



# LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

The Bible's 'Prayer Book'

## A walk through the Psalms

page 14

CURRENT EVENTS

**Living in and  
Understanding  
our "Babylon"**

page 5

75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF "THE SEM"

**The Good Shepherd  
Sends Shepherds**

page 8

YOUNG BRANCHES

**Life Without End**

page 11

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

# How Vapor Makes Plans

## Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

We know what happens when a glass of hot water is placed outside on an icy morning. For a time, vapor rises when the heat meets the cold. Then it quickly disappears. That rising vapor is used by the writer of James to have us reflect on the way we go about our lives in making plans. Planning for the new year – a year we pray will not repeat the pandemic challenges of 2020 – needs always to consider what James wrote by inspiration of God the Holy Spirit: Now listen, you who say, *“Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that”* (James 4:13-15).

Moses, the author of Psalm 90, depicts the average lifespan as seventy or eighty years (verse 10). That is roughly 613,000 hours, a good long period from our perspective. Many today even make it into the nineties. But from God’s perch, a thousand years are similar to a day that has just elapsed, or “like a watch in the night” (Psalm 90:4).

Both James and Moses remind us of a very basic fact never to be overlooked in planning: Since God is the only one who is not bound by time and since He holds in His hands our span of life, surely we ought every day to take His will into consideration as we try to map out our futures. We are to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will do this or that.”

To do otherwise is, as James goes on to say, foolish boasting. Whether realized or not, “planning” apart from God’s will is evil bragging (James 4:16). I once visited with a man who owned several banks and a number of businesses. It was obvious he wanted to impress me with how wisely he had planned

his ventures, and now he was doing even more expansion. When I interjected, “I guess the Lord has really blessed you,” I could sense he felt momentarily uneasy. He did not speak at all of his accomplishments as gifts from God. He replied, “Well, I don’t mean to be ‘brag-tocious’ but...” Then he quickly launched into more of his lucrative plans.

Could we also be guilty of the sin of boasting in a less obvious way? Our sinful mind that we carry with us daily as unwanted baggage tempts us to leave God out of the picture. This is not just on the big issue of how to get to heaven. Satan and our evil nature deceitfully strive to have us leave God out of the picture in planning even routine earthly activities.

Thank God, He is the forgiver of all sins – including this type of boasting. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9). Christ has come, has died, and has risen again! That forgiven status we possess because of His abounding mercy empowers us to want to adjust our planning. “Thy will be done” is a petition we wish to have upon our lips and embedded in our hearts 24-7. May God bless our planning for 2021 amidst the vapor of our earthly lives. Not an ethereal, but a concrete, eternal, and blessed existence is reserved in heaven for each soul grasping the redeeming grace of our Lord Jesus!



The soul of ELS President  
**John A. Moldstad**  
was called by our Lord to  
the Church Triumphant  
**Friday, January 29th, 2021**  
His body awaits its glorious resurrection.

*Blessed be his memory among us.*

**4** CURRENT EVENTS SERIES: CROSS FOCUS  
**He Chose You**  
REV. PAUL FRIES

**5** CURRENT EVENTS: CONVENTION EXCERPT  
**Living in and Understanding Our “Babylon”**  
REV. DAVID THOMPSON

**6** THE 1521 SERIES  
**Excommunication -Decet Romanum Pontificem**  
PROF. EMERITUS, ERLING T. TEIGEN

**8** 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY: BLTS  
**The Good Shepherd Sends Shepherds**  
REV. GAYLIN SCHMELING

**10** YOUNG BRANCHES:  
**You Are Young Branches**  
REV. KYLE MADSON

**11** YOUNG BRANCHES  
**Life Without End**  
REV. LUKE ULRICH

**12** EDITOR’S DEVOTIONAL SERIES  
**Who am I from?**  
REV. KYLE MADSON

**14** THE BIBLE’S PRAYER BOOK:  
**A Walk Through the Psalms**  
REV. TONY PITTENGER

**20** MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS  
**Resurrection Lutheran Church,  
Winter Haven, Florida**  
REV. CHARLES KEELER

**DEPARTMENTS:**

- 2** From the President
- 17** Pastor, I Have a Question
- 18** Synod News: Seminary Memorials / Honors 2019-20



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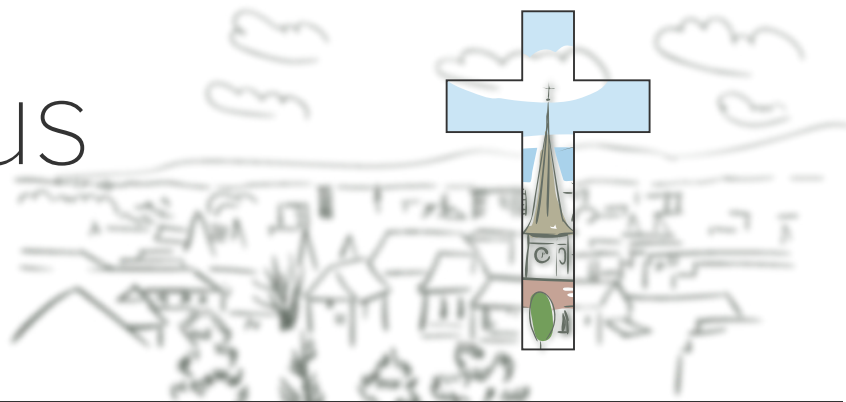
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# Cross Focus

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

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



## HE CHOSE YOU

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He did this when he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ. He did this in accordance with the good purpose of his will, and for the praise of his glorious grace, which he has graciously given us in the one he loves.* (Ephesians 1:3-6 EHV)

Looking at our world these days, we have to stop and wonder how close we are to Jesus' return. A review of the news headlines from the past year shows that we live in a world not only stained by sin, but seemingly ruled by it. Brutal violence against our neighbors everywhere we look. God's Word mocked, belittled, and even suppressed. Politics has become almost a blood sport throughout the world. There is violence in our cities, racial tensions, crime everywhere. It's an almost unending list of problems. How do we talk about these things? What do we say to each other when we do talk about these things?

We can easily say to every believer in Christ: "God has chosen you. He has paid for your forgiveness and salvation and guaranteed it. And all for His glory."

God not only knew you, but chose you before the foundation of the world. Before the universe was formed, while the earth was still formless and void, before He spoke into existence all things, before the Fall into Sin, before Abraham, before Moses, before David, before the Apostles, before Luther, before time even existed—God chose *you* as His adopted son through Jesus Christ.

What amazing news that is! God chose you and adopted you! And with that adoption as His son comes the inheritance—eternal life in His kingdom. As we see signs of our world falling apart around us, God gives us this comfort in His Word. We don't decide to follow God. You didn't choose Him. He chose you through Christ.

Thank God that He didn't leave it up to us to make a decision for Christ, or we would all be doomed. We know that, as we're told later in Ephesians, it's only by God's grace through faith in Christ that we are saved. You didn't choose Him. He chose you. But not because of you, not because of who you are or what you've done.

God points us not to ourselves, but back to His Word. And that Word gives us an absolute guarantee of forgiveness and salvation that is sealed with the blood of Christ. When forgiveness and faith are poured over us in baptism, when we hear God's Word and study it, when we are given Christ's body and blood in the sacrament, when the words of the absolution are spoken—that promise and guarantee is repeated over and over again to us. God wants there to be no doubt in your mind that your forgiveness and salvation have been purchased by Christ and given to you through Him by His grace through faith.

As we continue to be assaulted by the news in our world, as our world grows colder and more hostile to God's truth, we look in faith to God's promises—promises already fulfilled and promises of future fulfillment. We look to God, who chose us before the foundation of the world, the One who became man and lived a perfect life in our place, who took all of our sins on Himself, who died to pay our debt. And who rose again to guarantee our eternal life. You are His adopted son and heaven is yours!

Seek the Peace of the Land:   

# Living in and Understanding Our “Babylon”

Conclusion Excerpt  
2004 Evangelical Lutheran Synod Convention Essay

by **REV. DAVID THOMPSON**, Contributing Writer  
**ST. TIMOTHY LUTHERAN CHURCH**, Lombard, Illinois

What will happen to America? Will there be peace and prosperity in the land, or will it go the way of all Babylon? We do not know, but we do care. If it prospers, it will likely be because there are at least some who not only honor and pray for the State authorities, but also participate in the rule of the land out of love for their neighbor and Lutheran theology. After all, this is to be a “government of the people, by the people and for the people.” B.W. Teigen wrote:

*While Luther recognized that a ruler or judge, to be an effective one, need not be a Christian (LW 45, 99. 127), he nevertheless strongly urges that Christians participate in government, and he believes that their participation will be a blessing to the land. In a general way he says ... that it would be fine and fitting if all princes were good true Christians. For the sword and authority, as a particular service of God, belong more appropriately to Christians than to any other men on earth. ... Luther ... exclaims: “Would to God that they (i.e., the worldly rulers) were all Christians or that no one would be a prince unless he were a Christian! Things would be better than they are now and the Turk would not be so powerful” (LW 46, 166).*

Of course, Luther knew this could never be. Nevertheless, in America, Christians – especially confessional Lutherans – could be much more involved in the political process. And they would be, according to Luther, “a blessing to the land.” Christians need to stay informed and understand the times (1 Chronicles 12:32). They can let their views be made known to those in public office (write, call, visit, rally). Many more should run for public office. They can participate in organizations that promote the proper role of the State, the Home, civil righteousness, and compassion for others. They must love their fellow man, even when the State wants to stifle them. Perhaps above all, they must make sure the education of their children is not opposed to their confession of faith and, in the case of Lutheran and home schools, held accountable to Lutheran theology in all that it teaches. Make sure children – the next generation – are immersed in Lutheran theology.

If, however, temporal blessings diminish, if the State becomes more and more of a Babylon, if government-sponsored tolerance and pantheism grow, if terrorism increases, if another world war breaks out, if true Christianity is declared illegal, and if confessional Lutherans are told to deny Christ or die, there still remains the real and ultimate prosperity for which Christians live: “‘I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11). That future plan of prosperity for the Church will be in a “kingdom not of this world.” That ultimate prosperity was purchased by the “holy, precious blood,” and the “innocent suffering and death” of the One who “made every nation of men...and determined the times set for them” (Acts 17:26). It is He who has been guiding the history of the world all along. And when that kingdom comes, “our present sufferings” will not be “worth comparing with the glory” – the real and ultimate prosperity – “that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). This life will not even have been a drop in the bucket. In the meantime, the life of the Lutheran must be consumed with the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Word and Sacrament, for it is that Gospel that enables him to endure and remain within the Church until it is finally glorified. We are “*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 of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 8:38-39). In the words of Luther:

***Still must they leave God's Word it might,  
For which no thanks they merit;  
Still is He with us in the fight,  
With His good gifts and Spirit.  
And should they, in the strife,  
Take kindred, goods, and life,  
We freely let them go,  
They profit not the foe;  
With us remains the Kingdom.***

To God Alone Be the Glory!



# Dr. Martin Luther in

# 1521

## Excommunication — *Decet Romanum Pontificem*

by **REV. ERLING TEIGEN**, Professor Emeritus  
**BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE**, Contributing Writer

The challenges facing Martin Luther in 1521 were no less momentous than those of 1520. In June 1520, Pope Leo X had issued the decree *Exsurge Domine* threatening Luther with excommunication. The official copy of the decree did not arrive in Wittenberg until October 10, and within sixty days Luther was to recant his writings or be excommunicated. When the deadline expired on December 10, the Wittenberg students lit a fire on the banks of the Elb River to burn papal books since *Exsurge Domine* had urged the burning of Luther's books. The event was arranged by Philipp Melanchthon, and Luther joined in the fun by throwing a printed copy of *Exsurge Domine* into the fire.

On January 3, 1521, the final decree of excommunication was issued and sent to Worms (pronounced Vorms), where the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V was holding a four-month imperial diet or parliament to conduct the affairs of the empire. The decree arrived there on February 10, and thus began a harrowing few months for the Wittenberg professor. On March 6, the emperor summoned Luther to Worms for a hearing, which was held on April 17 and 18. After deliberation, the emperor issued his own decree, the Edict of Worms, placing Luther under the ban, not only of the church but the empire. However, Luther's prince, Elector Frederick the Wise, had arranged safe passage so Luther could return to Wittenberg, but had Luther abducted and safely hidden away in his Wartburg castle at Eisenach. Those events will be the subject of articles during the coming months.

### Excommunicated

The final decree of excommunication, entitled *Decet Romanum Pontificem*, was issued January 3, 1521. The title is taken from the first three words of the Latin text— "The Roman Pontiff has been appointed..." It is not clear when Luther might have had the decree in hand, but when he threw the bull *Exsurge Domine* in the fire on December 10, he knew that excommunication was inevitable.

By May 1521, Luther was under a twofold condemnation. In *Decet Romanum*, Luther was ecclesiastically condemned by the Roman Church. On May 26, Luther was also banned by the Holy Roman Empire (the German nation) in the Edict of Worms and was thus an outlaw.

*Decet Romanum* opens with these words: “Through the power given him from God, the Roman Pontiff has been appointed to administer spiritual and temporal punishments.” This sentence points to what is at the heart of Luther’s dispute with the papacy—whether the power of the papal office is divinely instituted (established by God) or was a humanly devised office. Of course, there were other issues on which Luther had publicly expressed himself, but those issues were not enough to ignite a heresy trial. But the matter of papal power was more explosive, and for good reason. If Luther was right, the Roman Catholic church was doomed to endless splintering.

The church had undergone a serious upheaval in the 150 years before. In 1309, the papacy had been moved to Avignon (France). When the papacy moved back to Rome, a quarrel developed so that for a while there were dueling popes, one in Rome and one in Avignon, and by 1409 a third pope was elected at Pisa. The issue was resolved at the Council of Constance (1414-18), which also declared that church councils were superior to the papacy (Conciliarism). That was unacceptable to the hierarchy and was reversed by later councils, even as late as 1517.

Thus, in 1521 there was an explosive mixture ready to be ignited. In the Leipzig debate in 1519, the critical issue of papal authority had arisen in Thesis 13, in which Luther rejected Dr. Eck’s statement that the Roman Church was superior to all other churches. In several writings, Luther repeated his rejection of the thesis that the Pope has supreme authority by divine right.

At the beginning of *Exsurge Domine*, the Pope had announced: “In virtue of our pastoral office committed to us by the divine favor...” The decree contained a list penned by John Eck of 41 statements made by Luther which must be recanted. The twenty-fifth was “The Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter, is not the vicar of Christ over all the churches of the entire world...” and the twenty-seventh “It is certain that it is not in the power of the Church or the pope to decide upon the articles of faith...” Most of the other points in the list pertain to other teachings of Luther on good works, indulgences, the nature of repentance, but behind nearly all of them, there is the attack on the teaching of divine authority vested in the pope.

Part II of *Decet Romanum* repeats the list of errors and concludes with the decree that Luther is now considered a heretic. Along with Luther, all others who “have become followers

of Martin’s pernicious and heretical sect and given him openly and publicly their help, counsel, and favor” are condemned—that would include Frederick the Wise, other dukes or princes, most of the Wittenberg faculty, many mayors, councilmen, pastors, and common Christians in the congregations of Saxony and other Lutheran territories. “Of all these,” the decree says, “we decree the sentences of excommunication, of anathema, of our perpetual condemnation and interdict...” “Interdict,” similar to excommunication, banned individuals, groups, even nations from participating in the rites or sacraments of the church.

The decree places the interdict on all locales, states, and territories which tolerate Luther or his adherents and uses some language we are very familiar with today: “We would protect the herd from one infectious animal lest its infection spread to the healthy ones.”

One aspect of *Decet Romanum* which retains special relevance for Lutherans today is seen in paragraph III: “Our purpose is that such men should rightfully be ranked with Martin and other accursed heretics and excommunicates, and that even as they have ranged themselves with the obstinacy in sinning of the said Martin, they shall likewise share his punishments and his name, by bearing with them everywhere the title ‘Lutheran’ and the punishments it incurs.” The pope thus pronounces a curse on the evangelical party with the name “Lutheran,” though Lutherans have come to regard it as a blessed confession. John Eck in the Leipzig debate used “Lutheran” in a derogatory sense and may have contributed it to the papal decree.

Lutherans have at times been accused of “Luther worship.” Some have dropped the name from their church signs, thinking that may be more inviting. Early on, Luther had objections to “Lutheran” as the name of Reformation confessors; he preferred “evangelical.” Later, however, he came to see that the papal decree made “Lutheran” a mark of confession. Even if unintended, the papal decree in effect shifted the focus away from Luther’s person to the biblical doctrine condemned by the pope. Hence, we confess our biblical faith as it is taught by Luther and expressed in the *Augsburg Confession* and the entire *Book of Concord* by identifying ourselves as *Evangelical Lutherans*.

#### **The two papal decrees can be found at:**

<https://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo10/110exdom.htm>  
<https://www.papalencyclicals.net/leo10/110decet.htm>

Luther’s response to the statements of Luther condemned in the decrees are found in the American edition of Luther’s works, volume 32.



# The Good Shepherd Sends Shepherds

75 Years of Blessings

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This year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of  
Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The work of the seminary is aptly pictured in the  
Good Shepherd stained glass window in our chapel.  
The picture first shows that all teaching in the seminary  
is centered in the Good Shepherd who laid down  
His life for our salvation. Through His life and death,  
He redeemed us from the terrible grasp of the old wolf,  
the devil. Then the portrait reminds our students each  
day that they are being prepared to be shepherds under  
the Good Shepherd, feeding the flock on the  
green pastures of Word and Sacrament.





**Norman A. Madson**

From its reorganization in 1918, the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (now the Evangelical Lutheran Synod) was without its own theological seminary for twenty-eight years. It depended on its sister synods for the seminary training of its pastors. First, students were sent to the seminaries of the Missouri Synod as had been done in the early history of the Norwegian Synod, and later also to the seminary of the Wisconsin Synod. During these early years, the hope of establishing its own seminary had been kept alive, but not until 1931 did the convention authorize its president to appoint a committee of three to prepare a plan.

Nevertheless, no real progress was made until the 1942 convention directed the Board of Regents of Bethany Lutheran College to take the necessary steps to make it

possible for the synod's ministerial candidates to have "their last year of training in our own school." The next year's synodical convention stepped up the pace by authorizing the Board of Regents "to establish our own theological seminary as soon as possible."

However, it was wartime—World War II—and the Board of Regents' efforts to gain exemption from the draft for its ministerial candidates ran into difficulties because of the Selective Service guidelines concerning new seminaries. Eventually, however, a change in ruling by the Selective Service Administration removed the last remaining barrier.

In the summer of 1946, the synod convention resolved in the name of the Triune God to adopt a number of resolutions relating to a new seminary. The first of these was: "To establish a full theological seminary course at Bethany Lutheran College, this course to begin in the fall of 1946." On September 24, 1946, a dedicatory service officially opened Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

The first dean of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary was **Norman A. Madson** (1886–1962) of Princeton, Minnesota. Madson was gifted and proficient in the study of homiletics and was known throughout the Synodical Conference for his homiletical expertise. During this time, George O. Lillegard, who had been a missionary in China, served

as a professor of religion and Greek. **Christopher U. Faye** was mainly in charge of the library. Other college professors who taught classes in the seminary included: **Alfred Fremder**, **Martin Galstad**, **Sigurd C. Ylvisaker**, and **Paul Zimmermann**.

This year at our synod convention, we will celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the seminary and thank the Good Shepherd for the wonderful blessings He has given us through this institution. In this school He has prepared shepherds to proclaim His free salvation in its truth and purity. In thanks to the Lord for His blessings given to the seminary and the benefits we have received from it, a seventy-fifth anniversary fund has been established for the support of the seminary and our students. We encourage everyone to consider a gift to this fund.

***"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing."***  
(John 15:5)

How many of you have household chores? Have any of you ever been responsible for picking up sticks in the yard? I had to do this as a chore for my parents; I still find myself doing this in my own yard today. It's not one of my favorites, mainly because it's such a constant need. As those sticks are collected, a pile is made. Eventually those sticks will find their way into a very hot fire.

There's more to this, though. Sticks weren't always sticks. First, they were branches, alive and well. They were producing leaves, maybe even beautiful and tasty fruit, because they were connected to the tree – their food source. Once they are separated from that tree, however, what was a living branch quickly becomes a dead stick – yet another one to be added to the pile and eventually taken away to the fire.

Jesus uses this familiar picture to help you understand Him and His relationship to you! ***"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"*** (John 15:5). Jesus says He is the Tree (Vine), and you are the young branches – branches that are alive in Him. You became a living branch in Him through baptism. Like sap keeps a branch alive by flowing through it, His Word and His Supper are the sap which keeps you alive in Him. Branches only become sticks when they are separated from the Tree, starved of the sap. And we know what happens to sticks. . .

This newsletter is called *Young Branches* because THAT'S YOU! You are branches of Jesus, The Vine. He is the cause of you being a living branch. He is the food source through which you remain a branch and are kept from becoming a lifeless stick. What an incredible gift – grafted as a branch into THE VINE. Each article, advertisement, and illustration in these "Young Branches" pages will be aimed at keeping you connected to and well-fed through The Vine. After all, there is no fire pit for living branches - ***"for those who are in Christ Jesus"*** (Romans 8:1).

Your fellow branch in the Vine,

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

# YOU ARE YOUNG BRANCHES



LIFE

WITHOUT

END...

by **REV. LUKE ULRICH**, Contributing Writer  
**MT. OLIVE LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL**, Mankato, Minn.

### ***“What do you mean there’s more? I got confirmed already...”***

The End?! No. Being confirmed is not the end. It’s actually more like the beginning of your adult Christian life—especially when you consider that your life as a Christian will never come to an end.

Consider high school. Is graduation from high school the end? No way! It’s really just the beginning. From there, you continue on your way as an adult, following your ambitions, hopes, and dreams. Once you graduate from high school, would you forget everything you learned, throw your diploma away, burn all your school records, remove yourself from all your friends and all the people you’ve met, and go back to being an eighth grader? What a waste of four years! What a waste of your hard work and energy! And what a waste for everyone who invested their time and energy in you! Doing that would be crazy. Instead, you take your diploma, the things you’ve learned, the friends and other connections you’ve made, and you make use of those things. You will use all those tools for your benefit. Well, the same thing goes for your confirmation.

At confirmation, you are declared a mature Christian and are encouraged to follow your ambitions, hopes, and dreams for the good of God’s church and for His glory. What God wants you to do now that you have been confirmed is to put those truths you learned (all that memory work, reading, and studying) to use. He wants you to make use of those tools. But don’t

be fooled. Satan sees you maturing as a Christian. He sees you as a bigger threat to him now than ever before. Like that “roaring lion” looking to devour you, he wants to strip you of all those powerful tools given you through catechism instruction: The Word and the Lord’s Supper. He wants to get rid of it and burn it. He wants to erase and destroy the faith that God the Holy Spirit has worked in you and he wants you to turn right back to the unbelief into which you were born so that you’ll be with him someday.

The Means of Grace, the Word and Sacraments, are the tools and weapons that God has given to you and that He wants you to continually make use of, before and after confirmation, so that you may be “strengthened and preserved in the true faith unto life everlasting.” Use these Means as tools as you follow your ambitions, hopes, and dreams to the glory of God and for the benefit of His church. Use them as weapons to drive away Satan when he tries to drag you away from your Savior.

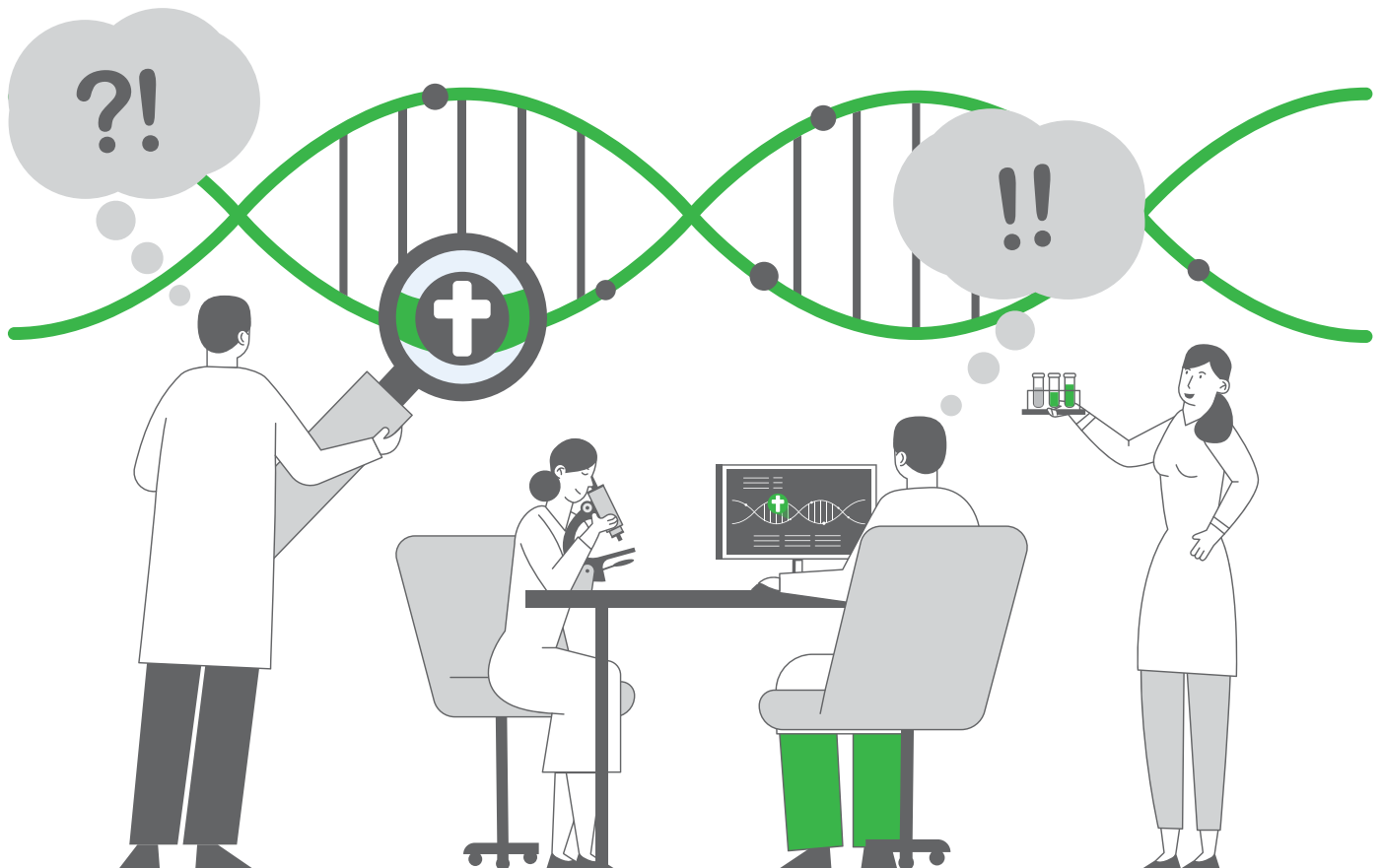
Confirmation: THE END? Not at all. Thanks to God and to His Word and Sacraments, we are given the forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life so that for us, there will never be an end. ***“Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life”*** (Jude 21).

*"You can't know where you're going unless you know where you're from."*

# WHO AM I FROM?

*Whether it be the adult adoptee curiously seeking to learn and know his historical background or just one of the millions of us now hopelessly fascinated with all things ancestry, it's hard to deny this deep-seated need to learn who and where I'm from.*

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



Even though the implications might slip right past us, when Jesus gives us His prayer as the pattern of all prayer (Matthew 6:7-13), He leads with this very foundation: who you are from.

***“And when you pray... pray like this: Our Father, who art in heaven...”*** (Matthew 6:7&9).

When Jesus teaches prayer, He teaches us to start with our ancestry—our baptismal ancestry! He gives us both Himself as our brother and His Father as our dear Father. He reminds us Who we are from!

***When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons*** (Galatians 4:4-5).

Jesus brothered us by being born of human flesh and blood, born underneath His own holy requirements so that we might have every right to claim family status with Him—so that His Father can be called “Our Father.”

***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he gave us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, into an inheritance that is undying, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you*** (1 Peter 1:3-4).

What do we say to this news?

Through Jesus, we have a royal pedigree—an eternal inheritance! This Gospel adoption means we are kings and queens with the King—Jesus Himself. As Paul writes to the Corinthians and their adoption by grace, ***“All things are now ours”*** (1 Corinthians 3:21). How does one proceed in prayer from this news of ancestral wealth? Put another way, what does the person with everything ask for?

We say, ***“Hallowed be Thy Name.”***

This seems an unusual ask, for God’s name to “be holy,” as if it weren’t already as lofty and set apart as anything in heaven or on earth could ever be. Luther helps here, first by assuring us that God’s name is indeed “hallowed”—set apart—of itself without our asking for it to be so. But we pray in this petition that it may be so among us (Small catechism 1st Petition—Explanation). We who have everything availed to us by baptismal adoption into God’s family ask that we not overlook or under-estimate the gift given us in God’s name.

That is the danger with someone who has “everything,” isn’t it? They might easily cease to recognize and cherish a present gift. So Jesus prays for this “hallowing among us” on our behalf as our passionate Priest:

***“Sanctify them [Your children] in the truth. Your Word is truth”*** (John 17:17).

This same “holy among us” prayer serves as the refrain of the great “prayer for the Word” that is Psalm 119:

- ***Do not snatch the word of truth from my mouth, for I have put my hope in Your laws*** (Psalm 119:43).
- ***You are good and what you do is good. Teach me Your decrees*** (119:68).
- ***The law from Your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold*** (119:72).
- ***I open my mouth and pant, longing for Your commands*** (119:131).

When we recognize the gracious Good News that God’s holy Name is our own name too (“Our Father...”), then we plead to our most gracious Father that He would actively govern our priorities so that our adopted “name” might always be treasured among us as our highest prize. We aren’t asking God to understand and respect our prioritizing of things: My job is really important; My leisure time is really precious to me; Sunday is my family time, etc. We’re asking our adopting Father to cause His sacred name to be our #1 priority. Hallowed be Thy name is our plea that our life and plans and calendars be shaped by this One Precious Treasure that all else exceeds (ELH 182:1).

God has adopted us through the brotherhood of His Son. And with this most gracious news, we pray that God would keep our new name “more precious to us than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.”

***Our Father Who art in heaven,***

***Hallowed be Thy name.***

***Amen.***

The Bible's 'Prayer Book'

# A walk through the Psalms

by **REV. TONY PITTENGER**, Contributing Writer  
**BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH**, Port Orchard, Wash.

Greetings in Jesus' name! I am Pastor Pittenger of Bethany Lutheran Church in Port Orchard, Washington, and this year, it will be my privilege to walk through the psalms with you.

We'll take them seasonally, selecting from those traditionally used in Sunday services.

Since this issue of *the Lutheran Sentinel* finds us at the tail end of Epiphany, let's have a look at the psalm for Epiphany Day, **Psalm 72**.

Dignitaries, scholars, emissaries, and kings form the backdrop for this psalm. Magi search for the King of the Jews, bringing gifts for His young Highness. Meanwhile, another king will stop at nothing to kill Him.

While Epiphany's drama plays out, another king speaks.  
**Solomon**, wisest of all earthly men, opens his mouth...

## Psalm 72: A Psalm Of Solomon

*Give the king Your judgments, O God, And Your righteousness to the king's Son. He will judge Your people with righteousness, And Your poor with justice.*

It seems “pie-in-the-sky.” Our rulers are sinful. Psalm 146:3 warns us, **Put not your trust in princes, nor in a son of man in whom there is no help.** No matter how good he or she may be, no ruler can govern us with God's righteousness.

Yet Solomon tells of One who will: the King's Son. He will plead/judge the case of God's people with the very righteousness of God Himself.

*The mountains will bring peace to the people, And the little hills, by righteousness. He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, And will break in pieces the oppressor.*

Though Herod ordered the slaughter in Bethlehem, he was only a puppet of mankind's original “oppressor.” Another way to translate that is “deceiver.”

As this King pleads His people's case, He will crush Satan's head!

*They shall fear You As long as the sun and moon endure, Throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing, Like showers that water the earth. In His days the righteous shall flourish, And abundance of peace, Until the moon is no more. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth. Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him, And His enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles Will bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba Will offer gifts. Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him.*

The promise and account of what God's King has done must not be kept to ourselves. Let these good tidings of great joy be spread across the world! Let this news refresh souls wearied by guilt and death. One day, the sun and moon will be gone, but those who hope in this King will not. May every people, every language, every nation and tribe see God's King, the King of Peace and Righteousness!

*For He will deliver the needy when he cries, The poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, And will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; And precious shall be their blood in His sight.*

Regardless of age, regardless of how the rest of the world values you, regardless of how you and your own guilty conscience see you, you are—IN FACT—so precious that this King has redeemed you.

Your works, your prayers, your offerings, and your promises of reform are not enough to do this. Instead, God has redeemed you with this King's own blood.

*And He shall live; And the gold of Sheba will be given to Him; Prayer also will be made for Him continually, And daily He shall be praised. There will be an abundance of grain in the earth, On the top of the mountains; Its fruit shall wave like Lebanon; And those of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; All nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, Who only does wondrous things! And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.*

Psalm 72. The sinful nature seen in Herod rejects the King promised in this psalm. God's gift of faith sees that King who has been given to Magi and mothers; farmers and fathers; sages and students; and even the most common citizens like yourselves.

*“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9–10, NKJV).*

**Soli Deo Gloria**

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# 2021 Sentinel Series

1 **“PRESENTING EVIDENCE for the Truth of Christianity”**

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**Nov–Dec 2021** Timothy Hartwig

The Center for Apologetics and Worldviews is pleased to provide free video archives and PDF handouts from our September 2020 conference, “*The Christian Church amid Seismic Shifts*.”

[\[https://blc.edu/2020/08/the-christian-church-amid-seismic-shifts/\]](https://blc.edu/2020/08/the-christian-church-amid-seismic-shifts/)

**Topics include:**

Cross-cultural evangelism, transgenderism, COVID-19 in relation to our concept of human nature, the church’s response to political tyranny, and practical advice for fortifying our youth with the Word of God.



# *Acts 7:53 says that the law was given “by the direction of angels.” How did the angels give the law? Was this a one-time occurrence or can something like this happen today?*

## Answer:

Angels and the realm of the supernatural are a source of great curiosity for us. As such, mention of them in Scripture is bound to draw our attention. One passage that draws our gaze to those heavenly, spiritual beings is found in Acts 7:53, where Stephen mentions angels being present when the law was given at Mount Sinai. Stephen’s words about the angels leave us with two distinct questions. How can this be? And can something like this happen today?

### How can this be?

When the Sanhedrin gave Stephen the opportunity to defend himself before them, Stephen used his words to call the Jews to repentance. He recounted Israel’s history from Abraham to Moses and all the way to their captivity in Babylon. He cites a pattern of unbelief and disobedience among the Jews, a pattern that the current generation continued. Just as their fathers persecuted and murdered the prophets who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, by crucifying Jesus the Jews had themselves murdered Him who the prophets foretold. He characterizes the Jewish people as those “*who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it*” (Acts 7:53, NKJV).

So what did Stephen mean? We gain more clues from his other remarks. When he preached, Stephen spoke about Moses and the Lord at Mount Sinai. Stephen said that Moses “was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers” (Acts 7:38). In verse 53, perhaps Stephen is recalling the events that Moses related in Exodus 24. There, Moses shared the astounding account of how he, Aaron, and the seventy elders of Israel ascended Mount Sinai, where heaven and earth met, and “they saw God, and ate and drank” in His presence (Exodus 24:11). From there, the LORD called Moses away from the group and gave him the tablets of the law for Israel.

Moses recalled that same event shortly before his death. In Deuteronomy 33, when he gave his final blessing to the twelve tribes of Israel, he told them that the LORD came with a fiery law from His right hand and with “ten thousands of saints”—or “holy ones,” a term that very well includes the angels.

When one considers the ramifications of heaven and earth meeting on Mount Sinai, it shouldn’t surprise us that angels would be present

when the Lord gave the law to Moses. Nor is it outside the realm of possibility to believe that the Lord communicated His will to Moses through the angels—and specifically, the Angel of the LORD (the pre-incarnate Christ). After all, “*Are they [the angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*” (Hebrews 1:14).

In addition, Stephen is not the only New Testament voice to speak this way. In Galatians 3, the apostle Paul wrote that the law “*was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator*” (Galatians 3:19). In this way, the New Testament serves to enlighten our understanding of the Old Testament.

### Could this happen today?

Scripture teaches us that with God, nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37). Our gracious God could choose to communicate with us through His angels at any time, though one could argue that God is already giving His law—as well as His gospel—through His angels. An angel is literally a messenger of God, but an angel doesn’t necessarily have to be a supernatural being who is a part of God’s invisible creation. In the first chapter of Revelation, where John is told to write to “the angel” of each of the seven congregations in Asia Minor, he’s not writing to a supernatural messenger of God, but a human messenger of God, namely, the pastor. Anyone called to be a messenger of God, preaching and teaching His Word faithfully, is an “angel” in the truest sense of the word.

And a day is coming when the bonds between heaven and earth will slip once again. On that day, when our Lord returns in glory, we will join all the angels of heaven in glorifying Him, saying, “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!*” (Revelation 5:12).



Do you have a question for Pastor Van Kampen?

Send them via email:  
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Send them via “snail mail”:  
 1700 Cardinal Ln,  
 Green Bay, WI 54313



# MEMORIALS & HONORS

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary  
07/01/2019 - 06/30/2020

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Mr. & Mrs. Paul Swenumson      New Hampton, IA

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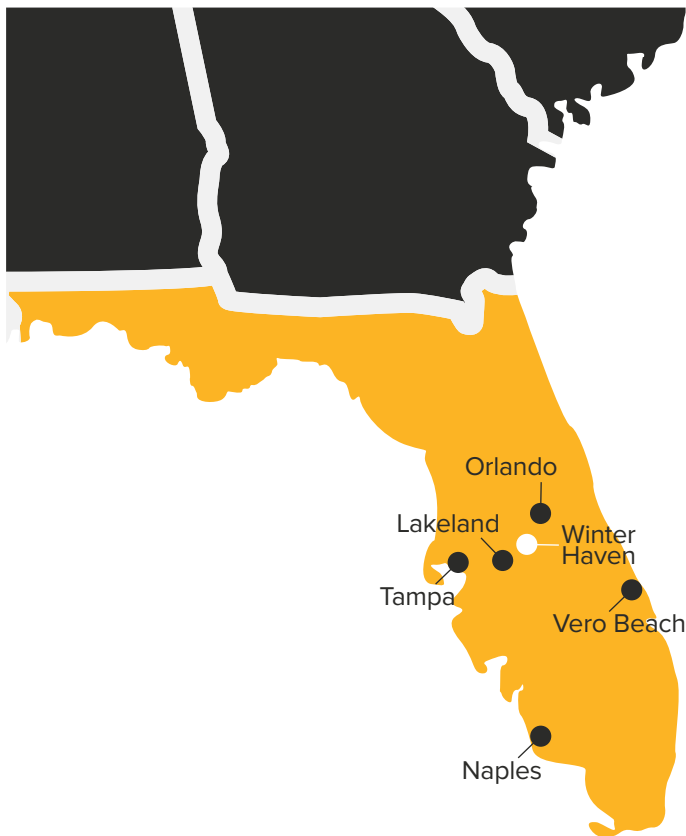
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## MEETING MY BROTHERS & SISTERS:



## Resurrection Lutheran Church

Winter Haven, Florida

by **PASTOR EMERITUS CHARLES KEELER**, Contributing Writer

Resurrection Lutheran Church was established as a home mission of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod when the Rev. Matthew Thompson was commissioned to do exploratory work in Winter Haven, Florida, in 1994.

A group of winter visitors and members of Our Savior Lutheran - North Lakeland, Florida, lived in the area and formed the core group. Quickly a congregation was established that erected a building with the help of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In 1999, Resurrection Lutheran Church played host to a meeting of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference - a worldwide Lutheran fellowship of church bodies.

The Rev. Mark Wold replaced Pastor Thompson. Pastor Wold was followed by Rev. Charles Keeler, who has served the congregation since 2003.

With Reverend Keeler's retirement from the ministry in 2020, Resurrection Lutheran agreed to form a dual parish with her mother congregation, Our Savior Lutheran - Lakeland, Florida. The parish is currently served by vicar Adam Brasich.

Resurrection Lutheran is an older congregation of faithful souls, many of whom have gathered regularly for worship throughout the difficulties of 2020. She is also blessed to become a haven for souls to many faithful winter visitors.