



LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

MAGNIFYING MISSIONS:

PRAYING FOR SOFTENED HEARTS

pg. 6

Body Matters

by **REV. JOHN A. MOLDSTAD**, President
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD, Mankato, Minn.



Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas. The events appear on our calendars in close succession. For many citizens, the three seem to hold little in common – a November day devoted to turkey and football, a four-Sunday season of repentant reflection, and the joyous day of gift-giving. For Christians, too, the three events may appear rather incongruent. Thanksgiving, admittedly, is much more secular, having its origin in a national declaration.

But consider for a moment an interesting connection as year after year we celebrate Thanksgiving, then move into Advent, and culminate with Christmas festivities. The connection has to do with our physical bodies. The soul, of course, is always the deeper matter. But Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas make for an intriguing correlation bodily.

Thanksgiving is a day we set aside to express gratitude for the ways in which God provides for our bodily needs. Advent is a season where we are made to think of Christ's second coming, which will definitely have a bodily component – the resurrection of the dead. Christmas is the moment in history we hold in high esteem for how God himself became a body to rescue our sin-corrupted bodies and souls for eternity. This in-the-flesh connection can serve as a reminder of what really is at stake.

Food for the body is crucial, and sustaining our physical structures must consume much of our time and energy each day. We plant seed, harvest the crops and the fruit, bake, buy, and sell. We then repeat the cycle. But it must always be for a higher purpose. Solomon wrote: *Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God* (Proverbs 30:8-9).

Advent is there to bring reality to the fore. Our human bodies will decay and die because of a soul problem. *"The soul who sins is the one who will die"* (Ezekiel 18:4). There is a day of reckoning coming for all. Upon the return of our Lord Jesus, the bodies of all will be raised – believers will, body and soul, enjoy a glorified state in eternal bliss while unbelievers will suffer a never-ending shame and torment of both body and soul. There is no annihilation of the body. Apart from repen-

tance over sin – the theme of Advent – one will necessarily face the reality of a never-ending destruction of "both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

But Christmas ushers in "the bodily moment" that counts, and this great news is for all to hear and believe! Our God became flesh and blood to rescue not just our souls, but also our bodies so that by faith in the redemptive work of the crucified and risen Jesus, there is no condemnation to face, but only life forever!

Pray that our unbelieving acquaintances may be turned to repentance before the Day our Lord returns for judgment. Most of all, rejoice that by faith in the "Word made flesh" (John 1:14), we too will in the flesh be with our Incarnate Savior. Our bodies raised imperishable will be like Christ's glorified body (Philippians 3:21). This bodily connection transcends all else!



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Holton Celebrates 150th Anniversary

by **REV. CRAIG A. FERKENSTAD**, Retired E.L.S. Pastor

The members of the oldest congregation established by the Norwegian Synod in the state of Michigan observed the congregation's 150th anniversary on September 15, 2019.

A morning anniversary service was conducted at Holton Evangelical Lutheran Church, during which ELS President John Moldstad preached the festival message "United in Praise and Purpose" based upon Isaiah 12:1-5. The congregation's current pastor, the Rev. Erich Hoeft, served as the liturgist.

The congregation again gathered for an afternoon program, during which the history of the congregation was read and five pastors reminisced about their pastorates. A combined adult-children's choir sang. Following the program and a hog roast meal, the members rejoiced as the mortgage for the church building was burned.

Holton Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized in 1869 with eleven voting members under the name The Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cedar Creek. The Rev. Johannes Bergh traveled twenty-five miles by foot from Muskegon to serve these Norwegian and Danish Lutheran pioneers. In 1881 when the first church building was constructed, the name of the congregation was changed to The Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Church of Holton.

This church building stood until 1934, when it was struck by lightning and burned. Services were then held in the township hall. A disagreement arose among the members as to the location of a new church building, which led to a division of the congregation.

Some of the members felt that the building should be located near the original site and in September 1938, the first service was held in a new church building. Another other group of members thought it better to move into town and continued holding services in the town hall. They organized as a sep-

arate congregation, taking the name Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, and constructed a parsonage in Holton. Both congregations were served by the same pastor. This continued until 1950, when joint worship services began to be held by the two congregation. In 1958, the two congregations joined together to form Holton Evangelical Lutheran Church

Twenty years later, a preliminary study of a church building program was begun. On October 19, 1986, a new church building was dedicated in the town of Holton.

Another special blessing enjoyed by the Holton congregation was the establishment of Holton Evangelical Lutheran School in 1989. Two portable classrooms were purchased and later replaced with a four-classroom building. Classes continued until 2004.

Among the pastors who have served this congregation in various capacities are: Johannes Berg, John Hendricks, Eivind Unseth, Gottfred Guldberg, Raymond Branstad, George Orvick, James Olsen, Craig Ferkenstad, Michael Krentz, Paul Zager, and Erich Hoeft.

Surely God has blessed and continues to bless Holton Evangelical Lutheran Church.



Women's Pacific Northwest Mission Rally

The ELS 41st Women's Pacific Northwest Mission Rally was held on September 28, 2019. This year's theme was "Mission through Vocation in Everyday Life."

Concordia Lutheran Church in Hood River, Oregon, hosted the rally, and there were 56 people in attendance. Rev. Lawson conducted the opening and closing devotions. Mites and offerings were collected and presented to the Bethany Seminary Student Fund and Concordia Lutheran School. The guest speaker was Rev. Thomas Heyn, who spoke on the legalities of witnessing in the workplace.

In attendance were Rev. Lawson, Rev. Thomas Heyn, Rev. Glenn Smith, Rev. Dan Basel, Rev. Edward Bryant, Rev. Bartels, Rev. Gullixson, and Rev. Jacobsen.

There are disturbing statistics about the numbers of young people who abandon their church, lose their faith, and just disappear after being confirmed during high school years, but especially during college years.

How can parents and our congregations work to help our young people to remain faithful?

Answer:

Over the last twenty years, many church bodies have studied the issue of young adults walking away from the church, including our brothers and sisters in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and, more recently, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). The recent LCMS study surveyed 2,000 young adults (18-35), asking who they considered to be the greatest spiritual influence in their lives. According to the survey, parents had the greatest impact on the spiritual lives of their children. But who took second place? Local parish pastors. The last column addressed the question of what parents can do. Today we address what pastors and congregations can do to help young people remain in the faith.

First of all, the time has come to lay to rest some common misconceptions about what churches must do to retain young people. One popular misconception: “We have to have a young pastor to keep young people.” On rare occasions, some have even tried to oust their current pastor in the belief that a younger pastor would help with retaining teens into adulthood. According to the LCMS study on youth retention, however, the age of the pastor usually did not have a significant impact on youth staying or leaving. Another misconception: “Young people only want to worship in a church with other young people.” Again, according to the study, “having a large proportion of young adults in worship” has “little to no impact” on retention

The greatest factor by far affecting youth retention is the Means of Grace. The Gospel is the “power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). If young people can stay close to the Means of Grace throughout the teen years and into young adulthood, the Holy Spirit will work to preserve them in the faith. We can see the evidence for this in the fact that churches with Lutheran schools tend to keep more of their youth than those churches that do not have a school. The challenge is that as young people grow up, the devil works hard through school, work, and sports to keep them from the Means of Grace.

Other factors fall into two major categories: relationships and responsibility. In the area of relationships, the most important is between pastor and parishioner. In addition to pointing to their parents, young people who stay point to their pastor caring for them as a major reason why. This doesn’t minimize the importance of other church members, however. A young person’s relationship with a Sunday School teacher or another adult volunteer also has a positive impact. In the area of responsibility, as young people start to gain more maturity, taking on duties at church gives them a level of ownership in the congregation that they wouldn’t otherwise have.

So what can pastors and churches do to help young people remain faithful? Pray that they stay connected to the Means of Grace. Catechize them when they’re children. Support your church’s school or support Christian education at a nearby school of our fellowship. Once confirmed, get them involved with the work of the church. Make them ushers and let them help with Sunday School. Put them in charge of something like the games for VBS. Encourage them to join the choir. Once they’re out of school and off to college, work to stay connected with them. Get their addresses and send them sermons and worship services. Encourage them to worship or participate in a campus ministry at a church of our fellowship. Most importantly, let them know you care about them.

There are no “silver bullets” for the problem of youth retention in church. Yet no one knows what the Gospel seed we plant in someone’s heart when they’re young will yield when they get older. And we can trust the Savior’s promise that no one will snatch His sheep out of His hand (John 10:28).



Do you have a question for Pastor Van Kampen?

- > Send them via email:
pastorspvk@christthekinggb.org
- > Send them via “snail mail”:
1700 Cardinal Ln,
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MAGNIFYING MISSIONS:

PRAYING FOR SOFTENED HEARTS

“The LORD was very angry with your fathers. Therefore, say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Return to Me,” declares the LORD of hosts, “that I may return to you,” says the LORD of hosts’”

(Zechariah 1:2-3)

“Return to me” would be the theme that is common to the three countries in eastern Europe where the Board for World Outreach supports **Thoughts of Faith ministry**. Under Soviet communist rule, atheism held sway. These once-Christian countries saw their churches closed and church buildings converted to museums, government buildings, or other public uses, while Christians and Christian pastors were persecuted and children taught there is no god.



UKRAINE

In **Ukraine**, the Board for World Outreach works with the **Gift of Life Program**. Two buses travel to smaller villages, where good medical and dental services are hard to find. One bus with a medical staff provides medical services, especially for children in these villages, while another bus with a dental staff does the same. While the parents wait for their children to be admitted, a deaconess stands outside the buses, where she is able to teach Bible stories, distribute Lutheran literature, and answer questions about why this special ministry exists.

CZECH REPUBLIC

In the **Czech Republic**, the **Thoughts of Faith Martin Luther School** in Pilsen reaches out to many students to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Czech people, historically, were predominantly faithful Christians. Years of religious wars and the influence of communism, however, has created a nation that is considered the most atheistic in all of Europe. The school and the two pastors who work with it work diligently to bring the Gospel to the Czech people.

LATVIA

In **Latvia**, under the influence of atheistic communism, a once strong Lutheran country has, in large part, turned its back on God. The faithful Lutheran pastors and members with whom the BWO works are trying hard to bring the precious Gospel to the Latvian people. Step by step, they urge their brothers and sisters to return to the Lord.

What can you do? You can PRAY. Pray for those who work tirelessly and faithfully in these difficult situations. Pray that the Lord would soften the hearts of a people oppressed under many years of communism and misled by the lies of atheism. Your offerings are also of great assistance. They help these dedicated pastors support themselves and their families while they cry out: "return to the Lord, that He may return to them."



Catechesis Through Scripture
The Lord's Supper

by **REV. TRENT SAARI**, Contributing Writer
LAKEWOOD LUTHERAN CHURCH, Lakewood, Wash.
OUR REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH, Yelm, Wash.



► **Read:** Exodus 12; Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 10:16; John 6:55-57

For the Israelites living in slavery in Egypt, the blood of a lamb painted on the doorposts and lintel of their house meant deliverance and redemption. Not only did the blood spare them from the angel of death, it ensured a new life and future for them as well. God would personally lead the Israelites out of their bondage. He would provide sustenance in the form of manna and quail for them during their time of wilderness wandering (Manna literally means “What is it?”). He would lead them to the land that He had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

The Passover and ensuing exodus marked such a pivotal point in Israel’s history that God commanded an annual feast in which these events would be proclaimed and retold for generations to come. It was a feast that celebrated God’s gracious acts in the lives of His people. However, these Old Testament events pointed forward to an even greater deliverance. John the Baptist would point to Jesus, saying, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). St. Paul writes, “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). You, the sinner, have been redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). Christ’s blood, shed on the altar of the cross, marks a new beginning for you.

In fact, it was for this reason that God’s Son took on human flesh. As your dear brother in the flesh, Jesus has kept the righteous decrees of God’s holy law and has died the death that you deserved on account of your sins. Through the flesh and blood of Jesus, you have the forgiveness of sins, and where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. Through faith in Jesus’ flesh and blood, you are now a partaker of an eternal feast of salvation.

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the

bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (John 6:48-51). He said, “My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (John 6:55-57).

On the night in which Jesus was betrayed, He celebrated the Passover with His disciples. It was at this meal that Jesus would institute a meal like no other. What is it? Jesus tells us what the food He gives is and why He gives it. “[A]s they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; **this is My body.**” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. “For **this is My blood** of the new covenant, which is shed for many **for the remission of sins**” (Matthew 26:26-28).

There is nothing figurative or symbolic about the salvation that Jesus distributes in His holy Supper and which we receive through faith. In this meal, Jesus is truly present with His body and blood for you. St. Paul writes, “The cup of blessing which we bless, **is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?**” (1 Corinthians 10:16). It is this gracious food for the soul that sustains us through our time of wilderness wandering here on earth. It is a meal which brings and seals to us the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. It is a meal which comforts us with the assurance that the same Savior, who won our redemption with His flesh and blood, is with us every step of our journey, imparting His life to us until we reach the promised land of heaven.

*This feast is manna, wealth abounding
Unto the poor, to weak ones pow’r;
To angels joy, to hell confounding,
And life for me in death’s dark hour.
Lord may Thy body and Thy blood
Be for my soul the highest good!*

*Thy body, giv’n for me, O Savior,
Thy blood which Thou for me didst shed,
These are my life and strength forever,
By them my hungry soul is fed.
Lord may Thy body and Thy blood
Be for my soul the highest good!*

(ELH 313, verses 10-11)

JESUS ASKS QUESTIONS

by **REV. JERRY GERNANDER**, Contributing Writer
BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Princeton, Minn.

*“What did you
go out into the
wilderness
to see?”*

(Matthew 11:7)



Jesus asked this question of the large crowds of people who previously had gone out to the wilderness to see John the Baptizer and now were coming to see Jesus.

They had almost forgotten about John. He was Mr. Irrelevant now. Once upon a time, they were excited to go see him. They heard stories about this strange young man in the desert, who had a strange diet, wore rough clothing, and held people spellbound with his preaching. They were excited to make the journey out to the wilderness to see John. But now John was in prison. Soon he would be cut down by Herod. His voice has been silenced for the most part. He seems to be Mr. Irrelevant now.

When Jesus asks this question, it's just when people might start to think poorly of John. Right before this, Matthew 11:2-6 says that two disciples of John came to Jesus. John had sent them to Jesus with a question. They asked if Jesus truly were "the Coming One." People might wonder how John could ask that. He had been so certain about Jesus in his preaching. Was he now doubting? Jesus answered by repeating the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, showing that they were coming true in Jesus' works. The answer, really, was to keep your faith founded upon what God said in His Word.

His question to the multitudes, "***What did you go out into the wilderness to see?***", sounds like it's about John. It sounds like he's defending him. Even if Jesus is defending John, that isn't really His point. Jesus' question, once again, is a searching question about their own faith.

Jesus amplifies His question with some statements about John: "What did you go out to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ... What did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments?" Jesus reminds the people that John was no "reed shaken by the wind." He didn't go whichever way the popular wind was blowing. Jesus reminds them that John wasn't a "soft garments" guy, giving up if it got difficult. But even that isn't the point.

The point is not to find the most stalwart example of a preacher or that John can be abandoned or dismissed if you find something in him that disappoints. The point is definitely not to find the preacher who has the least faults. It isn't even the case that John is nothing if he now experiences doubt in previously unthinkable ways.

Jesus' question, "***What did you go out into the wilderness to see?***" focuses the attention on what God calls the preacher to do. Jesus says that the right answer would be that they went out to see a prophet, that is, someone to whom God gives a message, a Word that God has called and sent him to preach, and he delivers that message. He preaches that Word of God.

Jesus finally says of John: "He is ... My messenger." John was called to prepare the way for Jesus. He was to point people to Jesus. He did that, especially when he was crying out, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

Jesus' question here is really saying, "It's not about John; it's about Jesus. It's not about what John looked or acted like, his impressive qualities or his talents; it's about what John preached - the Gospel." As St. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:5: *For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.*

Jesus is asking them - and He is asking you: "Have you been pointed to the Savior? Is that what you are desiring?" Just as that's what God wanted John to do, that's what Jesus wants your pastor to do for you. That's what Jesus wants you to desire from your pastor and in a church.

The Lord might even tell you not to be surprised to find that your pastor has great faults and sometimes shows them, that he experiences times of weakness when even he struggles to believe the message that he preaches. This even happens at Christmastime, when he has the most beautiful message to preach, and yet the heavier workload and the added burdens he carries cause him to sink under the weight. Pastors can feel guilt that they spend less time with their families. They can feel resentment about this, which adds to their guilt. They might condemn themselves for this and feel that they aren't worthy of the Lord and of the pastoral office. They might struggle to believe that God's grace is for them.

Your pastor needs you to pray for him. He also needs you to thank him for preaching Christ to you and giving Christ to you in the Sacraments. He might need you to gently remind him that it is not his burden to carry, that he is only the messenger, and the message of the Gospel is for him, too. The words he preaches to you are the words that will save him, too. Your pastor is a sinner, after all. He needs a Savior. You are a sinner, and you need a Savior. The good news for both pastor and people - especially in Advent and at Christmas - is: "Your Savior comes! He comes to you!"

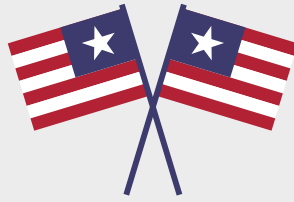
ELS MILITARY MONUMENT



Lutherans Are Taught to Be Patriotic



In the **Evangelical Lutheran Synod** explanation of **Luther's Small Catechism**, we are taught to uphold this truth: *"It is our duty to love our country"* in whatever country we find ourselves in this world. This was recognized during WWI in the following recollection from the **1922 Synod Annual Report** (pp. 87-88):



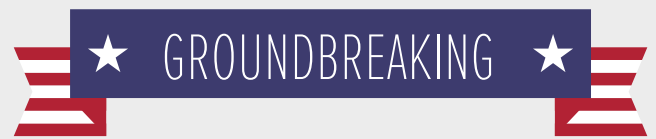
“The undersigned had the privilege of serving as a camp pastor or Lutheran chaplain in various army camps during 1918. ... Statistics show that the Lutherans had a larger percent of its youth enter the service than any other denomination. ... When in training these lads (Lutheran boys) proved themselves, because of their obedience to officers in command, to be most efficient and loyal soldiers.

“... toward the close of the summer, after a draft of several hundred men from Minnesota had been received into camp ... I ... met one of the captains there who had not seen me for some time. He turned to me and asked: ‘Chaplain, where have you been keeping yourself?’ ‘Working in the 333^d, looking up Lutheran boys,’ was the reply. ‘Yes, I see there are a lot of your cohorts from Minnesota, just arrived. They – the Lutheran boys – make fine soldiers,’ said the captain, who was neither a Lutheran nor of Scandinavian descent. However, he, a regular army officer, as well as many other regulars, who are keen observers of material which makes for good soldiers, was ready to commend the good, sturdy, sound and wholesome qualities in our Lutheran boys.

“Mark you, the majority of these Lutheran boys had received their education and training in our parochial schools. Had such wonderful results been attained in training these men; had such favorable comment been made about them by officers, if they had been the products of an un-American institution, which many in ignorance call our parochial school system? Does it not much rather appear as evidence of the soundness and stability of said school system? It can not be otherwise for this system is founded in order to maintain and inculcate in the hearts and minds of its pupils nothing but obedience and loyalty to God, home and our country, the United States. Let us therefore cherish and promote our parochial schools as a staunch bulwark against the many evil forces which would undermine our homes and country!”

Rev. H. A. Preus

With such sentiments in mind, the ELS is constructing its **Military Monument** on the **Bethany Lutheran College** campus (see rendering). Its purpose is to honor all veterans, men and women, by encouraging visitors to express, in thought and prayer, appreciation for the God-pleasing vocations of those who have served and will serve us by securing and preserving peace among us through our country’s armed forces.



On **Monday, November 11, 2019**, we will be conducting **groundbreaking ceremonies**, first in the **Trinity Chapel at 10:00 a.m.** and then **on site, weather permitting, at 11:00 a.m.** All are welcome.

TO DONATE:

Please visit: els.org/monument

We are now accepting monetary gifts to support the construction and upkeep of the monument. Also, we have the opportunity to honor a family or church member, friend, etc., who served in the U.S. Armed Forces or Merchant Marines with engraved granite pavers, benches, and branch pillars. The pavers will serve as the patio of the monument.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For information on the various ways to contribute, contact **Pastor Larry Wentzlaff**
pastorw1580@gmail.com
320-905-1929

“... that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life.”

1 Timothy 2: 2b

by **REV. DANIEL A. BASEL**, Giving Counselor
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD, Mankato, Minn.



Counting Our Blessings

Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

(Luke 6:38 NKJV)

“You can’t out give God!” I can’t begin to recount all the times generous followers of our Lord Jesus have told me this. I’m sure you have heard it, too. To top it off, it is true! We remember this as we consider his blessings to our Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Just a few moments listening to a list of the blessings we have at Bethany Lutheran College should instill in all of us an excitement for the work of the Gospel through this ELS ministry. With over 80 foreign students and 750 enrolled, there are many opportunities for the Gospel to be shared and for students to grow through the Christ-centered college education they receive.

Consider the blessings of having well-trained, qualified graduates for our churches, missions, and teaching positions through our Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. What a blessing our seminary has been to us, not to mention the impact our graduates have had on our missions and churches throughout our country through the preaching and teaching of the pure Word.

We rejoice to see the blessings occurring in our world missions. We have a significant presence in seven countries (India, South Korea, Peru, Chile, Latvia, Czech Republic, and Ukraine), not to mention current work being done with pastors in Kenya.

At the same time, the vital work of home mission work continues. Mission efforts in Leander, San Angelo, and Weatherford, Texas, are ongoing and show great promise toward building foundation congregations for our synod. We also continue to see blessings through cross-cultural work in Bell Gardens, California, as well as several other home mission efforts in the Midwest.

What a joy to see how the Lord works through us as we gather as a synod to reach so many! What an awesome and sobering responsibility we have in supporting these missions and ministries through our individual gifts and congregational gifts to the ELS!

A vital part of this work is to renew our commitments every year at our synod’s convention. Each year, as we do, the blessings multiply. Or as Jesus explains, “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom.” In other words, we should be thankful that our Lord so graciously blesses us with the opportunities listed above. While it is God who is to receive the glory, much of this work is the fruit of previous gifts. We are blessed. Now it is our turn to be generous, recognizing that we can’t out give God.

With that in mind, our pastors and lay delegates committed themselves (you and me, too) to giving \$780,000 from our congregations to our synodical work this year. Recognizing the blessings we have through Bethany Lutheran College, they resolved that all gifts over \$740,000 given to the synod from our congregations goes to help provide funding for religion staffing at Bethany Lutheran College (2018 Synod Report, p. 146).

That leaves us with this question implied by the words of our Lord: “What measure are we using when giving back to God?” If we acknowledge all our Lord’s blessings and that he has blessed us individually, then generosity will follow, trusting that our Lord will and does provide all we need.

Please help by giving generously to your church and your church’s giving to our synod. Encourage your fellow Christians and your congregation to support the wonderful work we do together in view of the love of Christ, remembering the souls he has placed under our care.

May we ever dedicate ourselves to this important work and see our ELS missions and ministries as blessings from our Lord.

You can give generously through your church or you can give directly to the ELS.

For the ELS, send your checks to:
ELS, 6 Browns Court, Mankato, MN 56001
 Or, go to els.org/donate

Or contact:
Pastor Dan Basel: 507-344-7311
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IN DEATH, *You are Mine.*

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There is a beginning and an end to the school year. There is a beginning and an end to summer vacation. (That's not so wonderful!) There is a beginning and an end to your life.

However, God teaches you in the Bible that from beginning to end, you are His. There is no end for His believers in the way we usually think about the "end." What about death? Isn't that the end? Can you still belong to God even when you die? Yes! That's what Jesus promises in John 5:25,26a: *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."*

You are God's child through faith in Jesus, who "is the resurrection and the life." It appeared that Jesus had met His end as He hung bleeding and naked on the cross. It even sounded like it: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46b). A short time later, Jesus died. His death was to pay for your sins. To prove the payment was completed, Jesus rose from the dead. Death wasn't His end. Because of what Jesus did for you, death isn't your end.

That's why from beginning to end, you belong to the Lord. He made you His very own in your Baptism. There isn't an expiration date on your Baptism. Some food items, like milk and meats, have expiration dates. Some coupons have

ending dates. They aren't good forever. But belonging to the Lord Jesus is forever. From beginning to end, you are the Lord's son or daughter. God claims you as His very own.

Forever is a pretty scary idea. How can you even begin to understand it? You can't. "Forever" isn't something that fits nicely into our mind. Rather, that promise of forever is for faith to hold. We simply trust what the Bible tells us about belonging to the Lord in Romans 8:38,39:

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Satan will try to pry you away from God. He may even use your friends and your sinful flesh to cut you off from God. Don't listen to them. Remember God's promise that not even death can separate you from His love in Christ. This promise doesn't end.

questions:

1. In what way is death an "ending?"
2. What is it about Christians and the Christian faith that undoes this ending - that undoes the permanence of death? **Read:** 1 Corinthians 15 for further study of death undone.
3. You hear often that God loves you and that you have "life forever" with Him. Where is this "love of God" and this promise of "life forever" found for the one doubting or despairing? **See:** Romans 8:38-39

MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS:

St. Martin Lutheran Church Shawano, Wisconsin



Lutheran pioneers, one after another, moved into northeast Wisconsin, described by one missionary as an area of trees, swamps, and mosquitoes. They worked long, hard days in this growing community remembering the “one thing needful” (Luke 10:42). They knew they needed to retain the Christian faith and their children needed to be nurtured in the same.

Rev. Fredrick Ruhland, Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) from Oshkosh, conducted the first services in private homes in this Shawano, Wisconsin, area and saw the potential for a congregation to be established there. That was 160 years ago. The first constitution of St. Martin Lutheran Church was signed October 23, 1859.

Rev. J.N. Beyer served St. Martin for three years before Rev. Peter Dicke was called. Despite many difficulties, Rev. Dicke moved forward with great dedication and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, formed 24 congregations in this area of trees, swamps, and mosqui-

toes. He believed people ought to be within walking distance of a church, so they were built about four miles apart. Remarkably, many of these congregations remain open for regular services.

When doctrinal differences in the LCMS became a concern, Rev. Wilbert Werling met with the voters and they chose to sever ties with the LCMS in 1966, remaining independent until joining the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1976.

The St. Martin congregation gives thanks to God for all the blessings over the last 160 years. Their membership stays at about 180–200 souls when many rural churches struggle to maintain their flocks. We are very thankful that our young adults often remain members as they marry. We have many babies and also a young Sunday School. St. Martin Lutheran Church sees a future.

To God alone be the glory.