could get rid of sin and its guilt. It was always there, accusing him, torturing him, condemning him.

"The best and holiest deeds must fail" (*ELH* 452:2). These words come from Luther's hymn, "Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee." It is easy to sing right past the words without thinking about what they mean. Do you get what Luther is saying about himself here? Do you realize that what he says about himself, he is also saying about you? Your deeds aren't the problem. You are. It's not enough for you to admit that your deeds have failed. God needs to lead you by the Law to take the next step—to swallow your pride and confess: "I have failed to keep it, I am a sinner."

I don't know about you, but I do not want to admit that. If a sinner like me has to compare himself with a sinless God, then I have no chance. Then I have no hope. Or do I?

You have probably heard someone say something to the effect that a person cannot recover from an addiction and get back on his feet until he has hit rock bottom. The same idea can be applied to the sinner's relationship with God. When the Law stops us from making excuses for our sins, when it shows us that we have no hope of saving ourselves from sin, when it crushes our pride so there is no escape; then God

gives us real hope in the Gospel.

Martin Luther's hope—and ours—rest on God's Word. The Word that describes God's hatred of sin also describes God's love for sinners. In one breath God's Word threatens: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a), but in the next breath that same Word promises, "But the gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23b). The Lord is just and punishes sin. The Lord is merciful and forgives sin. This is a paradox. It is a mystery, a divine mystery that can only be solved at the cross of Christ.

God's Word says that the "Word became flesh" (John 1:14). The Son of God was born to a woman, to live a perfect life on this earth, to die a sacrificial death on the cross, to rise triumphant from the grave, to assure the repentant sinner: "Your sins are forgiven," to give us comfort in this life, to give us the hope of eternal life.

By God's grace, Martin Luther understood God's Law and Gospel, and he confessed Christ as his Savior from sin. By the grace of God, so do we. Apart from God, life is hopeless, since "all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). Our trying to please God is a path leading to despair. But God's mercy and forgiveness through Jesus, revealed in His Word, raise us from sorrow to hope. Through faith, Christ has opened to us the way to heaven.



Erich Hoeft is pastor of the Northwood-Lake Mills parish in northern Iowa.

Be Ready to Give an Answer:

Give Out Devotional Literature That Tells About Jesus

During 2015, the Board for Home Outreach will present a series of articles with the theme “Be Ready to Give an Answer.” This title is drawn from 1 Peter 3:15: “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” As Christians, all of us are to be on the lookout for opportunities to tell others about Jesus, our true basis for hope in this seemingly hopeless world. It is the Board’s prayer that these articles will help you in your witnessing efforts.

There is a reason why we write things down. The reason, of course, is so that the information doesn’t get forgotten. Without pen and paper, even tying a string around your finger will only remind you that there is something you are supposed to remember.

God knows that our minds are weak and easily distracted. More even than that, these minds of ours are darkened because of sin. Because of sin, we hear without listening and see without understanding—especially with respect to God and His Word. So St. Paul writes, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

For such “natural” people—people who *do not accept* and *cannot understand*—God has done amazing things. He has given us His Son. He has conquered our sin and death in His flesh. And He has given us the words of truth and life to save us from lies and death. For the sake of our faith and salvation, God has committed Himself to paper.

It’s not as though God could forget. It’s not as though He could despise or misinterpret the High Priestly intercession and sacrifice of His Son, or fail to recognize what His Holy Spirit is doing for us in our Baptism. But we could forget, and we did. So the Lord revealed the Word; and the word got written down.

The written Word helps us in our witness. You see, *Being Ready to Give an Answer* sounds to us like we have a trump card. In our ears, it sounds like we can silence all the critics, put all detractors to shame, and put an end to every argument. Then everyone within earshot converts instantly, falls to their knees thanking God, and says to you: “Where did you get such wisdom?”

And who knows but that it might happen just that way? Yet, in all the rush to try to *be the person* who can say

something insightful, something witty, something that incisively gets through to people, we have a way of forgetting that the One who’s really speaking is God. God the Father spoke His Word in eternity, and in time spoke that Word into the flesh. God the Son spoke the absolution at the cost of His blood and death. God the Spirit breathed the words of Holy Scripture into His chosen, inspired writers.

So then part of *Being Ready to Give an Answer* is to point souls to that Word. Give it to them on paper. Then you are not pointing to yourself with your wit and charm. You are placing between them and yourself something external and objective: a word of witnesses testifying about Jesus, modeling prayer, and teaching about repentance and remission of sins. Our synod (along with a handful of other synods, sources, and publishing houses) is committed to providing devotional resources to you, for your use, and so that you can in turn give them away.

It connects with worship, which connects with daily prayer, which connects to faith: that very thing we seek for God Himself to provide in our loved ones when we pray: “Thy Kingdom Come.”

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



The “---ation”s

The Triune God’s Ongoing Work in Our Lives

“What have you done for me lately?” That may be a question you have heard or with which you are familiar. Some people may ask that of their supposed friends. Employers may wonder that about an employee. Politicians and negotiators may wonder that of allies with whom they are negotiating. People, Christians, may even ask that of God. Yet, consider our Triune God and His ongoing work in our lives.

The Trinity works together for our good. This is the case in the completed work of the Triune God. The whole Trinity worked in unison in the **creation** of the world, the entire universe and everything in it including you and me. The Triune God also accomplished the plan of **salvation** by sending Jesus to earth to die to redeem us. The Triune God has accomplished the work of **regeneration** by forgiving our sins and giving us faith in the rebirth in Baptism.

But again, that work of God is all completed. Does the Triune God *continue* to do things for us in the present time and in our lives? Thanks be to God, He certainly does. All Three Persons of the Trinity are *actively at work* in the ongoing work of the Trinity in our daily lives.

God the Father did not finish the work of creation in six regular days and then decide in essence, “Not only am I going to rest on the seventh day, but I’m finished. They’re on their own now. My work here is done.” No, God the Father continues His work of watching over, caring for, and providing for His entire creation in His work of **preservation**. In the words of The Creed itself, we confess the completed work of creation. Maybe that is why Dr. Martin Luther in his (explanation) *What Does This Mean?* uses significantly more words to describe God’s *ongoing work* of preservation: “... [and] that He richly and daily **provides** me with ...” and Luther goes on to specifically list the many blessings by which the Lord preserves us. The ELS *Small Catechism* titles chapter sixteen “God’s **Providence**” in referring to God’s preservation. Another aspect of God’s care for us is “that He **protects** us from all danger, guards and keeps us from all evil.” We know we deserve none of this loving care and protection so we echo Luther in saying, “and all this purely out of Fatherly, Divine goodness and mercy, **without any merit or worthiness in me.**” (emphasis added)

God the Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, completed everything necessary for our salvation as He cried out from the cross, “**It Is Finished,**” completing the work of redemption, thereby conquering sin, death, and the Devil.

But Jesus then did not ascend to His rightful place at the right hand of God in heaven and stop caring for us or stop working on our behalf. No, He continues to forgive our many sins and acts as our Advocate to God in His ongoing work of **mediation**. Of course our High Priest—Liaison, Jesus, is able to do this as He is the One who became one of us and experienced everything that we do.

Finally, God the Holy Spirit is continually at work in our lives in His work of **sanctification**, literally “making (us) holy” by working faith in us and strengthening that faith. We know and must confess, “We cannot by our own reason or strength believe ... but that the Holy Spirit has called us by the Gospel, enlightened us with His gifts, sanctified and kept us in the true faith.”

For all this ongoing work of our loving Triune God, “We are duty bound to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.”

God the Father	Completed work Continuing work	CREATION PRESERVATION
God the Son	Completed work Continuing work	SALVATION MEDIATION
God the Holy Spirit	Completed work Continuing work	REGENERATION SANCTIFICATION

Andrew Burmeister is pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Lakeland, Florida.

Attention All Senior High School Youth: LYA Is Coming to Bethany!

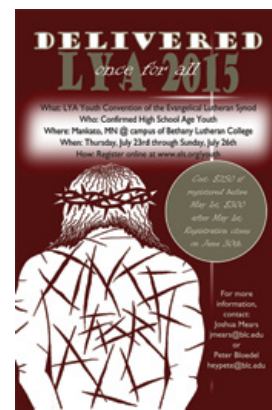
The 2015 Lutheran Youth Association (LYA) will hold its convention at Bethany Lutheran College (BLC) in Mankato, Minnesota, starting on Thursday, July 23, and wrapping up on Sunday, July 26.

The theme of the convention will be “Delivered Once for All,” which is based on the Bible verse Jude 1:3: “*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*”

“Saints” in this verse means God’s holy people. That’s us! Our faith is precious to us, and LYA is a great way for Christian youth to get together with their peers from across the country to study God’s Word and to just hang out and have a great time.

Lots of fun classes and activities are being planned. These include a taste of what classes are like at BLC, a trip to the Twin Cities to enjoy either the Mall of America or the Waterpark of America, a concert by the folk/rock band “The

Divers,” and a keynote address by the Rev. David Thompson, author of the book *What in the World Is Going On? Identifying Hollow and Deceptive Worldviews*. We are going to pack a lot into the weekend, so don’t miss out! Hope to see you all this summer for LYA 2015.



Peter Bloedel is a professor at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota, and a member of the ELS Board for Youth Outreach.

Announcing the 98th Annual Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the 59th Annual Meeting of Bethany Lutheran College Inc.

“Engaging One Another with Jesus’ Teachings”

June 21-25, 2015
Mankato, Minnesota

Synod Sunday - June 21, 2015

3:00 - Synod Sunday Service
4:30 - Supper (free-will donation)

Monday - June 22

9:00 - Opening Convention Service

Tuesday - June 23

1:00 - Convention Essay
5:00 - Memorial Service

Rev. Craig A. Ferkenstad, Secretary
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Wednesday - June 24

1:00 - Convention Essay
3:30 - Anniversaries Observed
7:00 - Communion Service

Thursday - June 25

8:30 - Unfinished business



Who Raised Jesus from Death, and What Does It Mean?

An essential doctrine of the Christian Church states that Jesus Christ suffered, died, and was buried. The Church also confesses, “The third day He rose again according to the Scriptures” (Nicene Creed).

The phrase “rose again,” is a teaching from the Bible, as the Nicene Creed says, quoting the New Testament, “And that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:4).

But when the Nicene Creed uses the words “according to the Scriptures,” the expression really refers to the Scriptures as they existed at the time Jesus rose, and later when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15:4. In other words, it means the Old Testament.

One such Old Testament passage is, “For You will not leave my soul in Sheol [the grave], nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:10). Like many of the Psalms, this expresses a prayer of God the Son to God the Father, so that the word “You” means the Father, while “my soul” and “Your Holy One” refer to Jesus. This passage means that the Father participated in the resurrection of the Son.

The New Testament speaks this way, too. St. Paul told the Jews in Antioch in Pisidia, “But God raised Him from the dead” (Acts 13:30). And Paul also wrote, “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

When St. Paul introduces his letters, he often summarizes the essential core of the Christian faith in connection with himself and his readers. So in Ephesians, he expressed his desire for them, writing: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory ... that you may know ... what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead” (Ephesians 1:17–20).

In a similar way, the holy apostle connects the death and resurrection of our Lord to the Baptism that Christians receive, “In Him you were ... buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians

2:11–12). And in the passage cited in the *Small Catechism* of Dr. Luther, St. Paul writes, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

Who raised Jesus to life from the grave? It was God. When Scripture describes Christ’s resurrection as His own doing, this fully agrees, because Jesus is God the Son. But more often we see it described as Jesus *being raised by* God, and specifically by God the Father. The Father is the One whom Jesus mentioned in John 12:45, “And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me” (John 12:45). The Son was sent by the Father and reveals the Father to us. As John also wrote in his first letter, “We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14).

The task that the Father assigned to the Son was the salvation of the world. This was to be accomplished through His death by crucifixion, as He bore the guilt of the whole world. Jesus put it this way: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of

Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:14–15).

When Jesus’ task was finished, He was raised to life again because the guilt of all humanity that had been laid upon Him was no more. There was nothing left to hold Him in the grave. The Father confirmed this for the world by raising Jesus to life. As death has no more hold on Jesus, so it also has no hold on us. (Romans 8:38–39)

St. Paul proclaimed this truth and hope for all time: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20–22).



Jesse Jacobsen is pastor of Bethany in The Dalles and Concordia in Hood River, and principal at Columbia Lutheran School in The Dalles, Oregon.

All Praise to God for This New Day

Text: Ryan C. MacPherson (1974–), adapted from Genesis 1:1–2:4

Tune: H. Rung (1807–71), RUNG (“By Faith We Are Divinely Sure,” ELH 229)

Day One

In the beginning was the Word;
He spoke, all was created.
“Let there be light!” and there was light
From darkness separated.
First came the eve, and then the morn:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
All praise to God on this first day!

Day Two

God made the sky to separate
Waters above from below.
Where higher waters then did swell
Angels and God alone know.
First came the eve, and then the morn:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
All praise to God, the second day!

Day Three

Water from land He then removed:
In soil the Lord made plants grow.
From seed to seed they reproduce:
Blessings of our God still grow.
First came the eve, and then the morn:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
All praise to God on the third day!

Day Four

God gathered light and called it sun;
Its beams illumine our day.
Light’s softer glow He saved for night;
The moon and stars in season sway.
First came the eve, and then the morn:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
All praise to God on the fourth day!

Doxology

All very good, yes very good
created by our good God
To glorify His holy name
and rest in trust where He hath trod—
From Christmas Eve through Easter Morn:
Renewed creation, God with us!
All praise to God for this new day!

Day Five

God filled the sea with fish diverse
and the air above with birds,
Each kind to reproduce its kind
For generations unheard.
First came the eve, and then the morn:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
All praise to God on the fifth day!

Day Six—Part I

God said of all, “Yes, it is good,”
and made on land new species
Of animals both great and small
to feed on earth’s increases.
First came the eve, and then the morn:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
All praise to God on the sixth day!

Day Six—Part II

“In Our image let Us make man,”
male and female God made them.
With body, soul, together whole,
filled with grace to live for Him.
First came the eve, and then the morn:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
All praise to God on the sixth day!

Day Seven

In these six days did God make all
the earth and all its creatures.
Though resting each day thereafter
He watches, cares, and treasures.
First came the eve, and then the morn:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
All praise to God, the seventh day!

Pastor, I Have a Question...

Question: *What does it mean when someone says they are a “born again” Christian?*

ANSWER: “Jesus said: ‘Unless one is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’” (John 3:3–5, emphasis added).

And St. Peter wrote: “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been **born again**, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:22–23, emphasis added).

All believers have been born again or from above. God gave us new life in Jesus. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He rescued us from our old nature and the punishment sin deserves. This gift is ours by faith.

Our Catechism explains: “Regeneration [rebirth] is the activity of the Holy Spirit by which He through the Gospel makes me a new and holy creature of God with the new spiritual life of faith and the desire and strength for that which is good” (*An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism*, page 146, question 217).

Those who call themselves “born again” Christians have a different understanding. This writer lives in an area in which such Christians dominate. We often hear the phrase: “I have accepted Christ as my personal Savior” and are asked, “Are you born again?”

Such “born again” Christians mean they have, at some point in their lives, enjoyed a conversion experience. They are able to point to the exact time when it happened. They see conversion as a special emotional experience in which they accepted Jesus as their personal Savior and received Him into their hearts. Their lives changed radically for the better. God did His part to send Jesus, and they did their part to accept Him. Conversion is followed by baptism.

St. Paul explains that we cannot do our part: “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which

He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4–6). Before God created faith in our hearts, we were spiritually dead because of our sinful nature. We needed a new life, but we could do nothing about it. Rather than cooperate with God, we resisted Him and rejected His Word. Because we were spiritually dead, we could do nothing to change this.

God, in His grace and power, gave us the birth from above through Baptism—the water and the Spirit. God, in grace and power, gave us the birth from above by His living and powerful Word. God brought us to faith

by His own power. St. Paul explains: “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of

righteousness which we have

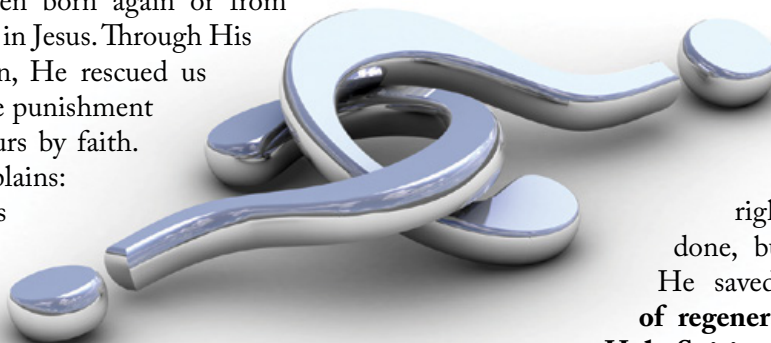
done, but according to His mercy

He saved us, through **the washing of regeneration and renewing of the**

Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us

abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4–7, emphasis added).

Our Catechism teaches that Baptism is called a **washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit** because it is a special washing by which the Holy Spirit cleanses us from sin and gives us a new birth in Christ (*An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism*, page 185, question 286).



Send your questions to:

Pastor Charles Keeler
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Faith in Jesus

St. John wrote: “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). The Bible has a blessed purpose. It is not just a book about the history of the children of Israel, not a biography of Jesus, not a book about philosophy, science, or ethics. The Word of the Bible proclaims a powerful message about Jesus’ work of salvation so that people can be rescued from their sins through faith in Jesus. The Bible says, “Of His own will he [God] brought us forth by the word of truth” (James 1:18).

What shall we believe about Jesus? The world we live in is engaged in all-out war against Jesus and God’s Word. Almost daily, articles appear on the Internet that deny the truths of the Bible. Here are some of the titles: “10 Theories About Who Really Wrote the Bible”—Daniel was written after events happened, the Gospels are not eyewitness accounts, the pastoral epistles are forgeries; “Five Things You Didn’t Know About Jesus”—Jesus probably didn’t know everything, Jesus didn’t want to die; “6 Reasons Why Religion Does More Harm Than Good”—promotes tribalism, makes a virtue out of faith (instead of science), teaches helplessness, seeks power. Another person published a document that implied that Jesus had a wife (later proven to be a forgery).

Christians should not be surprised at these attacks. Jesus said His enemies fulfilled Psalm 35:19, “They hated Me without cause” (John 15:25). The Internet gives many people a forum they did not have before.

God does not ask us to believe in myths, fables, and legends about once-famous people. God’s Word presents God as acting within human history—the world-wide flood; promising and giving Abraham a son; the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan; the kingships of David and Solomon; the exile and return of Israel from Babylon; the birth, life, and death of Jesus; and the mission

work of the apostles and Paul.

St. John stated, “We beheld his [Christ’s] glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), and St. Peter wrote, “We did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). Two of the four Gospel accounts were written by people who were with Jesus for three years. They twice experienced Jesus calming a stormy Sea of Galilee. They twice saw Him feed thousands of people from a few loaves of bread. They witnessed the many healings and other miracles that Jesus did. They all saw the empty tomb and the risen Christ—both in the upper room and in Galilee.

The unbelieving world and Satan will continue to attack and deny the evidence in the Bible about God’s mighty and gracious works. However, for 2,000 years this evidence has led countless believers to confess at Easter that Jesus is their risen Savior, their ascended Lord, and their loving Shepherd. They follow His voice, because it is truth. Jesus said to Pilate, “Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37). May the truths of God’s Word assure us of salvation, comfort us in trials, and give us hope of eternal life.



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Board for Christian Service: World Needs Fund Offering

The Blessed Life of a Christian

I've lived a very blessed life. I was born to two loving parents, baptized as an infant, and raised in the church. I've always had plenty of food to eat and a safe place to sleep. I've had access to state-of-the-art medical care and haven't had to use it for any serious illnesses. Finally, I've been blessed with a church body that fully supports my spiritual needs.

This past Sunday, I was blessed to hear a Bible study and sermon by a missionary in our fellowship who has served in Indonesia. It soon became clear to me that Christians in Indonesia have not shared in the same blessings that I have. By and large, they have a much lower standard of living. They also live among neighbors that are 87% Muslim.

Not only do Indonesian Christians live as a small religious minority, they are also severely persecuted. They are killed for their belief. Their churches are fire bombed and razed. They suffer discrimination in all aspects of their lives. Despite these dire earthly obstacles, the Indonesian Christians possess a strong faith and desire for God's Word and Sacraments.

Indonesian Christians understand Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). May the Lord bless them in their struggles until they can be with Him in His kingdom.

Once again this May you'll be receiving an envelope for your Mother's Day offering to the ELS World Needs Fund. During this past year, the majority of support was sent to our mission congregations in India. Many of their church buildings were severely damaged by a cyclone, and the congregations were in need of support to rebuild.

Take the opportunity to set aside a little something for your fellow believers around the world who are suffering personal, natural, and man-made disasters. Consider

your blessings and how they can help those with physical needs. Thank God that we are all spiritually blessed through the same Word and Sacraments.



Brad Wosmek is a member of Peace Lutheran Church in North Mankato, Minnesota, and of the ELS Board for Christian Service.