

The
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“The Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35.

“Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105.

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begotten of the
Father”

John 1:14



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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture**, what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead Godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or false church body, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*"

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.

Giving Thanks to the God of Our Salvation

“What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.”
—Psalm 116:12-14

God’s Word of truth “levels” with us when it tells us: *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,...* ***unthankful***” (II Timothy 3:1-2). These fruits which will show themselves in the last days are fruits of the no-good “*flesh*” (Romans 7:18); they are corrupt fruits from the deceitful lusts of the “*old man*” (Ephesians 4:22). Those who are aligned with the unbelieving, ungodly world, living only according to and for the “*flesh, the old man,*” are and will continue to be persistently unthankful to God for the many gifts and blessings which He has given to them. “*The carnal mind is enmity against God*” (Romans 8:7). Instead of loving God and being grateful to Him, the unbelieving and ungodly are “*lovers of their own selves.*” Furthermore, instead of being content and thankful to God for whatever He has given to them, whether little or much, the unbelieving and ungodly are “*covetous.*” Instead of humbling themselves before the Triune God with much thankfulness, the unbelieving and ungodly are “*boasters, proud.*” Finally, instead of praising God for His great, undeserved goodness, the unbelieving and ungodly are “*blasphemers;*” they speak evil of God.

However, even within the child of God, “*the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*” (Galatians 5:17). It is unalterably true that our unthankful flesh always wants us to be and remain unthankful and ungrateful in our thinking, speaking, and conduct toward God and toward each other. Furthermore, this wicked, evil flesh wants all human beings, including every believer in the Savior, to look on Philippians 4 as “*foolishness*” (I Corinthians 2:14) when it says: “***Rejoice in the Lord *always*, and again I say, Rejoice***” (v. 4). Therefore, we need to persist, day-after-day, in crucifying, abhorring, and hating

our own selfish, covetous, arrogant, corrupt, and unthankful **flesh** (Galatians 5:24; Romans 12:9; Proverbs 8:13; II Timothy 3:1-2).

In contrast to the old man, the “*new man*” (Ephesians 4:24) shows its genuine gratitude, thankfulness, and appreciation when it puts forth the always-timely question: “*What shall I render [give back, return] unto the Lord for all His benefits [of kindness, goodness] toward me [an undeserving and unworthy human being by nature, that is, already at my conception and birth]?*” The grateful “*new man*” of Jacob made itself known when he confessed: “*I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant*” (Genesis 32:10). This should, of course, also be **our** confession.

How does the “*new man*” respond to the question posed in Psalm 116: “*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?*” The “*new man*” responds by giving **three answers** to this important question:

1) “*I will take the cup of salvation.*” This is the voice of saving faith in Jesus and His perfect, finished salvation for the whole world of sinners (John 1:29; I John 2:2; John 19:30). In the days ahead, during the rest of their earthly life, the believers in Jesus will continue to raise up with gratitude the cup of salvation, that cup of salvation from the Holy Scriptures which continually reassures them of complete freedom from the terrible curse and condemnation of the Law of God. This cup of salvation was prepared for us and given to us on account of the cup of suffering and death which our only Savior, Christ Jesus, “drank” on account of our sins and on account of the sins of all other people in the world. Christ willingly “drank” this cup of suffering and death “*once for all*” (Hebrews 10:10), “*the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit*” (I Peter 3:18).

It is an outrageous lie and gross deceit when anti-Trinitarian religions and organizations (Judaism, Muslims, Buddhists, Unitarians, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, the Masonic Lodge, the Scouting organizations, etc.) leave Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, out of the way to heaven and the way of salvation. Furthermore, it is also an outrageous lie and gross deceit when so-called “Christian” churches add to or subtract from the teaching of Scripture by declaring that faith in Jesus and human works are *both* necessary for salvation from sin and entrance into heaven, or by teaching that prayers spoken and money paid help souls escape from “purgatory” into heaven, or that “once in faith, always in faith,” thus conveying the message that faith in Jesus can never

be lost or destroyed, even if one, against better knowledge, continues to live in impenitence and remains devoted to the corrupt flesh.

Let us, in gratitude for the full, free, and finished cup of salvation from the perfect obedience and the sinless sacrifice of Jesus for all sinners, abhor and reject all contrary teachings, rejoicing in the clear truth of God's Word, as spoken by Jesus in John 14 - "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me*" (v. 6), or as the Apostle Paul said to his fellow believers in Ephesians 2: "*By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast*" (vv. 8-9).

2) "*I will ...call upon the name of the Lord.*" This is the **second answer** of the "*new man*" to the question: "*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?*" Since believers in Christ and His salvation have peace and reconciliation with God (Romans 5:1; II Corinthians 5:19, 21), complete forgiveness for all of their sins so that none of their imperfections are held against them (I John 2:2; Romans 8:1, 31-34; Isaiah 53:5-6), and perfect righteousness and justification before God (Jeremiah 23:6; Romans 3:21-28; 5:18-19), they are now His dear friends (John 15:15), and no longer His enemies (Romans 8:7; 5:10).

Therefore, believers in the Savior, Christ Jesus, will gratefully come to their true, Triune, gracious, and merciful God as dear, adopted children come to their dear heavenly Father, calling and crying out to Him: "*Abba, Father*" (Romans 8:15; see also Galatians 4:6). Such calling out to the Lord God is in response to His wonderful invitations and promises, such as we have in Psalm 50: "*Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me*" (v. 15). In the Holy Scriptures, our God has given to us a priceless prayer book in the Psalms, where we actually can find prayers written out for us, such as in Psalm 25: "*Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths; lead me in Thy truth, and teach me, for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and Thy lovingkindnesses, for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Thy mercy, remember Thou me for Thy goodness' sake, O Lord*" (vv. 4-7). Does such calling and crying out to the Triune, gracious, and merciful God and Savior do any good? Of course! "*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16).

So, in gratitude for our God's completed and perfect salvation for all

sinner in Christ Jesus, let us continue to remember His instruction and reassurance in Philippians 4: “*Be careful [worried, anxious, stressed out] for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*” (vv. 6-7).

3) “*I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.*” This is the **third and final answer** of the “*new man*” to the question: “*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?*” These vows are offerings or sacrifices of thanks, such as the psalmist himself spoke of a few verses later in Psalm 116: “*I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving*” (v. 17). The Apostle Paul reminds and encourages his fellow followers of the Lamb (John 10:27; 1:29) when he says to them in Romans 12: “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*” (vv. 1-2). Because they are “*the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord*” (Isaiah 62:12), the children of God are, on account of God’s grace and mercies in Christ Jesus, again and again to cheerfully render their God-given bodies as a living sacrifice of gratitude to glorify Him for having made the once-for-all payment through the “*one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (I Timothy 2:5; see also v. 6) to save them from His anger and everlasting punishment on account of their sins (I Corinthians 6:20; I Peter 1:18-19; John 3:36; Galatians 3:13; John 3:17-18; Romans 8:1; Matthew 25:46).

Some **examples** of God’s “*saints*” (I Corinthians 1:2) rendering their bodies as a living sacrifice or offering of praise and thanks to the God of their salvation, are **1) Noah**, who, after God told him to make an ark because of the upcoming, great flood (Genesis 6:13—21), “*did ...according to all that God commanded him, so did he*” (v. 22) in gratitude for the promised Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15); **2) Abraham**, who, after God had instructed him on what to do with his “*only son Isaac*” (Genesis 22:2), “*rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him*” (v. 3) in thankfulness to one of his descendants, the promised Messiah, Christ Jesus, who would bring blessing to “*all the nations of the earth*” (v. 18; see also Genesis 12:3; 18:18); **3) Joseph**, who, when he was tempted by his employer’s wife, said to her, “*How then can I do this*

great wickedness, and sin against God” (Genesis 39:9), an expression of his gratitude to the God who had promised him the one and only Savior for his sins; **4) the wise men**, who traveled “*from the east to Jerusalem*” (Matthew 2:1) to worship the new-born Savior, and after actually seeing Him, they “*fell down, and worshipped Him, and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts - gold, and frankincense, and myrrh*” (v. 11), **5) the woman**, who, when she found Jesus at Simon’s house, “*stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment*” (Luke 7:38) **because her many sins were forgiven** (vv. 47-48, 50; see also vv. 40-43), **6) the Apostle Paul**, who wrote to his dear spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus at Philippi: “*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you*” (1:4; see also Psalm 133:1); and **7) the Samaritan**, who, after he was healed from his leprosy, as an evidence of his faith in Jesus, “*turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks*” (Luke 17:15-16). These examples are only some of many in Scripture which display an offering of grateful love, worship, and honor to Him who “*first loved us*” (I John 4:19; see also Psalm 115:1).

When we see and review in Scripture how “*the Lord hath dealt bountifully with [us]*” (Psalm 116:7), let us, His “*chosen generation*” (I Peter 2:9), again and again not only ask the question, “*What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?*” but let us also again and again gratefully answer this timely question with the response of the psalmist: “*I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people.*”

— R. J. L.





Christ, The Messenger of the Covenant

“The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.” —Malachi 3:1

The first part of Malachi chapter three, verse 1, reads: *“Behold, I will send **My messenger**, and he shall prepare the way before Me.”* As we are reminded each year at this time in the Gospel Lesson for the *Third Sunday in Advent*, Matthew 11:2-10, those words are a rectilinear, that is, a direct prophecy of the appearance of **John the Baptist** as our Savior’s forerunner or “advance-man,” who would prepare His way before Him in the hearts of the people. This clear reference to John and his preaching is confirmed also in Mark 1:2-4; and the specific content of John’s preaching of repentance and remission of sins was foretold by the Prophet Isaiah (40:3-5) and was referred to as having been fulfilled by John particularly in Luke’s Gospel account, chapter three, verses 2-18. Moreover, when John’s birth was announced to the aged priest, Zacharias, as he ministered in the Temple, the angel Gabriel spoke of John’s work as the Messiah’s “way-preparer,” namely, *“to make ready a people prepared for the Lord”* (Luke 1:17); and, at the time of the child’s birth, Zacharias was moved by the Holy Ghost to sing of that blessed work, saying: *“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to **prepare His ways**; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high [the Messiah] hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”* (Luke 1:76-79).

The word “*messenger*” in Hebrew is pronounced [mah·LACH] —the word that is frequently used of God’s “*ministering spirits*” (Hebrews 1:14) who carried *messages* to His people, the word that is therefore

often translated “*angel*” throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. Thus, both the name of the prophet who foretold the coming of John the Baptist AND the name of John himself in that prophecy are “*My messenger*” or “**Malachi**” [m’lah-CHEE], God’s own messengers: The prophet to God’s people about four hundred years *before* the Messiah’s birth, AND the forerunner who prepared the way before Him just thirty years *after* His birth, as He was about to enter upon His public ministry.

But, in our Advent celebration of John the Baptist as the Savior’s forerunner and promised “*messenger*,” we often lose sight of the **SECOND** “*messenger*” spoken of by Malachi in his third chapter, verse one, “*even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in....*” Who is this “*Messenger*”? The Prophet Malachi says: “**THE LORD**, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even **the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, HE shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.**” This was the long-promised **Messiah** Himself, whom God’s people *sought* and longed for, in whom they “*delighted*,” whom they eagerly awaited and expected. Note the true parallel language (not only in words but in context) between the following direct prophecies:

*“Behold, **the Lord** your God **will come** with strong hand, and His arm shall **rule** for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young”* (Isaiah 40:10-11);

*“Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart: Be strong, fear not; behold, **your God will come** with vengeance. even God with a recompense; **He will come and save you**”* (Isaiah 35:3-4);

*“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch; and **a King** shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth; and this is His Name whereby He shall be called: **The Lord, our Righteousness**”* (Jeremiah 23:5-6);

*“And it shall be said in that day, ‘Lo, this is **our God**; we have **waited for Him**, and **He will save us**. This is **the Lord**; we have **waited for Him**; we will be glad and rejoice in **His salvation**”* (Isaiah 25:9);

*“Look upon **Zion**, the city of our solemnities; thine eyes shall see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, **a tabernacle that shall not be taken down...**; but there **the glorious Lord** will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams...; **the Lord is our king**; **He will save us**”* (Isaiah 33:20-22);

*“In **thy Seed** [Cf. Galatians 3:16] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed”* (Genesis 22:18);

*“So shall He sprinkle **many nations**; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider. ... **the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all...** He is brought as **a lamb to the slaughter**; ...**for the transgression of my people was He stricken**”* (Selected verses from Isaiah 52 and 53);

and, of course, many other wonderful Messianic prophecies of the Savior to come.

“The Messenger [Angel] of the Covenant” or *“the Angel of the Lord”* [mah·LACH·ah·doh·NAI], as He is often called in the Old Testament, the eternal Son of God before His incarnation, appeared to men as a special “messenger” particularly of God’s gracious promises and blessings. We read of that name, for example, in Genesis 22:11-18 where He appeared to Abraham, who was about to sacrifice his son, Isaac, to the Lord. Isaac was spared, a ram caught in a thicket was sacrificed in his stead, and the Angel of the Lord repeated to Abraham the promise of the Savior-to-come. As the Great and Gracious Deliverer of His people, the Angel’s messages often centered on that very thing. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush and called him to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 3:2); He appeared to Gideon and chose him to deliver Israel from the Midianites (Judges 6:12ff.); He appeared to the parents of Samson, who would deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines (Judges 13). *“The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them,”* writes the Psalmist (34:7).

But particularly in the New Testament, when “*the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son*” (Galatians 4:4) just as He had promised. The “*Messenger of the Covenant*” had “*suddenly come to His temple,*” to His Church, to His “*Zion,*” to the “*tabernacle that shall not be taken down.*” Our Divine Prophet, the “*Messenger of the Covenant*” of God’s grace, “*who is in the bosom of the Father*” (John 1:18), declared His Father’s love for all the world (John 3:16) on the basis of the vicarious atonement that He Himself would render to divine justice for the sins of all mankind. During His public ministry, He manifested Himself by word and deed as the long-promised Redeemer of the world; He perfectly fulfilled every prophecy of the Scriptures concerning Himself; and then He laid down His life as “*the Lamb of God*” (John 1:29), as “*our Passover*” (I Corinthians 5:7b), whose precious blood was poured out as the incorruptible Sacrifice (I Peter 1:18-19), the all-sufficient “*price*” (I Corinthians 6:20) that alone could propitiate God’s justice and purchase salvation for every man. Thus “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (II Corinthians 5:19). “*Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

Those who reject Him as their Redeemer and seek salvation apart from Him are, as were the Ephesians before their conversion, “*without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*” (Ephesians 2:12). Only CHRIST JESUS, “*the Messenger of the Covenant,*” still proclaims “*the word of reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19b) as our exalted Divine Prophet, as He sends men to preach the everlasting Gospel of peace to them that are “*afar off*” —those who still are “*strangers from the covenants of promise*”— “*and to them that [are] nigh*” (Ephesians 2:17) —even to **us** who have known “*the grace of God that bringeth salvation*” (Titus 2:11) and are by faith members of “*the church, which is His body*” (Ephesians 1:22-23), His “*Temple*” (I Corinthians 3:16-17; II Corinthians 6:16), “*the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High*” (Psalm 46:4), “*the tabernacle that shall not be taken down*” (Isaiah 33:20) because He promises that “*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18).

“*Hear ye Him!*” (Matthew 17:5), “*the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in.*” Behold, He HAS COME, “*and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19b), “*the word of*

His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.” (Acts 20:32).

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” —Jude 24-25.

—D. T. M.



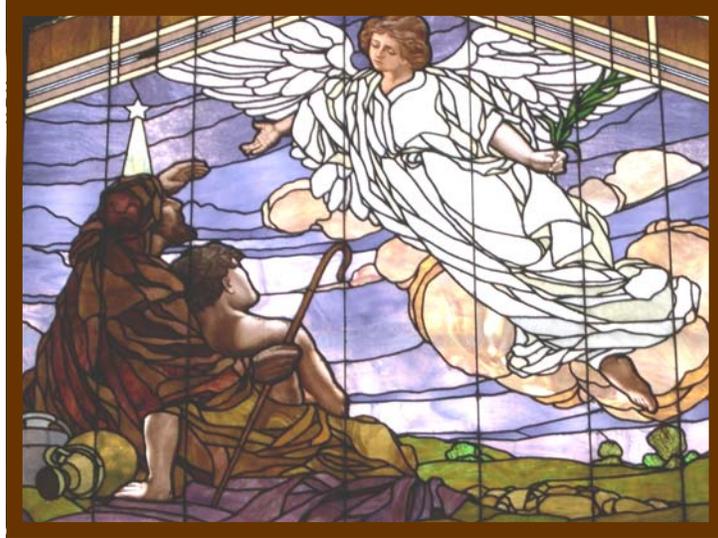
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“The Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35

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Angel & Shepherds Stained Glass—Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Oak Park

The Joyous Message of the Christmas Angels

“And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’” —Luke 2:10-14.

Imagine yourself for just a moment sitting with those shepherds of Bethlehem on a grassy hillside tending the flock of sleepy sheep. It is late at night, and the shepherds are weary from the day’s labor. The grass is wet with dew; the crisp night air, in spite of its stillness, pierces through their cloaks; and the shepherds move yet closer to the glowing coals of the watch fire, trying to keep warm. It is so quiet there on the meadow under that clear, star-speckled sky, that the slightest complaint from a sheep or lamb is a startling

disturbance. Yet, barring the intrusion of a hungry wolf on the prowl, this night should be peaceful enough and should pass as easily as most. — Suddenly, without warning, the sky is ablaze with blinding light, with “*the glory of the Lord*” with a holy brightness that terrifies the shepherds! Could it be that the day of God’s judgment has come upon them?? They look up and see a figure standing in that light, a heavenly messenger who beckons for their attention to what he is about to say. “*Sore afraid*,” the shepherds brace themselves for the worst, as they anticipate the pronouncement of God’s just anger against them because of their sins.

The angel speaks with the clarity of a heavenly trumpet, but also with the sweetness of a shepherd’s pipe: “***Fear not!***” he says. “*Don’t keep cringing and shrinking back in terror at what my message might be; don’t hide your face from the light of God’s glory because of your sins and your unworthiness before Him.*” What could this holy messenger be about to say that would make them less fearful of God’s justice?? What could possibly change things that drastically for the shepherds, that instead of quaking at this sight, they should now put away their fear and hearken calmly to the rest of the message?

“*Behold, I bring you GOOD tidings of great JOY,*” the angel continued. **Good** news? Great **joy**? A **Gospel** message to US?? Those poor, humble shepherds needed some good news at that time —not just good news about sheep prices, or about the political situation with the Roman occupation, or about the economy and heavy taxes— although most people, even in those days, would probably have welcomed that kind of news. No, this was to be a **far better** kind of news because this news was to soothe away the fear of God’s justice! These “*good tidings*” were to calm the guilt-ridden heart and to replace grave terror with “*great joy*”! Oh, how those shepherds, those Old Testament believers in the coming, promised Messiah, had been waiting, yea, longing for just this very news!

And what about US? Do **WE** *long* for the good tidings of the Gospel? When in the mirror of God’s holy Law we see ourselves as **He** sees us — vile, perverse, rebellious and vain by nature— and when that Law indicts us as His **enemies** and pronounces the sentence of **eternal death** upon us according to our *own deserts*, do we long for that promised Savior, as did the shepherds on Bethlehem’s fields?? Oh, if **not**, then we must take yet another look into that perfect mirror and come to the inevitable realization that, on the basis of our works, no peace with God can ever be effected, no truce can be made, not even an approach to God is possible for us by nature, because even the best things we do reek like garbage in His

holy nostrils! “[We] are all gone aside; [we] are altogether become FILTHY; there is NONE that doeth good, no, not one!” (Psalm 14:3). Oh, we need some good news, all right, just like those humble shepherds.

But, whatever that good news is, is it intended also for us poor **Gentiles**?? Or is it just for God’s “chosen people,” the **Jews**? Hark! Listen again to the angel’s unmistakable words, dear convicted and contrite sinner: “I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to **ALL PEOPLE!**” Yes, that includes also **you** and **me!** —We, whose forefathers were **not** God’s chosen people, whose barbaric, idolatrous ancestors did not have the sacred oracles of God, the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, to point them to the Savior, yes, **we too** are the intended recipients of these “good tidings,” thanks be to God and His unmerited grace! How **our** hearts, **too**, burn with hopeful anticipation, as we perk up our ears with the shepherds of old to hear what that good news of great joy is all about.

“For unto **YOU** is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord!” In that one simple sentence, the Christmas angel brings not only the tidings themselves, but the sure and certain proof that this Babe is in fact the promised **Messiah**, the Anointed One of God Himself, **God**, manifested in the flesh. “Born”—The miracle of miracles that God should become man to take our place under the Law, and to give **His** life a ransom for **our** sins! “This day”—**now**, today, an accomplished **fact** and no longer just a promise to look forward to. The Messiah was actually here on this earth, just as the prophets had foretold! “In the City of David”—“Of what significance is **that**??” we might ask as Gentiles, as outsiders not versed in the Scriptures of prophecy. But those shepherds knew. Not only were they presumably from the City of David themselves, the town of Bethlehem, the ancestral home of King David, from whose line the Messiah was to come. But they well knew the prophecy of Micah, chapter 5, verse 2: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall **He** come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” The promised Messiah, the eternal Son of God Himself “from everlasting” was to come forth from that little, seemingly insignificant town of Bethlehem just to fulfill sacred prophecy! This was indeed the proof that the shepherds could readily see and understand!

“A **SAVIOR**” —not just an earthly Savior from the Romans, for that would not be good news to “**all people**,” but only to the **Jews**. **This**

Savior is the very **source** of “*good tidings of great joy*” to **all people**, of **all times** and of **all places** — sinners like you and me! He is the Savior of our sin-corrupted **souls**, as well as of our **bodies**, the ransom-price of our redemption, of whom the Prophet Isaiah wrote some 700 years before: “*He was wounded for OUR transgressions, He was bruised for OUR iniquities, ...and with His stripes WE are healed. ...The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of US ALL!*” (53:5-6). **That**, my dear fellow-sinners, is a **SAVIOR** worthy of the name; for **He** saves from sin, death and the devil — a feat that could **never** be accomplished by a mere man, for the Bible tells us: “*The redemption of their soul is precious!*” (Psalm 49:8).

And this Babe of Bethlehem is not just **any** Savior, for the angel calls Him “**Christ**,” that is, the **Messiah**, the One chosen of God to save His people from their sins, “*whom GOD hath set forth*,” writes the Apostle Paul, “*to be a propitiation [that is, a **payment**] through faith in His blood*” (Romans 3:25). This was the “**Branch**” that God Himself had promised to raise up unto David, the King that was to “*reign and prosper*” over the hearts of men with His righteousness to cover their sins (Jeremiah 23:5-6). — “**Good tidings**”?? “**Of great joy**”?? Oh, **indeed!** Tidings of joy **unspeakable**, both to the leaping hearts of the shepherds and to **ours** as well!

And the crowning word in this brief sentence of joy now comes forth: “*Which is Christ, **the LORD!***” This, too, had been foretold; for the Prophet Jeremiah had written: “*This is His name whereby He shall be called: **THE LORD, our Righteousness.***” This was no mere **man-Savior**, no mere **human being** chosen for a special task, as was John the Baptist, the Savior’s forerunner. But this was **the Lord, Jehovah** Himself, as we confess in the Nicene Creed: “*The only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.*” — This was **Emmanuel, God with us** (Matthew 1:23).

And the mystery of Jesus’ incarnation and humiliation is declared by the angel too, for the “*sign*” he gives to the shepherds, the signal by which they would be able to recognize “**God manifest in the flesh**” (I Timothy 3:16) was that they would find this Babe “*wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a **manger.***” Think of the **immensity** of this mysterious news: A Savior, **Christ**, the **Messiah**, the **Lord God** Himself, was to be found in the lowliest of poverty-stricken conditions, with nowhere to lay His precious head

but upon rough hay, with nowhere to make His bed but in the feeding trough of common farm animals, with nowhere to call his home but a rude stable! (Cf. Matthew 8:20). What a miracle indeed, that “*though He was rich, yet for [our] sakes He BECAME poor, that [we] through His poverty might be RICH!*” (II Corinthians 8:9).

Is it any wonder then that the angels of God, who “desire to look into” the revelation of Gospel grace (I Peter 1:12), these celestial beings, burst forth with heavenly songs of praise —multitudes of them, filling the sky above the awe-stricken shepherds? “*Glory to God in the highest,*” they sang, “*and on earth peace, good will toward men!*” Yes, glory to **God**, whose love and mercy to sinful mankind in Christ Jesus made this gift and its glad tidings a **reality!** No credit for any of it is due to miserable mankind, wallowing in their sins, shame and utter helplessness. For the Bible tells us: “**God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them**” (II Corinthians 5:19). This was **God’s doing alone**, and **all glory** was due to him alone!

And what was the **RESULT** of this glorious reconciliation in and through the precious Babe of Bethlehem? “**Peace on earth,**” the choirs of angels sang —not earthly peace which lasts only for the brief interval between wars and rumors of wars —but real, lasting peace on earth, peace **with God** through the forgiveness of sins; —and “**good will toward men**” God’s good will toward us, not ours to Him (I John 4:10), lest we puff ourselves up to be our own Saviors! No, God’s good and gracious will toward us caused Him to reconcile us **unto Himself**, to send his only-begotten Son to be the price of our redemption, so that His perfect justice was also satisfied, and that, by faith in our Redeemer, Paul writes to the Romans, chapter 5, verse 1, “*we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*” **THAT** is the peace of which the angels sang on that first Christmas night: *Peace on earth and mercy mild; God and sinners reconciled!*

Is all of this really “good news” to **YOU**, dear reader? Do you feel so weighed down with the guilt of sin that these words of the Christmas angels really mean something to **you personally** in your heart of hearts? Do you, by God’s grace, with those humble shepherds on Bethlehem’s fields, **long** to hear those “*good tidings of great joy*” again and again in the precious Gospel of salvation, realizing full well that the Babe of Bethlehem is your only way to God in heaven? Oh, then take these “*good tidings*” into **your heart by faith, trust them** as God’s own reliable message of

peace, **His** peace and **His** goodwill, **His** everlasting mercy and grace to you, as well as to *all people!* And then hasten with those shepherds of old to the manger bed in Bethlehem's stall —to the manger bed of the **sweet Gospel** where your Savior lies for you; then take Him up into your arms of faith, hold Him fast to your trembling breast, and pray with Luther in his hymn based on this joyous message of the Christmas angels:

Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child,
make Thee a bed soft, undefiled
within **my** heart, that it may be
a quiet chamber kept for Thee.

(*TLH* 85, 13)

—D. T. M.



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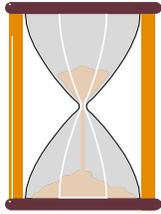
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Using Our Time Wisely in These Last Evil Days

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” —Ephesians 5:15–16

With each passing year, we approach ever closer to the last year of our earthly life. As Christians who have been cleansed from all our sins in the precious blood of Jesus Christ (I John 1:7), we can look forward with joyous anticipation to our last day on this sinful earth as the day in which we shall be brought into the glorious presence of our Savior in paradise (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23). But as we wait for that blessed day to come, God does not want us to be idle or waste our time here on earth. Rather, the Lord commands us in the above-quoted passage of Scripture to *redeem the time* (literally, to “buy the time up”), which is just the opposite of squandering it. The new year that lies before us may be our last. God may even choose to take us out of this life today or tomorrow. The fact that we do not know for sure when our lives will come to an end should impress upon us the importance of making good use of every day that the Lord gives us.

And as no one knows when his own last day will come, it is also an indisputable fact of Holy Scripture that no man or angel knows when the very last day of this world’s existence will come (Matthew 24:36)—even Jesus *during His state of humiliation* withheld the use of this knowledge from Himself (Mark 13:32). This then means that we should be *constantly* ready for the second coming of Jesus Christ—understanding that the Last Day could come *at any time*. *“Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. ... And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch”* (Mark 13:33, 37). *“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come”* (Matthew 24:42). *“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer”* (I Peter 4:7).

As faithful servants who are ready for our Master’s return (Matthew 24:45–51), we should be putting our Christian faith into practice by fol-

lowing what we are told to do in the text upon which this article is founded: “*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*” (Ephesians 5:15–16). Walking “*circumspectly*” (accurately and carefully) means diligently guiding each step of our Christian life according to the Word of God as the only and perfectly reliable Lamp for our feet and Light for our path (Psalm 119:105). We would be spiritual “*fools*” to depart from the doctrines of the Bible and follow the leading of any other guide (human traditions, popular culture, our own thoughts or feelings, etc.). Being spiritually “*wise*” means following the Scriptures alone (*sola Scriptura*) in our Christian faith and life, and thus walking circumspectly.

In His Law, the Lord God has very clearly set forth what He wants us to do and what He wants us to avoid doing. Any breaking of this Law is *sin* (I John 3:4) and merits the punishment of eternal death in hell (Romans 6:23)—the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10). The Bible makes it clear that all people are sinners (Psalm 14:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20), that unbelievers can do nothing but sin (Romans 8:7–8; Hebrews 11:6), and that even we Christians still commit sins on account of our miserable flesh (Romans 7:15–23; I John 1:8). So we must all confess that we have not always walked circumspectly in Godly wisdom. Instead of “*redeeming the time,*” we have often wasted much of the time that God has given us—walking as spiritual fools contrary to the Law of the Lord.

It has become the common practice, as each new year approaches, for both the religious and non-religious alike to make certain personal resolutions to improve various aspects of their lives. They consider the beginning of the new year to be a good time to institute some beneficial changes in such areas as dieting, exercising, the breaking of bad habits, and the beginning of good ones. And then if these goals are not attained or continued, they target the beginning of the following year to give it another try. But if we Christians consider the many changes and improvements that all of us because of our sins need to make according to God’s Law, we should not wait for the turning of the year to make these changes, but start *immediately*, just as soon as we notice the spiritual deficiencies. To wait for a specific date on the calendar to arrive before starting to live a better Christian life is not “*redeeming the time,*” but is squandering all the time that comes before that date! Christ may come, or our life may have come to an end before that date! “*Shall we continue in sin*” even for a few days or a few hours? “*God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*” (Romans 6:1–2)

Furthermore, we Christians should certainly not require the motivation of a brand new calendar year for us to correct ourselves and fight against sin. The Lord Jesus lived, suffered, and died to save us from our sins. For His sake we have been forgiven and have been saved from eternal hell-fire by faith in Him. Should not our hearts, then, be filled with love for our gracious God and Savior? Should we not desire to please Him in all that we do? After all, Jesus did not redeem us from our sins so that we would continue to live in them. Instead, He kept God's Law and suffered the wages of our sins as our Substitute so that we would no longer live in the service of sin but in the service of our gracious and loving Lord and Savior. "*He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again*" (II Corinthians 5:15). "*Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar [special] people, zealous of good works*" (Titus 2:14). Bringing forth good works as a fruit of our saving faith in Christ Jesus is how God wants us to use the time that He has given us—walking circumspectly as those whom He has enlightened with the saving wisdom of the Gospel.

We are told to redeem the time "*because the days are evil.*" These last days in which we live are indeed *evil*, as the Scriptures had foretold, saying that "*because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*" (Matthew 24:12), that it shall be "*as it was in the days of Noe*" at the time of the flood and "*as it was in the days of Lot*" in the city of Sodom (Luke 17:26–30), that "*the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables*" (II Timothy 4:3–4), and that "*there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*" (Matthew 24:24). We can certainly observe these "*signs of the times*" (Matthew 16:3) occurring all around us in the world today. While these various signs were *not* given so that we would try to calculate the exact hour of Christ's return (as many have foolishly attempted), they *were* given to us so that we would be reminded to remain watchful and ready for the Last Day *at all times*.

Considering the wickedness of the last days in which we live, we need to be especially diligent in our endeavor to *redeem the time*—"buying" time away from foolish and sinful pursuits, not following the children of this world in their wicked ways, but using every second of opportunity to bring our lives more and more under the rule of God's Commandments out of

love for Him. With the time God has given us, we should examine our lives according to His Law, take note of the sins that so often trouble us, and actively fight to eliminate them from our lives. (C.F. Romans 13:14) Instead of being satisfied with the fruits of faith that we routinely produce, we should earnestly strive to become all the more fruitful in good works. As St. Paul writes in his first letter to the Thessalonians: “*We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more*” (4:1). If we follow this divinely-inspired exhortation, we will be using our time in a good, wise, God-pleasing way.

The sinful world around us will only become more and more evil as we draw closer and closer to the Last Day. So that we do not become ensnared and overcome by our spiritual enemies, it is important and urgent for us to act quickly in bringing about the needed spiritual reforms in our lives through the power of the Holy Ghost working in us through His Word. This new year, may be our last one here on earth; we need to redeem the time while we still can. May we then gladly dedicate our entire life to the service of our gracious God for Jesus’ sake—*“redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”*

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” —Psalm 90:12

—P. E. B.

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THE NEED FOR FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN PASTORS

“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.”

—Matthew 9:37

Not only did this word of the Lord Jesus pertain specifically to the situation at hand when He uttered it; but it certainly applies to our circumstances today, having been written, as are all the Holy Scriptures, for our learning (Romans 15:4). “*God was in Christ reconciling **the world** unto Himself, not imputing **their** trespasses unto them,*” we read in II Corinthians 5:19 concerning God’s gracious justification or forgiveness of the entire world of sinners—then and now. To this gracious disposition He was moved *for Christ’s sake*, that is, because of Christ’s perfect satisfaction of divine justice as the Substitute and Scapegoat for the ungodly (Romans 4:5; 5:8-9). Accordingly, “[*God*] will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,” writes the Apostle Paul to Timothy (I Timothy 2:4), expressing the Lord’s *primary will* that He earnestly desires the salvation of *every sinner* and wants “*the world,*” for whom He gave His only-begotten Son to be its Redeemer, to be brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ, “*that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16). These and other clear and certain texts of Holy Scripture stand in direct opposition to Calvin’s false teachings of a limited atonement, of particular grace, and of a double predestination; “*for the Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (II Peter 3:9).

However, “*the knowledge of the truth*” of God’s *objective justification* of the world for Christ’s sake does not belong to man’s *natural knowledge of God*, neither is it committed to men “out-of-the-air” by the immediate revelation of the Spirit; nor yet is the saving faith whereby a poor sinner lays hold on God’s gracious forgiveness for Christ’s sake bestowed upon him without means. For St. Paul, writing to the Romans, asks the following rhetorical questions to which the answers are obvious in the text itself: “*How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of*

whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Romans 10:14-15) ...and the Apostle's divinely-inspired conclusion in verse 17: "*So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.*"

Therefore "*the Word of Reconciliation,*" the "good news" of God's reconciliation of the world unto Himself, the precious Gospel of God's saving grace in Christ Jesus, has been "*committed unto us,*" Paul says, II Corinthians 5:20, so that we can **proclaim** it "*in all the world, ...unto all nations*" (Matthew 24:14). "*It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*" (I Corinthians 1:21). And the "marching orders" given by Paul to the young pastor, Timothy, as he sallied forth "*as a good soldier of Jesus Christ*" (II Timothy 2:3), expressed that pleasure of the Lord that the chief duty of a Christian pastor is to "*preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove; rebuke; exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (II Timothy 4:2ff.). Moreover, the public preaching or proclamation of the Word is not limited to the pulpit on Sunday mornings and on special occasions but occupies the faithful pastor or spiritual shepherd on a full-time basis as he feeds the church of God, the local flock of the Savior (John 21:15ff.; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2), as he teaches (I Timothy 3:2), as he admonishes (I Thessalonians 5:12), as he oversees the flock and watches for their souls (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17), as he functions as the steward of God's mysteries in the public administration of the Office of the Keys (I Corinthians 4:1ff.). Thus the office of the "public ministry," the Pastoral Office (*das Pfarramt*), is not merely a human arrangement, devised without God's particular ordinance and institution but simply for the sake of good order in the Church (I Corinthians 14:40), as the Wisconsin Synod, the Church of the Lutheran Confession, and others teach contrary to Scripture (Cf. Titus 1:5; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; I Thessalonians 5:12-13; etc.). "[It] is no human institution, but an office which has been instituted by God Himself" (Walther, *Church and Ministry*, Part II, Thesis II).

"Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:2). The Scriptures lay down very specific qualifications for the Pastoral Office in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 —among which we search in vain for professional training in conflict resolution, substance abuse rehabilitation, social work, marriage and family counseling, corporate management, and other purely secular courses which have little if anything to do —even collaterally— with the office instituted by God. The **faithfulness** required of a pastor (bishop, elder) is faithfulness to the

Word of God (Jeremiah 23:28; Titus 1:9; etc.); faithfulness to “*the doctrine which is according to Godliness*” (I Timothy 6:3; 4:13; etc.) both in its teaching and in its application; faithfulness in the performance of all the duties incumbent upon him for the sake of the sheep and lambs committed to his charge (I Thessalonians 5:12-13; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; etc.); faithfulness to the call of God’s Holy Spirit, which makes him answerable not only to the local congregation that called him but to God Himself (Hebrews 13:17; Ezekiel 33:7-9; etc.), in whose holy office he serves as an incumbent at the Lord’s pleasure (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 5:4).

Pastors who confound Law and Gospel in their preaching, teaching, and practice; pastors who preach the truth of God’s Word *as theory* but do not apply it *in practice*; pastors who refuse to indoctrinate their members by means of thorough instruction but are satisfied with giving prospective members an “orientation course” prior to their reception; pastors who regard inconsistent practice (either on their own part or on the part of their people) merely as “imperfect sanctification” which must be tolerated; pastors who mark error and persistent errorists but refuse to “*avoid them*” (Romans 16:17); and pastors whose standard of spiritual truth is not “*the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Ephesians 2:19) but their own “professional judgment,” private interpretation, subjective rationale, and personal experience; —these are not *faithful* stewards of God’s mysteries but, as He Himself characterizes them, worthless watchmen or “watchdogs” that are blind, ignorant, dumb, asleep on the job, lazy, greedy, lacking in understanding, and looking out only for themselves!! (Isaiah 56:10-11). Sadly, we see far too many such “dogs” or “curs” in the ministry today; and their sheep either enjoy the silence and lack of concerned “barking,” or they have become so accustomed to the lack of instruction and spiritual oversight that they sit secure in their ignorance and think that their “*dumb dogs*” are really on the job! In either case, they are being neglected.

The Lord Jesus bids us: “*Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest*” (Matthew 9:38). And the Lord, as we well know from His Word, answers every proper Christian prayer, though in His own way and in His own good time. Nevertheless, He does not promise to provide us pastors “out-of-the-blue.” He expects qualified, gifted, faithful and Gospel-motivated men to *volunteer* themselves for labor in His vineyard (Isaiah 6:8). He expects us who are pastors to *train* such faithful men, committing to them what we have learned, so that they will be able to teach others also (II Timothy 2:2). He expects those men to *study* to show themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15). And He expects our

people to show to *prospective* pastors, by the love and respect they render to *their own* pastors, that they value those that labor among them, and are over them in the Lord, and admonish them (I Thessalonians 5:12-13), and that they gladly hear and learn God’s Word from their mouths as from the lips of Jesus Himself (Luke 10:16). Such an example of eagerness to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Savior, of high esteem for the ministry, and of love for Christ’s ambassadors should greatly encourage young men among us with the prospect of having one day, at the call of the Holy Ghost, a flock of like-minded sheep who hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matthew 5:6).

We all have plenty of work to do in the Lord’s harvest, also with respect to recruiting and training competent and *faithful* laborers for His vineyard —laborers whom the Lord of the Harvest may then one day, at His choosing, send forth into His harvest and, at the call of His Holy Spirit, make them overseers over a local “*church of God*” (Acts 20:28), to feed it, to watch for the souls of its sheep and lambs, to tend it, and to love it for the sake of their loving and incomparably Good Shepherd, Christ Jesus, the Savior and Head of His Church. To that end we beseech the Lord of the harvest to move the hearts of young men throughout our Conference with the earnest desire to become trained in our fine seminary program for labor in His vineyard and for service in the Pastoral Office, that a future ministry may thus be provided for us, for our children, and for their children after them, through which His name may continue to be hallowed among us in the faithful preaching, teaching, and practice of His pure Word to the salvation of our souls. Therefore we also pray with the hymnwriter:

O bless Thy Word alway,
our souls forever feeding;
and may we never lack
a faithful shepherd’s leading.
Send workers forth, O Lord,
the sheaves to gather in,
that not a soul be lost
which Thou art come to win!

(*TLH* 485, 4 & 6 adapted)

—**Pastor David T. Mensing**, Chairman
Committee on Theological Education

Official Announcement and Report

Pastor Roman G. Schurganoff, Yekaterinburg, Russia, underwent an intensive, thorough colloquy on October 25-26, 2004, at our Fall Pastoral Conference, held at St. John's Lutheran Church, Lebanon, Oregon. It was a great help for all present to have an interpreter on hand, Mr. Martin Vartanov, fluent in both Russian and English, a teacher at Linn Community College, Corvallis. At the conclusion of the two-day discussion, "it was moved and seconded that, on the basis of his colloquy, we recognize Pastor Roman Schurganoff to be one with us in faith and confession, in doctrine and practice, and to be qualified according to Holy Scripture for the pastoral office which he holds. With regard to any weaknesses we noted in his ability to articulate doctrines of Scripture in English, succinctly to respond to our questions, and freely to quote Scripture *sedes* in support of his answers, we fully expect Pastor Schurganoff, in accordance with his own express desire, humbly to grow in his knowledge of Christian doctrine and in his ability to articulate the same, and thus to be better able to make full proof of his ministry to the glory of God and to the praise of His grace. The motion was unanimously carried" (The Minutes of the 2004 Fall Pastoral Conference, page 10). This colloquy was really a priceless opportunity for our pastors to hear Pastor Schurganoff "*speak[ing] the same thing*" as we do, "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (I Corinthians 1:10). His colloquy was also the reaffirmation of what the *Committee on Lutheran Union* had reported at our 2001 Convention, namely, "the declaration of full agreement with us in doctrine and practice by Pastor Schurganoff and his congregation" (*The Concordia Lutheran*, July-August, 2001, page 83). "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*" (Psalm 133:1).

Pastor Schurganoff's two-week trip to the United States, October 17 – November 3, was a great blessing of God in that it provided many in our Conference the privilege of meeting him for the first time. He got to visit with many of the members at Faith, Jackson, Michigan, on the evening of October 22, following a *Committee on Missions* Meeting in the afternoon at Pastor Mahan's home. Pastor Mahan is the chairman

of this *Committee* and was very instrumental in much of the “leg work” which needed to be done prior to Brother Schurganoff’s arrival. On Sunday, the 24th of October, he participated in the Worship Service at Peace, Oak Forest, Illinois. That very evening he flew, with Pastors Mahan, Mensing, and Lietz, from Chicago to Portland, Oregon, where a vehicle was rented to drive to Lebanon for the October 25-27 Pastoral Conference. At Lebanon, he had the opportunity to have personal contact with many of the members of St. John’s, as well as all the pastors from our Conference, with the exception of Pastor Dierking, who, for health reasons, could not attend, even though he wanted very much to be present. However, he did get to talk with Pastor Schurganoff by telephone. On Reformation Sunday, Brother Schurganoff read the three Scripture readings at Trinity, Oak Park, Illinois, for the joint worship service, also attended by members from St. Mark’s, Sauk Village, and Peace, Oak Forest. He was taken on a “tour” of downtown Chicago on Election Day, and the following day headed home. We praise God for permitting this trip to take place, for the glory of His name, for the edification of His people in our Conference, and for the benefit of our Russian brethren! *“O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever”* (Psalm 136:1).

In a recent e-mail to Pastor Mahan, Brother Schurganoff expressed his gratitude to all of our congregations and pastors for making it possible for him to come to our country. He also informed us that he had some stomach problems when he got back home, due in part to the stark difference in American food and what he was used to in Russia and, furthermore, related to the weather during the time that he was with us.

It is our fervent hope that, the Lord-willing (James 4:14-15), Pastors Mahan and Mensing will be able to visit Pastor Schurganoff and his congregation, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Yekaterinburg, Russia, next spring, as authorized by the Conference Board of Directors already last summer. Let us go boldly to *“the throne of grace”* (Hebrews 4:16) concerning this proposed trip to Russia, as well as the day-after-day, ongoing, and important work of our God through Brother Schurganoff and his congregation in faithfully teaching, preaching, and bearing witness to the truths of God’s Word, by the grace of God, in their part of the world, leaving the results in God’s merciful hands (I Corinthians 3:6-7)!

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Robert J. Lietz, President



Pastor Roman Schurganoff, Pastor Robert J. Lietz, Pastor David T. Mensing at the Reformation Service, Trinity, Oak Park IL



The Telltale Signs of the Sad Deterioration of Lutheranism in this Latter Day!

“There have been times – and such times may come again – when unbelief and false doctrine so overran external Christendom that orthodox Christians had to depend on the preaching of the Word in the homes. Of this Luther says, ‘It may happen that the world will become so utterly epicurean that we shall have no public ministry in all the world and the preaching will be solely epicurean outrage and that the Gospel will be preserved only in the homes by the fathers’ (St. L. VI:938).” This quotation from Dr. Pieper’s *Christian Dogmatics*, Volume III, page 449, has taken on a most significant meaning as we observe the steady deterioration existing in outward Christendom. Most of the main line Protestant denominations have so glaringly yielded to such blatantly abominable teachings so repugnant that even a Sunday School child can recognize it. Last year the leaders of the Episcopal Church decided to approve the appointment of an openly homosexual bishop. And when this Sodomite bishop of New Hampshire was questioned by reporters, he brazenly told them that his election represented a “move of the Holy Spirit.” A similar trend has been observed among the Methodists and Presbyterians. The devilish notion that those who believe in Christ can practice “faithful, monogamous gay sex” has even infiltrated the denomination which erroneously calls itself Lutheran. And here we specifically refer to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA).

Already back in the early 90’s, the ELCA issued statements supporting homosexual unions. While current ELCA policy forbids ordination of candidates in same sex relationships, it allows perverts to be pastors who are committed to celibacy. But, at the same time, it openly tolerates the ordination of candidates in same-sex

relationships. It was recently reported in the Associated Press that Jay Wiesner has become the Twin Cities' third openly homosexual pastor. He and his partner of five years were formally "married" on May 1 at Bethany Lutheran Church where he will be installed. Most of the pastors in our Conference were formerly in the Missouri Synod and had to leave that Synod for doctrinal reasons. Now has that Synod returned to the true Scriptural position which it once held and rejected the false teachings which had infiltrated its midst, or has it continued its decline? While the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, for example, correctly states on paper that homosexuality is a sin, it shows that there are those within that Synod who, knowingly or unknowingly, are slowly opening the door to their influence. It is a well-known fact that there is a group of perverts within that Synod who are persistently advocating recognition of their evil lifestyle. Look at the present leaders in that Synod who are indirectly aiding such by their association with the leaders of the ELCA. Rev. M. S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the ELCA, told the delegates at the LCMS convention that he was "profoundly grateful" for their decision to continue discussions with them and also expressed his joy at the reelection of Gerald B. Kieschnick, LCMS president. The ELCA does not hold to the inerrancy of the Bible and teaches evolution, ordains women, even perverts, supports abortion, etc. Some of the doctrinal resolutions passed by the recent LCMS convention were not unanimous. For example, the resolution affirming the Biblical teaching that marriage is the life-long union of one man and one woman was not passed unanimously; the resolution on the Biblical teaching of creation and the opposition to evolution had about 20% of the delegates voting against it; for the first time, the delegates agreed that women may now hold the offices of elder and congregational president. While there are pastors in the LCMS who oppose the ordination of women pastors, there are those who openly advocate it. The same holds true in the matter of unionism. Joint services with Roman Catholics, etc., is simply taken for granted on the part of many. The Prophet Elijah told the Israelites, "*How long halt ye between two opinions?*" (1 Kings 18:21). In the church there must be true unity. And what is that unity? The Apostle answers, "*Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (1 Corinthians 1:10). The

divisions in the LCMS have smoldered for many years and burst into open flames whenever some glaring public event arouses the ire of the so-called conservatives. Remember the furor it caused when Dr. David Benke, president of the LCMS Atlantic District, participated in the joint worship service in Yankee Stadium on September 23, 2001? It was billed as a memorial service following the destruction by terrorists of the World Trade Center Towers in New York City on September 11th, a disaster in which some 3,000 people were killed. This unionistic service included the representatives of virtually every known religion. And so it has, unfortunately, continued for the past decades. A little here, a little there, and soon the entire body is infected. The Apostle states, “*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*” (Galatians 5:9). What is to be done when a church-body tolerates that which is plainly contrary to God’s Word. One would readily think that of all people, the editor of *Christian News*, Herman Otten, who knows the false teachings which have infiltrated the LCMS probably more than anyone else and has exposed them in his periodical repeatedly, would now finally apply Romans 16:17, “*Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them.*” But what does he now do? In the August 2, 2004 issue of the *Christian News* he has an editorial entitled, “No Time To Throw In The Towel.” In this article he states, “*CN has been receiving reports that a few conservatives have already left the LCMS. The editor is being asked to join them...CN has no intention of throwing in the towel...The editor has no intention of throwing in the towel to stop any Jesus First liberals from getting him and his congregation removed from the LCMS.*” At the recent LCMS convention *Christian News* was denied a booth at the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod’s 2004 convention where it could display some of the books it had published such as *An American Translation of the Bible*, C.F.W. Walther’s *Pastoral Theology*, Luther’s Catechism with the AAT text, John Gerhard’s *Manual of Christian Comfort*..... (*Christian News*, Monday, July 19, 2004). How sad! Here is a golden opportunity which the Lord has given him publicly to announce his obedience to the Word of God and to urge all those pastors who would regard themselves as faithful Lutherans to follow his example. By remaining in such a unionistic fellowship contrary to God’s Word the individual actually becomes the “*partaker of other*

men's sins" (I Timothy 5:22). The words of Martin Luther are certainly Scriptural when he writes, "Whoever really regards his doctrine, faith, and confession as true, right, and certain, cannot remain in the same stall with such as teach or adhere to false doctrine" (St. Louis Ed., Vol. XVII:1180). Such telltale signs of the sad deterioration of true Lutheranism should serve as a warning to us in these last evil days of the world! Complacency was a contributing factor leading to the downward course of the LCMS as one pastor stated, "By and large, our people no longer know or care to know the distinctive theology of the Lutheran Church" (Dr. Laurence White, LCMS pastor in Houston, Texas, quoted in *Christian News*, July 19, 2004). We must combat the assaults of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh, which seek to lull us into a false sense of security. We dare not forget that it is solely by God's grace that we believe, teach and confess all of God's Word in its truth and purity. There is no merit or worthiness on our part. Every single one of us must confess with the Apostle Paul, "*I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing*" (Romans 7: 18). From beginning to end it is His grace and mercy. "*By the grace of God I am what I am*" (I Corinthians 15:10). And by God's grace, the Lord has entrusted us with His pure Word. We distinguish between the Law and the Gospel, knowing that a man is not justified by the Law but by the Gospel. The Law does not make us righteous before God "*for by the Law is the knowledge of sin*" (Romans 3:20). We sinners flee from the Law and its threats and cast ourselves upon the mercy of our dear heavenly Father as revealed in the precious Gospel, which tells us that Jesus, our Substitute, has done all for us; and, dressed in His blood and righteousness, we now have peace of heart and mind "*For there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1). O, that these truths would occupy more of our thoughts and then be evident in our words and deeds, "*holding forth the Word of Life*" (Philippians 2:16) in these last evil days of the world!

—M. L. N.

Merry Christmas

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Church Directory

FAITH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2620 Francis Street
Jackson, MI 49203 Telephone: (517) 787-1411
Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Worship Service..... 10:30 a.m.
The REV. ROSS A. MAHAN, Pastor
2175 Pioneer Drive
Jackson, MI 49201 (517) 750-3946
E-mail: rmahan@acd.net

GOOD SHEPHERD EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, AZ 85730 Telephone (520) 721-7618
Worship Service 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School & Bible Class 11:15 a.m.
The REV. DAVID G. REDLIN, Pastor
4050 South Melpomene Way
Tucson, AZ 85730 (520) 721-7618
E-mail: david.redlin@worldnet.att.net

PEACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Central Avenue at 171st Place
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 Telephone: (708) 532-4288
Sunday School & Bible Class 8:30 a.m.
Worship Service 10:00 a.m.
The REV. DAVID T. MENSING, Pastor
17151 South Central Avenue
Oak Forest, IL 60452-4913 (708) 532-9035
E-mail: pastormensing@yahoo.com
NOTE: Services are also held each Sunday in our Midland, Michigan chapel at the Midland Motor Inn, 1815 South Saginaw Road:
Sunday School & Bible Class 6:30 p.m.
Worship Service 7:30 p.m.

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sixth and Tangent Streets
Lebanon, OR 97355

Sunday School & Bible Class 10:00 a.m.
Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
The REV. M. L. NATTERER, Pastor
483 Tangent Street
Lebanon, OR 97355 (541) 258-2941
E-mail: m.l.natterer@comcast.net

ST. LUKE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

5350 South Fountain Street
Seattle, WA 98178 *Telephone: (206) 723-1078*
Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Worship Service 10:30 a.m.
The REV. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Pastor
9658 – 54th Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98118 (206) 723-7418
E-mail: revworley@comcast.net

NOTE: Services are also held in **Victoria, British Columbia** on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.

Worship Service 7:00 p.m.
Adult Bible Class 4:30 p.m.
Adult Catechism Class 8:30 p.m.

ST. STEPHEN'S EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

420 Park Avenue
Wilmot, SD 57279
Worship Service 10:00 a.m.
Sunday School & Bible Class 11:15 a.m.
The Rev. MARK W. DIERKING, Pastor
420 Park Avenue
Wilmot, SD 57279 (605) 938-4710
E-mail: dierking@tnics.com

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

300 North Ridgeland Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302 *Telephone: (708) 386-6773*
Sunday School & Bible Class9:00 a.m.
Worship Service 10:15 a.m.
The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor
233 North Cuyler Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302 (708) 386-4145
E-mail: robertjlietz@yahoo.com

Churches in Fellowship with the Concordia Lutheran Conference

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Yekaterinburg
Yekaterinburg, RUSSIA

**For the time and location of services, contact:
The Rev. ROMAN G. SCHURGANOFF, Pastor**
P. O. Box 62
620088 Yekaterinburg, RUSSIA
E-mail: lutheran@r66.ru

St. Mark's Ev. Lutheran Church
22012 S. Torrence Avenue
Sauk Village, IL 60411
Telephone: (708) 758-6222

Sunday School & Bible Class 8:45 a.m.
Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor
22012 S. Torrence Avenue
Sauk Village, IL 60411 (708) 757-6859
E-mail: revbloedel@yahoo.com

