



# LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD



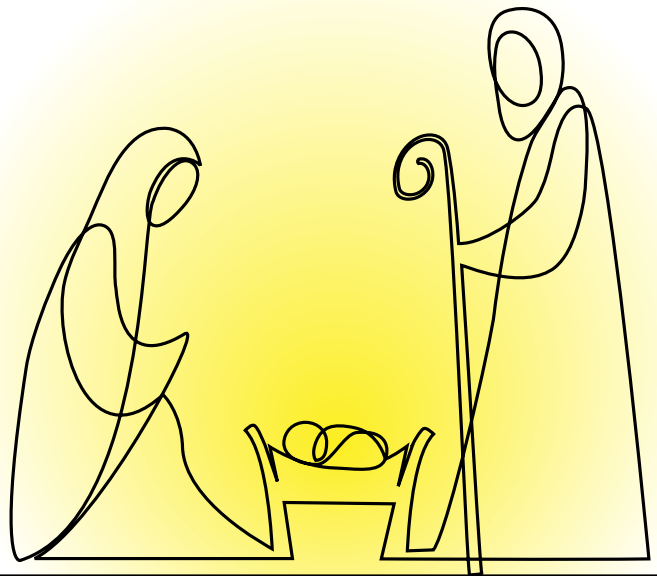
BOARD FOR WORLD OUTREACH: SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

## A Lutheran Mission in Seoul Amongst Megachurches

pg. 10

# Greatest Need

# Fulfilled



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

## Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

Myopia refers to an eyesight condition that impairs a person's eyes from focusing on distant objects. Besides denoting a physical defect in the retina, "myopic vision" frequently applies to a lack of "seeing the big picture." It is a pejorative expression indicating one is not so discerning from a wider or worldly perspective.

If we were to ask at this point in time, "What is the greatest **world** need?" you can guess the responses. A vaccination for the pandemic. Peace and order in our streets. Compassion in race relations. Better stimulus for economic recovery. Good leadership in government. These are all on the hearts and minds of people. Rightfully so. Globally, controlling the virus appears paramount. We can observe its effect on so many other aspects of life.

But as fellow Christians, we know that the "Google earth" perspective on the world's **greatest need** is far more profound. Beyond experiencing "myopic vision," the world of people by nature is infected with spiritual blindness. Original sin has cast its eternally deadly pall on all. All people of every climate, race, and nation desperately need more than a virus recovery. We need more than compassion and peace in the streets. We need more than a superb financial boost. We all need a Savior! Sinners that we are, we would have no prospect for bliss beyond the grave, for Scripture states clearly that *"all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). The Bible minces no words in describing the fate of mankind without a Savior – *"...as a result of one trespass was condemnation for all men"* (Romans 5:18).

The fantastic news is that we do have such a Savior! He has satisfied the world's greatest need, and this means He has completely met your own and my own personal greatest need. The account of our Lord's birth at Bethlehem assures us that His flesh-and-blood arrival in the manger secures for us salvation from the consequences of our sin; salvation from the fear of death; and salvation from the horrifying place of hell. The angelic announcement to the shepherds is meant for the whole world to hear and to believe: *"I bring you good tidings of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord!"* (Luke 2:10-11).

This Jesus, God's own Son from eternity, has entered our world of sin without Himself succumbing to any sin in thought and word and deed. He Himself was conceived and born without any sin. What transpired during his thirty-three years of life before his death and resurrection was a life of holiness lived in your place and mine and in the place of all humanity. Then, at the cross, He vicariously assumed the sins of us all and became the accursed one in the place of each sinner before the holy justice hall of the Heavenly Father (2 Corinthians 5:21). By faith in Jesus, we now escape hellfire and instead are offered life everlasting with our blessed Redeemer in the halls of heaven! *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1).

May God have us all see **the big picture** (John 3:16-17)!

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Seoul Lutheran Church, Seoul, South Korea



**PUBLISHED BY:**

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

**ADDRESS EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:**

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Mankato, MN 56001

**ADDRESS CIRCULATION CORRESPONDENCE**

**and ADDRESS CORRECTIONS TO:**  
*Lutheran Sentinel*  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

**PERIODICAL POSTPAID AT MANKATO, MN 56001**

**and ADDITIONAL OFFICES. POSTMASTER:**  
Send changes (Form 3579) to  
*Lutheran Sentinel*  
6 Browns Court  
Mankato, MN 56001

The *Lutheran Sentinel* is the official publication of the **Evangelical Lutheran Synod** and is published six times per year. The subscription price is \$12.00 per year with reduced rates available for blanket subscriptions at \$10.00 through a member congregation.

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# The Better “All Better”

by REV. KYLE MADSON, Editor  
*THE LUTHERAN SENTINEL*, Norseland, Minn.



The eight-month-old gnaws on his fingers, moaning and groaning and crying out from the teeth cutting through his gums. His sad eyes and sorrowful voice serve to say, “Mom, **make it all better!**”

Disbelief has set in with the 12-year-old girl. She has just experienced the acute pain that can come from the gossiping tongue even of a friend. Her eyes well up with tears and run down toward a mouth with no words, and the two join to say, “Dad, **make it all better!**”

“I’m sorry, ma’am. The heartbeat’s gone...” The mother once expecting the thrill and joy of delivering life now has the special cross of delivering death. Collapsing into the arms of her husband, her anguish and emotional exhaustion speak in unison: “Honey, **make it all better!**”

The 94-year-old has lived and loved and lost...lost a great deal: lost many normal adult capacities and the ability to live in his own home, lost his wife of 70+ years, memory loss, and hearing loss. And this one familiar with loss often groans to his heavenly Father, “**make it all better!**”

It’s a lament that comes early to our little hearts and minds and mouths. And the sin and the suffering of this fallen world make it a constant companion throughout the seasons of life and loss: “**make it all better.**”

As painful as this refrain of life proves, it can’t be called a surprise, not to God’s people—*The Church*. This anguish and affliction is, in fact, what God gave as preview to His people through St. John’s vision. Your Bible’s heading might capture it with *The Woman and the Dragon* (Revelation 12:1-6). The woman (The Church) is clothed with the sun and the moon, but in the throes of birth pains (The Christ-child). And The Dragon (the Devil) is stalking the Woman, waiting to devour her promised Child. The Child is caught up to heaven before this heinous plot succeeds and the Woman flees into the wilderness, where she is nourished and provided for by God in her waiting.

We are the Wilderness Woman in Waiting. The Dragon does his dastardly best -we are not at home. We are waiting in the wilderness. The “all better” beg so familiar to us is not remedied in the temporal solutions we so often crave: a foolproof healthcare system, safety from disease or the threat of it, getting our country “back to normal,” getting “the right people” elected to civil office. All of these temporal matters have

a proper place in our thoughts and cares and considerations. They just aren’t capable of being the “all better” we, the Wilderness Woman (The Church), so sorely need.

And so God teaches us to pray for a better “all better”:

**Amen. (Yes. Yes!) Come, Lord Jesus!**

Our merciful Father knows well our anguish: the agony of our broken and beleaguered bodies, the anxiety of our fraught and frenzied minds, the unrest of our trembling hearts. He is far too merciful to merely supply us with temporal fixes—band-aids to soothe body for a bit. He has spared no expense in securing the best “all better” our battered body-and-soul existence could fathom. He redeemed our lives from the pit with no less than the blood of His Lamb—our Savior. All our anguish of body and the freefall of our minds have been caught up in this plentiful and lasting redemption. And the Father will not leave His blood-bought redemption to wait forever. This offers us more than just a reprieve from the discomfort of body or the disquiet of mind. It offers us a Promise to cling to in our wilderness waiting.

The Bridegroom says to the woman in waiting: “**I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy (the promise) of this book!**” (Revelation 22:7).

The blood-price purchase and the Promise it leaves behind give us the better “all better” beg. It is the refrain of Advent: “**Come, Lord Jesus!**”

It spares us false hope and secures to us the lasting “better” bought for us:

*No human strength, no earthly pow’r  
 Can see me through the evil hour,  
 For You alone my strength renew.  
 I cry to You!  
 I trust, O Lord, Your promise true!*

(ELH 415; v.1)

**The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come!”** (Revelation 22:17).

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!** (Revelation 22:20).

# Right before we sing the Sanctus in the Divine Service, what is meant by the phrase, “Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven...?”

## Answer:

During a normal year, people expect to spend the holidays getting together with the family. After church, everyone piles in the car and heads over to Grandma’s for Christmas dinner. Brothers and sisters spend the day catching up with mom and dad and each other. Grandkids gather around the table for a game of Monopoly. Everyone in the family is together—and everyone enjoys the feeling of family togetherness.

We celebrate that same sense of “family togetherness” in those words of the Divine Service that come right before the Sanctus: “Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You...” (ELH, p. 75). As God’s people gather to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, those words teach us why we call the Sacrament of Jesus’ body and blood “communion.” Dining at the Lord’s table is not just about “God and me”—my personal relationship with the Lord. Nor is it simply about the fellowship of the local congregation. As we gather to receive the body and blood of Christ under bread and wine, He is gathering us together as members of His body, the Holy Christian Church.

In the Lord’s Supper, Christ blesses us in so many ways. Through His body and blood under the bread and wine, Christ Jesus joins Himself to us, forgiving our sins and strengthening our faith. At the same time, He unites us with every other faithful believer in His kingdom, even joining our prayers and praises with those of the angels and believers in heaven. Therefore, in the Sanctus, we join the angels—the seraphim—of Isaiah 6 in singing, “Holy, holy, holy LORD God of Sabaoth,” and we join the faithful who hailed Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem in crying out, “Hosanna in the highest!” For those few minutes, the Lord Jesus gives us a taste of heaven: everyone in God’s family is together in His temple—and everyone enjoys family togetherness in Christ.

This hasn’t exactly been a normal year. In this time of social distancing, God’s house feels a little emptier than before and we cannot show our affection with hugs and handshakes. We feel separate

from one another and from the Christian church as a whole. Yet these words from our liturgy point us to otherworldly fullness and togetherness in Christ through the means of grace! When we come together for worship, we know that we are not by ourselves. As our Savior reminds us, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20, NKJV).

Our Scandinavian Lutheran forefathers passed down their understanding of “family togetherness” in the Lord’s Supper, not only through the liturgy, but also through the design of their churches. In some of our synod’s older sanctuaries, the communion rails are intentionally semi-circular. As God’s people commune together on this side of the circle, those who came before us wanted us to have the certainty that in heaven, the circle is unbroken. As we receive Jesus’ body and blood with praise and thanksgiving on this side, on the other side of the circle, our praises join the entire Church Triumphant in heaven. The patriarchs, the prophets and apostles, the martyrs, along with all our loved ones who died in the Lord—mom, dad, grandma, grandpa—together with the angels and archangels, we join in singing their glorious song!

In this lonely, broken world, people crave family togetherness. Yet you and I already have it freely as a gift of God’s grace in Christ! Don’t take the gift for granted! Come to the Lord’s table and be strengthened in your connection to the body of Christ. If you are unable to come to church, call your pastor and schedule a time for private communion. And may we always enjoy the family togetherness we have in Christ.



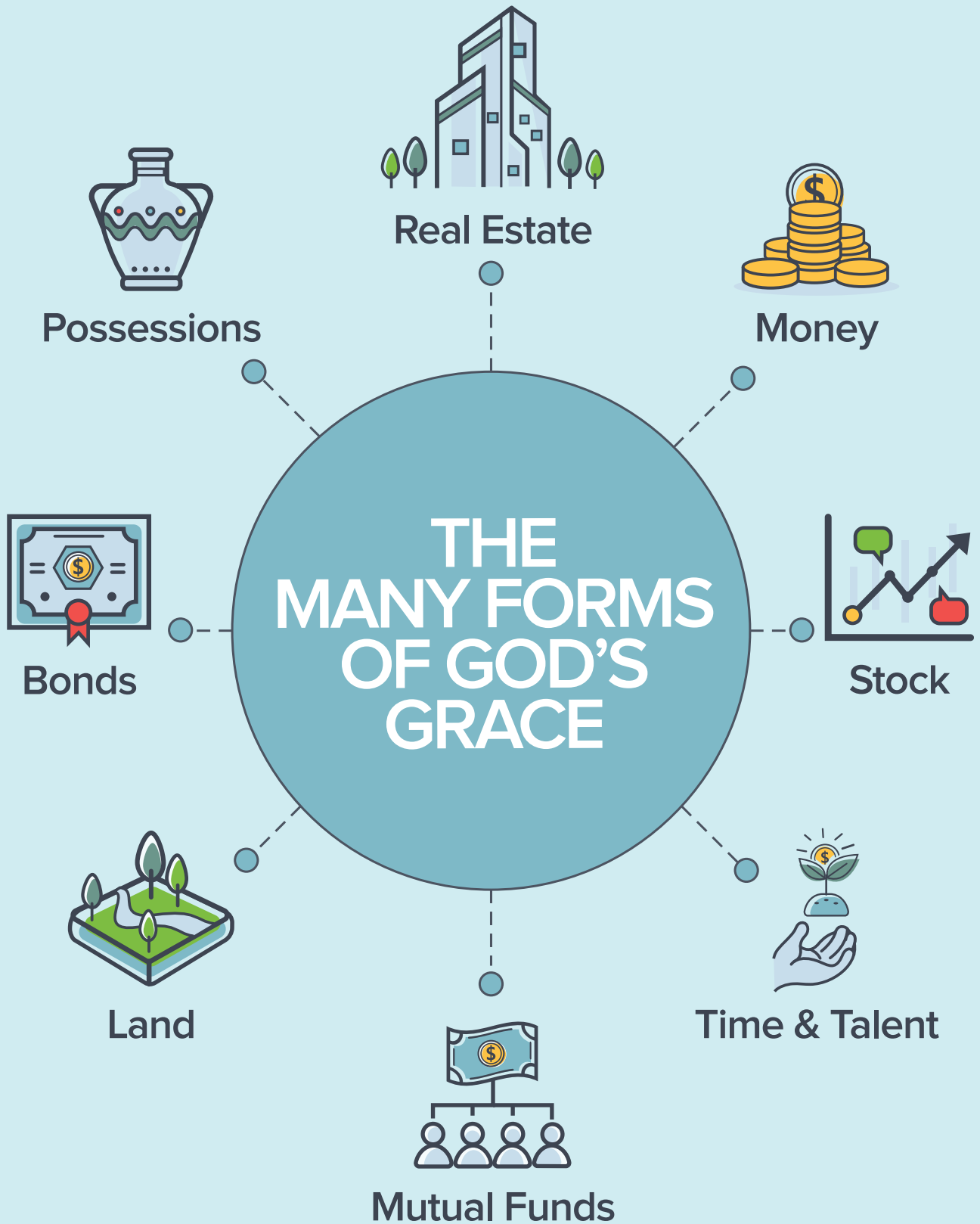
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1700 Cardinal Ln,  
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# Of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh

*Serve one another, each according to the gift he has received,  
as good stewards of the many forms of God's grace. (1 Peter 4:10 EHV)*

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

2020 will likely be labeled anything but a banner year. Volatility in the markets, shutdowns, and social distancing are all taking their toll on us, ushering in a huge change in how we live. Will we ever recover? Will things ever return to “normal?”

As the magi made their way to worship the One whose star had appeared in the East, they likely faced many challenges to their goal as well. The distance they traveled was great and wrought with hazards. There was likely some uncertainty as to the purpose and goal of their quest. Who knows how often they debated whether or not they were doing “the right thing.” Then there were the obviously false and diabolical plans of Herod saying he wanted to worship the young child, yet all the while plotted to kill the child instead. Thankfully, there came a divine warning to the magi to disobey the civil authority and hide the location of the child.

Are we facing various dangers in our time? Is there uncertainty in what we are facing? **This should not deter us from our goal of honoring the King.**

Yet as uncertain as things are in our day, especially as Christmas and a new year draws near, it is still good and right for us to make every effort to effectively plan for the support of Gospel ministry with our gifts. And in view of our own mortality, perhaps we should dig into some long-term estate planning and, in the process, firm up our charitable plans as well.

How we give is important, too. It is certain that any cash gift to your church or its missions through the ELS would be appreciated. Our year-end synod envelopes, handed out at each of our churches, should remind us that we have made a commitment to support the preaching and teaching ministries of our Evangelical Lutheran Synod. What a blessing they are as thousands at home and abroad are blessed through our work together.

Speaking of teaching ministries, this year we are blessed to be able to support Christian Education with every dollar that

the synod receives above the base budget of \$760,000. Last year, we were able to add over \$80,000 to help pay for religion studies staff at Bethany. What a joy!

But cash is not the only way to give. You can make gifts of other property of value as well. Gold and silver are still a good means of helping Gospel ministry. Or what about that old life insurance policy (with cash values, etc.)? Would that make a good gift? Perhaps an even better option is to gift appreciated securities or shares in mutual funds. Gifts of farm commodities also work for ministry support. Perhaps you would like to set up a deferred gift by funding a trust with the sale of a piece of land, rental property, or a vacation home. Depreciated farm equipment with significant value is ideal for funding a charitable trust from which to receive income. All these can make a good way to set up your gift. The icing on the cake of setting up a gift in this way may well be sizable tax savings as well as a good income stream.

**Are any of these gifting options for you?** Just call the Estate Planning office at 507-469-9656 or 507-344-7311 or send an email to [danbasel@blc.edu](mailto:danbasel@blc.edu) and he'll give you information that will help you make an efficient and generous plan to give in your support of Gospel ministry.

What a blessing to see how our Lord works through you and me to help spread the Gospel through missions and our schools, including our seminary. Even as the magi's gifts helped the Holy Family flee Herod to safety, your gift can help bring the Gospel to a lost and dying world. Part of your joy this holiday season is knowing that your gift will help make a difference in the missions or ministries that are dear to you.

In the end, passing on a portion of the bounty our Lord has given us to support Gospel ministry is a true act of worship to our earthborn King. May our gifts and praise ever be to the glory of God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

# God at Work: Divine Care Through Many Callings

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## Pastor

*"A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated ...every one by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another."*

**Martin Luther - "An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility"**



A child asked, "What's it like being a pastor?"

"Well," the pastor answered, "you get to be with people on the worst days of their lives and on the best days of their lives."

Their worst days:

- Pastor often shows up in the emergency room while the patient is in back and the family sits in the waiting room trying to pray.
- He may be upstairs in the crowded little hospital room as a family's loved one slips away.
- Pastor is often the one who hears that a person's life is crumbling because their spouse just told them they want a divorce.
- His presence may be requested when parents tell their children about a diagnosis of cancer.

These are just some of the causes of our worst days. Other times, our worst days are "self-inflicted":

- "Pastor, will you help me tell my parents that I'm pregnant and probably won't be graduating on time?"
- "Pastor, I need to tell my spouse about my affair. Can you help us through this?"
- "Pastor, what I did was horrible, reprehensible. I hate myself. Surely God hates me too..."

With the vocation of pastor, God ensures that His people aren't alone on their worst days and in their worst times. Pastor shares their grief and their burden. The vocation of pastor also places an "under-shepherd" with God's sheep on some of their happiest and best days!

- "Pastor, will you please marry us?"
- "Would you baptize her on the Sunday after we come home from the hospital?"
- "Wow! I didn't think I could answer all those confirmation questions."

Birthday and graduation parties, promotion and retirement ceremonies, wedding anniversaries... Pastor helps mark many of life's milestones with God's people, often with prayer, helping them find words of thanks for His blessings.

The vocation of pastor has him with God's people on some of their best and happiest days and on some of their lowest and worst. No matter what kind of day it is, God places pastor there with His Word:

- Words of thanks and praise for those happy milestones—another year of life, five decades of marriage: "O Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations" (Psalm 90:1).

- Words of holy Baptism as a child is named His "*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*" (Matthew 28:19).
- Words of blessing as a young man and woman pledge to be a husband and wife because "*for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall be one flesh*" (Genesis 2:24).

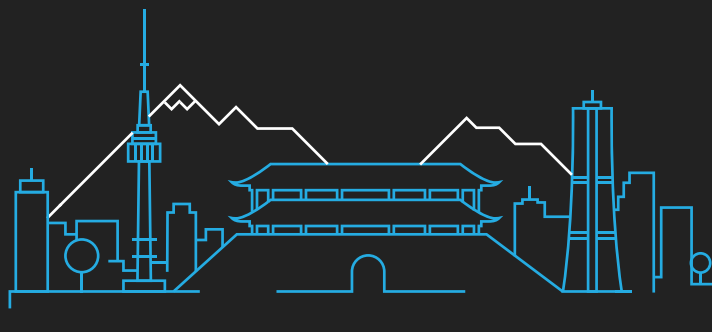
The vocation of pastor places a shepherd with God's people as He leads them to and through the green pastures and still waters of His Word. Faith comes from hearing, the seed that sprouts up to eternal life is the Word of God, and just as the rain and snow come down to water the earth, so too God's Word is what waters the soul thirsting for righteousness.

God's Word gives voice to the joy and happiness of His people and the pastor leads them in that. His Word is also our balm in sorrow, our refuge and strength even when the mountains are moved into the heart of the sea.

- Words of assurance when the lives of God's people seem to crumble all around them because Jesus Himself promises "*in this world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33).
- Words of prayer and heavenly concern as the sick are brought to Him, saying, "*Lord, he whom You love is ill*" (John 11:3).
- Words of forgiveness when the guilty stand before Him and hear Him say, "*God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through Him*" (John 3:17).
- Words of life when one of God's people close their eyes in death so that this person and those around can hear Christ proclaim, "*I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live*" (John 11:25).

Most of our days are neither our "worst" nor our "best." Much could be said of those days while your pastor serves you on these days, too, preparing sermons, teaching confirmation and Bible classes, visiting, etc. Still, with the vocation of pastor, God ensures that His people hear His Word on their best and worst days because Peter's rhetorical question still stands: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life*" (John 6:68).

*"Hear us, cheer us By Thy teaching;  
Let our preaching and our labor  
Praise Thee God and bless our neighbor."  
ELH 27; v.3*



## A Lutheran Mission in Seoul Amongst Megachurches

by **REV. THOMAS HEYN**, ELS Board for World Outreach Administrator  
(608) 335-4612 | [theyn@blc.edu](mailto:theyn@blc.edu)



REV. **YOUNG HA KIM**



REV. **JAE WOONG KIM**



REV. **SAMUEL CHOI**

When you arrive in **Seoul, South Korea**, you see a very modern city that looks like any major city in the United States. The Seoul Capital Area accounts for half of South Korea's 51 million inhabitants while the city of Seoul itself has a population of ten million. As you travel around the city, you see modern skyscrapers, a clean and efficient transit system, and a businesslike atmosphere. There is something else that stands out—crosses—in the commercial centers as well as residential areas. Some are attached to steeples while others are attached to the outside of buildings to identify them as Christian churches. You often see neon crosses lighting up the night skyline.

More than half of the population declare themselves unaffiliated with any organized religion, and, unfortunately, this percentage is growing. About 27% to 28% of South Koreans are Christians. Of the 13.5 million Christians, two-thirds are Protestants, mostly Presbyterian (including Pentecostal Presbyterians). Unlike other East Asian countries, in the 18th century, the monarchy opened the country to Westernization and many were brought to Christianity. Today, the largest church in the world is located in Seoul—Yoido Full Gospel Church, a Pentecostal church with 480,000 members and an average weekly attendance of 200,000. The church proclaims a message about salvation of the soul. In addition, however, it also teaches unbiblical promises of physical health and financial

prosperity, a common message in many Korean churches. So in a country that is relatively “churched” and has more than a few megachurches, how did the ELS come to start a mission there? It started with an energetic non-Lutheran pastor, **Rev. Young Ha Kim**. He was working with a Korean Baptist congregation in the Chicago area and was looking for a church to rent. He found a church that looked like a good setting and asked Pastor Dennis Kleist if he could rent the church on Sunday afternoons. The congregation said it could be used rent-free if Rev. Kim agreed to teach only what that congregation also taught. So he agreed to take a class on the basic teachings of that church, a WELS church. For the first time, Rev. Kim learned about the law and gospel message proclaimed in the Lutheran church. When he shared it with his Baptist congregation, they said they did not want him to teach those things. About a year later, he came to Pastor Kleist and said he wanted to study to be a Lutheran pastor. He attended and graduated from Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary and became a pastor in the ELS.

After starting a mission to Koreans in Irvine, California, he eventually returned to Seoul and the mission in Seoul was adopted by the ELS in 2006. A building was rented and remodeled for use as a church sanctuary, fellowship hall, offices, and classrooms. One outreach approach, still being used today, was to recruit students to study English and then study

in the U.S. for a year at a Lutheran elementary or high school. Dozens, if not hundreds, of students came, and continue to come, to the U.S. for studies at Lutheran schools.

A theological studies institute was also created at Seoul Lutheran for those who wanted more study in Lutheran theology and to seek future pastors for this new Lutheran church body in Korea.

Rev. Young Ha Kim retired in January of this year. Since early 2019, **Rev. Samuel Choi** has been the pastor of Seoul Lutheran Church. It currently has about 80 to 90 members. This past year, five new families were added. Weekday mornings, they have devotions from 6:00–6:30 am via Zoom. English services are conducted on Sunday mornings, often attended by American service personnel as well as others.

The leaders of Seoul Lutheran Church look for mission opportunities to spread the Gospel in Korea. A congregation was started about three years ago in Anyang, about 45 minutes away. It is served by **Rev. Jae Woong Kim**, a former elder of Seoul Lutheran Church and now an ordained pastor.

Next fall, they hope to begin a major new outreach effort when a Korean graduate of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary begins work in another part of Seoul. We look forward to watching how the Lord blesses that outreach effort.

We are thankful for all the support given to this field by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and its members. Please continue with your prayers and gifts to help this church. More information can be found at: <https://els.org/our-work-together/world-outreach/> and <https://els.org/donate/>.

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# Martin Luther's Busy Year

## The Freedom of a Christian

The four treatises written by Martin Luther in 1520

have been regarded as important formulations of the teachings of the Lutheran Reformation. The last one in this series, *The Freedom of a Christian*, was published late in November 1520. Book and essay titles do not always give a clear indication of the subject matter. From the title, it would be easy to expect this treatise to deal with freedom of religion as granted by a government, or even that it was a proclamation of freedom from the Roman church. But that would be to miss the point of Luther's treatise.

# 1520



Luther scholar **Martin Brecht** was correct when he said of Luther's treatise, "one should not lose sight of the fact that it speaks strictly of the Christian freedom that results from justification." A careful reading of this treatise reveals that it is in fact about the core teaching of the Christian faith—God's justification of the sinner.

At the outset, Luther announces that his topic is the Christian faith: "Many people have considered Christian faith an easy thing, and not a few have given it a place among the virtues [works]. They do this because they have not experienced it and have never tasted the great strength there is in faith" (343). So the topic is the Christian faith. But how he is going to approach the topic is at first glance rather odd:

To make the way smoother for the unlearned—for only them do I serve—I shall set down the following two propositions concerning the freedom and the bondage of the spirit:

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all (344).

This is a paradox. A paradox is the placement of two seemingly contradictory statements side by side to express a single truth. St. Paul presents the paradox in this way: “Though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

To show how the two elements of the paradox fit together, Luther begins with an obvious truth about humankind: “Man has a twofold nature, a spiritual and a bodily one. According to the spiritual nature, which men refer to as the soul, he is called a spiritual, inner, or new man. According to the bodily nature, which men refer to as flesh, he is called a carnal, outward, or old man” (344).

The first question is “How does one become ‘a righteous, free, and pious Christian, that is, a spiritual, new, and inner man?’” (345). This condition is spiritual and therefore cannot be accomplished by any physical act like fasting, abstaining from some foods, or praying. Luther argues that the only thing that can accomplish Christian righteousness and freedom is “the most holy word of God, the gospel of Christ, as Jesus himself says ‘If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed’” (John 8:36). In sum, Luther says, “Since faith alone justifies, it is clear that the inner man cannot be justified, freed, or saved by any outer [physical] work” (347).

To grasp what this justification is, Luther offers an illustration that has been called “the great exchange” and is based on the marriage relationship described in Ephesians 5: “Faith unites the soul with Christ, as a bride is united with her bridegroom.” Christ and the soul become one flesh, which is “indeed the most perfect of all marriages.” In human marriage, everything that belongs to the bride or the groom becomes the property of both in common—the good as well as the evil. Thus “the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own.” And what does each of them own? “Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation.” So all of my sin and death becomes Christ’s, and His perfection becomes mine. This is the freedom Christians have through faith— not by their own work but by Christ’s loving grace. Since Christ gives Himself fully to his bride, the Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. From this, Luther concludes “a Christian is free from all things and over all things so that he needs no works to make him righteous and save him” (351-357).

How about the “outer man,” who is “a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” The Christian remains in the world. “In this life he must control his own body and have dealings with men. Here the works begin,” Luther writes (358).

Luther’s discussion of the “outer man” who is a dutiful servant to all becomes chiefly a discussion of good works, not unlike the *Treatise on Good Works*, which was the subject of an earlier article in this series. Repeatedly, Luther warns that while God commands good works, we must not think that they justify anyone; good works “reduce the body to subjection and purify it of its evil lusts,” but not perfectly in this life. As important as good works are, Luther advises: “Let him who wishes to do good works begin not with the doing of works, but with the believing which makes the person good, for nothing makes a man good except faith,” that is, believing God’s gracious promise (359-361).

The first point of Luther’s discussion of the good works of the outer man, or what the law has to say to him, is that it shows him his sin. Those works are never done perfectly and are the witness that the flesh remains sinful and that no one can justify himself.

Luther then turns himself toward one’s neighbor: “Lastly we shall also speak of the things which he does toward the neighbor” (364). The Christian, who has been taught by the law that he is an unworthy and condemned man, turns to the riches that God has given him in righteousness and salvation and says, “I need nothing except faith which believes that this is true. Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully, with all my heart, and with an eager will do all things which I know are pleasing and acceptable to such a Father who has overwhelmed me with his inestimable riches? I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor just as Christ offered himself to me” (367).

After citing examples of love for the neighbor from Scripture, Luther judges, “Any work that is not done solely for the purpose of keeping the body under control or of serving one’s neighbor, as long as he asks nothing contrary to God, is not good or Christian” (370).

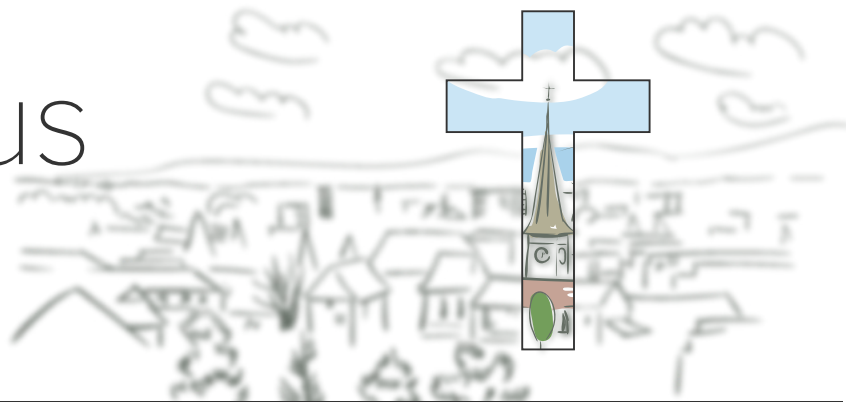
Luther’s “Amen” comes with a simple conclusion: “A Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love” (371).

**Note:** *The Freedom of a Christian* is found in *Luther’s Works*, American edition, Vol. 31, 334–377) Numbers in parentheses are page numbers in this edition. The quotation from Martin Brecht is found in vol. I of his three-volume work, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation 1483-1521*, 409, Fortress Press, 1985.

# Cross Focus

Focusing on the world around us through the lens of the cross.

by **REV. PAUL FRIES**, Communications Director  
**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD**, Mankato, Minn.



## AND SO WE SPEAK

We live in very strange times. Actions and behaviors that were only a few years ago considered to be wrong by the majority are now defended as normal. Scientific studies are cited showing why what once was wrong now can be considered not only acceptable, but good. This is not a new phenomenon, but it has been happening for quite a few years as our society continues a slow but steadily increasing slide into moral decay.

From time to time, a particular sin is held up to the public eye, repackaged as acceptable with emotional slogans, and sold to society as something updated or new. The dangers are hidden or downplayed, and the sin becomes normalized. When this happens, the Christian Church must respond. Some have responded by embracing the sin, dismissing God's Word and endangering the souls of their members. Churches that continue following God's Word teach their members why this sin is still a sin. They publicly acknowledge what God's Word teaches and why they will continue to follow that Word.

But then things get personal. We all probably know someone who has had an abortion, whether we realize it or not. We all probably know a friend or family member who is gay or transgender. We all know couples who have had sex outside of marriage. We all know couples who have divorced without a biblical reason. We all know someone who has let greed become the most important thing in their lives. We all know someone who unapologetically admits to being racist. The list of sins and those who commit them is endless. And we have to include ourselves in those lists. None of us are innocent. It is very easy to see the sins of others, to look at them and point out their faults. But we are reminded that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." So what do we do? How can we expect someone to listen to us about a sin they are committing when we ourselves are guilty of the same or worse sins?

We start with ourselves, recognizing that being a Christian does not make us better than someone else. But it does make us different. We are different because we have been crushed by God's Law. The sins we embraced have collapsed on us, trapping us in the rubble of our own sinful actions and thoughts. And

we are different because our Savior pulled us from this desperate situation and, by God's grace, saved us. We are not by nature better than others, but we are different. We know the sins being held up as good and normal will eventually crush the person holding them, that they too need a Savior. And so we speak to them about their sins out of love and concern. *If a person is caught in some trespass, you who are spiritual should restore such a person in a spirit of humility, carefully watching yourself so that you are not also tempted* (Galatians 6:1-2 EHV).

When we shine the light of God's Word on the darkness of sin, the first reaction is likely very negative. Imagine being sound asleep in a dark room and a light is suddenly switched on and a voice, no matter how gentle, tells us to "wake up." We are not too pleased at being awakened. When we are comfortable sleeping in our sins, we also are not too pleased when God's Word wakes us and tells us we are wrong. We may think, "Why are you picking on me? Look at all the other sins in the world—and you are condemning mine?"

It is true that we often are seen, both personally and as a Church, as hypocritical. And it is also true that we often are hypocrites. But it is that imperfect, sinful, hypocritical vessel that God has chosen to bring His Word to others. We tell others of their sins because we know the punishment for those sins—the punishment we ourselves deserve but was suffered by our Savior instead. We know the relief of having the crushing weight of sin being lifted from us and we want everyone to know that relief—knowing the joy of having faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ. *Just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please people but God, who examines our hearts* (1 Thessalonians 2:4 EHV).

When a particular sin is held up publicly as normal or good, we have the responsibility to publicly shine the light of God's Word on that sin. The eternal life of someone else may depend on it.

# MEMORIALS & HONORS

07/01/2019 - 06/30/2020

## In Memory of:

### Isabelle Arneson

Rev. Daniel and Lisa Basel - Mankato, MN  
Silas and Mary Born - Mankato, MN

### Duane H. Anderson

Our Savior's Ladies Aid - Princeton, MN

### Harmon Anderson

Laufey G. Anderson - Johnstown, CO

### Marie Basel

Rev. Daniel and Lisa Basel - Mankato, MN

### Myrna Borgwardt

Tom and Judie Conzelmann - Frankenmuth, MI

### Eileen Brekken

Western Koshkonong Ladies Aid - Cottage Grove, WI

### Vivian and Don Brudvig

Rev. Daniel and Lisa Basel - Mankato, MN

### Walt Bunte Elgin

Faith - Medford, OR

### Rev. Walther & Mildred Gullixson

Margaret Gullixson - Buena Park, CA

### Kim Holtz

Silas and Mary Born - Mankato, MN

### Howard M. Hougan

Karen Madson - Minnetonka, MN  
Richard & Kristi Paterson - Cedar Rapids, IA  
Michael and Victoria Butterfield - Palos Heights, IL  
Andrew Madson - Minnetonka, MN  
Erik and Abigail Debruzzi - Faribault, MN  
Phil and Carrie Holz - Faribault, MN  
Christina Madson & Matthew Lynner - Minneapolis, MN  
Jeremy P. Butterfield - Chicago, IL  
Matthew C. Butterfield - Frankfort, IL  
Joshua and Laura Mears - Lakeville, MN  
Jonathan and Martha Mielke - Faribault, MN

### Herta Jaster

Eldon and LuAnn Sting - North Mankato, MN

### Richard Jones

Elaine M. Jones - Lakeland, FL

### Eugen Kauffeld

Rev. John and Joslyn Moldstad - Mankato, MN

### Cleo Kjenslee

Ronald and Gail Levorson - Albert Lea, MN

### Arnold & Leona Kuster

Bob and Ruthann Mickelson - Madison, WI

### Barton Lande

Duane L. Lande - Lake Park, MN

### LaVonne Lande

Duane L. Lande - Lake Park, MN

### Elwood Lande

Duane L. Lande - Lake Park, MN

### Rev. Richard Mackain

Jean MacKain - Milwaukee, WI

### Clarice Madson

Ann Hengel and Tim Larson - Minneapolis, MN  
Rev. Daniel and Lisa Basel - Mankato, MN  
Christopher and Ruth Faye - Mankato, MN

### Lyle McCarty

Heritage Ladies Aid - Apple Valley, MN

### Marilyn Olmanson

Rev. Daniel and Lisa Basel - Mankato, MN

### Beverly Olsin

Our Savior's Ladies Aid - Princeton, MN

### Fritz & Anita Perlwitz

Allison Perlwitz - Walford, IA

### Irene Peterson

Zion Lutheran Ladies Aid - Tracy, MN

### Louise Rodning

Harold Rodning - Nicollet, MN  
Norseland Ladies Aid - Norseland, MN  
Rev. Daniel and Lisa Basel - Mankato, MN

### Marilyn Rodning

Norseland Ladies Aid - Norseland, MN

### Dorothy Ruddy

Rev. Daniel and Lisa Basel - Mankato, MN

### Sharon Sander

Rock Dell Ladies Aid - Belview, MN

### John K. Schmidt

Rebecca Cook - Apple Valley, MN

### Sandra Schneidervin

Heritage Ladies Aid - Apple Valley, MN

### Doris Sehloff

Silas and Mary Born - Mankato, MN

### Edwin Sell

Lois Sell - Juneau, WI

### Jerry Stenzel

Eldon and LuAnn Sting - North Mankato, MN

### Irene Stock

Ralph and Margaret Slaker - Maple Grove, MN  
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### Linda Teigen

Silas and Mary Born - Mankato, MN

### Harold Theiste

Arlene Theiste - Plymouth, MN

### Emma Turek

Our Savior's Ladies Aid - Princeton, MN

### Bill Wehrenberg

Eunice M. Wehrenberg

## In Honor of:

### Lorraine Born

Silas and Mary Born - Mankato, MN

### Marv & Pat Meyer

Silas and Mary Born - Mankato, MN

## Retirements

### REV. CHARLES KEELER

from Resurrection / Winter Haven, Fla.

### REV. KENNETH MELLON

from Trinity Lutheran / West Bend, Wisc.

### REV. DALE JAECH

from Our Savior / Bishop, Calif.

### REV. RON PEDERSON

from King of Grace / Waukon, Iowa

## New Calls Accepted

### REV. KURTIS FREIMUTH

to Peace Lutheran Church / Deshler, Ohio

### REV. LEE KUHNS

to Peace Lutheran Church / Kissimmee, Fla.

### REV. ANDREW BURMEISTER

to Our Savior Lutheran Church / Bishop, Calif.

### REV. MATTHEW BEHMER

as missionary to WELS One Latin America Team

### REV. DANIEL HARTWIG

to Trinity Lutheran Church / West Bend, Wisc.

## Resignation

### REV. MATTHEW BROOKS

from Pilgrim Lutheran Church / Waterloo, Iowa  
& Faith Lutheran Church / Parkersburg, Iowa

MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS:

## Saved By Grace Lutheran Church Gresham, Oregon

by **REV. TIM BARTELS**, Contributing Writer



During the late 1980s, Lutheranism was in disarray in Gresham, Oregon. That led a few concerned Lutherans to explore starting a mission. They contacted the Board for Home Missions, as it was known at that time, to see if it would back such an effort.

Some charter members of the congregation liked to tell the following story about that inquiry. The mission board told the congregation that if they had 50 interested people, they would back their desire to start up a mission. The Sunday the Home Mission Board representatives came to meet with the congregation, 50 minus 1 were in attendance. The one who could not make it was sick that Sunday morning...so the board gave the congregation the backing it needed.

Over the years, the members of Saved By Grace have demonstrated a genuine concern for God's Word as well as an appreciation for the confession of the ELS and its backing while it was a mission congregation. Illustrative of that is the fact that one-third or more of our Sunday morning attendees travel an average of 45 minutes for Sunday services.

Saved By Grace is located in a region of the United States that has fully embraced social norms contrary to Scripture and one of the lowest church attendance rates in the nation. It is, therefore, only by God's grace that Saved By Grace continues to provide what so many in our community need. Our prayer, then, is that God use the relatively small number of us who live throughout the greater Portland area to connect many others with Jesus and that God bless us as we gather around Word and Sacrament in the future as He has in the past.

To learn more about Saved By Grace, please visit:  
[savedbygracelutheranchurch.org](http://savedbygracelutheranchurch.org)